

Promised. Investment State minister Evelyn Anite promised the Chinese entrepreneurs free land for investment and tax holidays.

BY YASIN MUGERWA
ymugerwa@ug.nationmedia.com

Govt courts Chinese to build sanitary pads firm

TIANJIN CITY, CHINA. In the face of a raging battle for free sanitary pads for school-age girls, government in what looks like a rethink, has initiated talks with Chinese investors to build a sanitary pads factory in Uganda.

The same company, under the proposed deal, will also produce diapers which are imported into the country.

The Ugandan delegation to China led by State Privatisation and Investment minister Evelyn Anite and her Trade counterpart Micheal Werikhe last Thursday held talks with the proprietors of Eonbon Household Suppliers Co Ltd and invited them to Kampala to establish a \$20m (about Shs70 billion) factory in the country. This Chinese company had already expressed interest in the project through Tian Tang Group boss.

The Thursday meeting between government officials and the company directors was coordinated by Tian Tang Group chairman, Mr Zhang Zhigang, who has been helping government to attract Chinese investors to Uganda. Mr Zhang owns Tangshan Mbale Industrial Park Co Ltd and has signed a partnership with CCCC Tianjin Dredging Company to develop the 619-acre park. The sanitary pads investor has already signed an investment contract. The company is expected to invest up to \$20m.

Ms Anite who described the meeting with the Chinese investors as "a relief" and "a timely intervention to the challenges at home," alluding to the absence of sanitary towels and diapers factories in Uganda, to visit the country at their convenience to finalise the agreement.

Mr Bai, the chairman of the company, welcomed the deal and promised to visit Uganda soon.

"We visited their plant and requested them to come to Uganda and build a factory for sanitary towels and diapers. We will give them land and other incentives. As government, we are hopeful that they are going to build for us a factory to help mothers and school girls who need them," Ms Anite said.

"This company is going to put a stop to the noise about sanitary pads and at the same time create jobs for our people. It's no longer business as usual; we are looking for investors to help us in our quest to develop Uganda. The President has already instructed us to create 1.5 million jobs by 2020, and we are going to achieve this target."

Dr Nyanzi, a researcher at Makerere University, used 'crude' language online to criticise Mr Museveni's gov-

ernment for failure to provide the sanitary pads he promised during the 2016 election campaign.

"We visited their plant and requested them to come to Uganda and build a factory for sanitary towels and diapers. We will give them land and other incentives."



Visited. Evelyn Anite, Privatisation and Investment State minister

The President had pledged to stop school girls' serious absenteeism problem and poor performance in schools by providing them with free

sanitary pads.

Dr Nyanzi's woes began with her campaign for free sanitary pads for school-age girls. The *Pads4GirlsUG* campaign sought to raise sanitary pads for at least one million girls.

According to Amnesty International and other organisations, lack of sanitary towels is one of the leading causes of girls dropping out of school in Uganda as a result of fear, shame and embarrassment.

On account of the absence of sanitary pads, a number of girls have continued to drop out of school. For instance, in 2016, a total of 323,276 candidates registered for Uganda Certificate of Education, but of that number, 6,652 did not turn up for the exams. In 2015, there were 6,655 pupils who failed to turn up for exams while in 2014, the number was 4,229. In 2013, it stood at 6,756 candidates and another 5,903 candidates in 2012.

Mr Werikhe told *Daily Monitor* after the meeting in Tianjing City, a metropolis in northern coastal Mainland China, that the production of sanitary pads and diapers will boost Uganda's economy and create employment for the jobless youth in eastern part of the country.

The minister said their mission to China was largely about looking for investors for Mbale Industrial Park.

"There are industries we need as soon as the park is ready so as to add value to our products and create jobs. For instance; building materials, agro-processing, new energy, automobile manufacturing and assembly, household appliances among other things," Mr Werikhe said.

"We want to make Mbale a model park for investment. We have visited and held talks with serious Chinese investors and some have already signed agreements to invest in Uganda. The investor who is going to produce sanitary towels and diapers is just one of the many who have agreed to bring factories and jobs to Uganda. This is good news for our people especially the youth in Mbale and other neighbouring districts."

Mr Godfrey Byamukama, the commissioner for investments in the Ministry of Finance, told *Daily Monitor* that the agreement signed with Tian Tang Group in July obligated government to extend electricity, water and ICT services close to the Mbale Industrial Park gate.

A partnership of the Chinese Companies is expected to invest unspecified amounts to work on the road, water and the ICT extension to the park complex.

Ms Anite told the Chinese investors that there will be free land for investment, tax holiday and the tax for the machinery used in the establishment of the Industrial Park will be waived so as to speed up investment projects and job creation.