

# Ondo Gives N600m Loans to Artisans

*By Tunde Raheem, Sun News Online.*

As part of the efforts to assist various economic and business sectors in Ondo State, the government has given out N600m loans to artisans in the state. The Commissioner for Labour and Productivity, Mr. Taye Akinyele, who disclosed this yesterday in Akure while briefing journalists on programmes lined up to mark this year's Artisan Day, said that the loans were meant to assist the artisans to boost their businesses as well improving entrepreneurial scheme in the state.

Akinyele said before now, artisans drawn from the 18 local government areas of the state have been empowered to the tune of N250 million in form of revolving loans to assist them in their trade under the state micro credit scheme. The commissioner stated that as a policy thrust of the present administration, a full fledged ministry was created to handle artisanship empowerment and employment generation for the first time in the history of the state.

He also disclosed that the state and the Federal Government were collaborating in the area of putting into use the Industrial Development Centre, (IDC) established in the state few years ago as part of the federal Government employment generation effort. According to him, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), has been signed by the two governments on how to utilize the facilities available at the IDC to facilitate employment generation for teeming graduates in the state. By virtue of the MoU, the state now has 70 percent control over the assets and facilities at the centre.

According to him, several working equipments such as tippers, generating sets, welding machines, block making machines were distributed to the artisans, while 500 of them were trained on how to access the NEFRUND/ODSG loan. He further revealed that the state government was also into partnership with the National Economic Reconstruction Fund, (NERFUND) in Abuja with a view to mobilizing funds for empowerment of small and medium enterprises in the state. "A MoU was subsequently signed between the state and NERFUND to raise a sum of one billion naira for this purpose. The state will contribute the sum of N400 million while NERFUND will raise N600 million," he said.