

# The new face of shopping in Ondo

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Former Ondo State Military Administrator, Colonel Ahmed Usman (rtd), recently, gave some insight into what is happening in the state. Usman said: “I am quite impressed with the development in the state since the inception of Dr Olusegun Mimiko’s administration.

Can you imagine I missed my way into the same Government House Akure where I once resided because of the monumental reconstruction and improvement of the township roads. I am impressed with the new look being given to Akure, the state capital.”



*Caring heart international Auto Mart... new age shopping*

Usman must have been taken by surprise by the transformation that is going on in Ondo that many residents say is unprecedented and is turning the state into a huge construction yard. Simultaneously, scores of construction works are in process. “But the main ones are the Oba Adesida Road and Arakala Road.

It is not only in the area of road construction that the former Military Administrator has a testimony to give. He is also a living witness to the entire gamut of the Mimiko administration’s urban renewal plan. Before the advent of the governor, the markets in Akure, just like in other major towns of the state, were at best slums. But the coming of Mimiko has brought a new lease of life to shopping across the state.

Usman said: “The Neighbourhood Market located within Akure, I learnt, was completed within three months of Governor Olusegun Mimiko’s assumption of office. I chatted with the people in the market to feel the pulse of the market people. I can tell you that they are happy with the governor.

The market women told me that the market, as modern and neat as it is, is cheap and secure to do business in.” The erstwhile Military Administrator did not stop there. “He extends his testimony to the innovation in auto shopping that the Mimiko government brought to Ondo.

“The last but not the least place I visited was the Auto Mart Complex which gladdens my heart. The Mart has offices, licensing office, solar powered lights, fire service, pipe borne water, banking facilities and adequate security.”

But the story of the former Military Administrator would pale into insignificance when you visit Ondo to behold the gargantuan transformation that is taking place there courtesy of the Mimiko administration. “Our dream for Ondo State where things work is coming to pass before our eyes,” an Akure resident, who gave his name as Femi Oluwasanmi, said.

And the story is better told by somebody who has been out of the state capital for some time and is now visiting. If the visitor does not miss his way, just like it happened to Usman (ex-MILAD), due to the new network of roads, then he must be lucky.

If your entry point is Ilesha Road but you choose to enter through the Owo-Benin end of the inter-state road, there is no way you will miss this picturesque sight on the left side of the road on which sits several hundreds of vehicles.

“As you behold the facility, your mind races back to Berger on Lagos-Apapa expressway, said to be the largest auto mart in the West Africa sub-region. Berger Yard is characterised by chaos. But the sight before you is not Berger Auto Market.

This is the Caring Heart International Automart. In landmass and capacity to accommodate vehicles, the Akure facility compares with the Berger Market. Where the distinctive difference lies, however, is that whereas disorderliness rules in the latter, modernity and orderliness hold sway in the former.

If you are in Ondo and the need to buy a vehicle arises, this is where to do it, and in comfort too. You do not need to move from one location to the other looking for the vehicle to buy, unlike what you have in other states. All the vehicles from which to buy are in one location.

And for the auto marketers, the Caring Heart International Automart is a most convenient facility. “It has all the amenities any market of international standard should have, as itemised by Usman, former Ondo MILAD. This is a product of good thinking and the vision came as a small part of Mimiko’s larger urban renewal package.

But the Akure auto mart came with an irony. When the governor envisioned the facility and informed the Akure auto marketers that they had to move from the road sides where they

were displaying their wares (particularly Oba Adesida Road) to recreate the place, the initiative was met with strict resistance.

The auto marketers did not want to move because of the fear that the movement would lead to poor patronage as the new site was far away from the town centre. But the Mimiko administration knew better that if all the auto marketers moved, anybody wanting to patronise them will find them wherever.

Today, the motor sellers are smiling. They operate in a most conducive environment. And patronage remains. They are even said to be paying less for rent. All these could have come from a governor that has a caring heart. The other side to this action is that the road sides where the auto marketers hitherto sold their wares have been reclaimed and recreated to renew the state capital.

A resident described the scenario as a win-win situation for the auto marketers and the Mimiko administration's urban renewal programme. From the Caring Heart International Automart, your journey into Akure takes you into Oba Adesida Road. Oba Adesida Road is one of the major roads in the state capital.

Built in 1976, it has fallen into a state of disrepair necessitating reconstruction. The reconstruction is viewed against the backdrop of the fact that every road has 20 years lifespan. By simple calculation, Oba Adesida Road is 35 years old.

The reconstruction that is going on there is one that befits a state capital, complete with beautification and street lights so bright at night you will mistake them for stadium flood lights. The reconstruction has eliminated indiscriminate parking of vehicles on the road that impeded traffic.

The road has designated bus stops with the state-of-the-art shelters for commuters comfort. If your next port of call is Arakale, then you cannot lose sight of the massive reconstruction that is about 50 percent completed. A single lane road is giving way to a dual carriageway.

When completed, the road will decongest Akure major roads. Many houses were demolished to make the project possible. But the landlords are happy because the demolition was carried out with a human face. Every victim got at least N8 million regardless of whether the structure had documents or not.

What is unfolding in Akure and other parts of the state, spearheaded by the Mimiko government, is the bold move to build a new state, and the people are on the road to the destination.