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Nigeria: Abuja-Kaduna Rail Project Ready for Presidential Flag-Off

By Juliet Alohán

Abuja — The nations transport sector is set for a boost, as the rail modernisation project from Abuja to Kaduna, which would be undertaken by the China Civil and Engineering Construction Company (CCECC), at the cost \$874,308,704, including consultancy, is ready to be flagged-off.

According to a statement signed yesterday by the Deputy Director, Press and Public Relations, Ministry of Transport, Mr. Kinsley Agha, the project which would be flagged-off by President Goodluck Jonathan, is in pursuance of the administration's commitment to revolutionalise the nations transport system.

"The President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan will perform the official flag-off/ground-breaking ceremony of the Abuja- Kaduna standard gauge (single track) railway modernization programme on Thursday, February 10, 2011, at Rigasa in Kaduna, Kaduna State," the statement reads in part.

The project is expected to be completed in three years starting from the flag-off date.

It would be recalled that the former President Olusegun Obasanjo had awarded the contract for the construction of the Lagos-Kano standard gauge rail system to CCECC in 2006 at a cost of \$8.3b, but the contract could not be executed due to funding problems.

In order to ensure the realization of the project, it was later re-scoped to six stand-alone segments following directives from President Jonathan, who also approved that a concessionary loan be secured for the project.

"In order to see to the execution of this project, the Nigeria government in December last year secured a concessionary loan of \$500million from the Chinese Government at less than 3 per cent interest rate, repayable in 15 years," the statement added.

The rail modernization project is to begin with the Abuja -Kaduna line, and would be simultaneously followed by the Lagos-Ibadan route.

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