

REPORT

OF THE

AD – HOC COMMITTEE AND DELEGATION TO BENUE STATE ON THE RECURRING BOAT MISHAP AT THE BURUKU CROSSING POINT ON RIVER KATSINA-ALA, BENUE STATE.

Introduction

On Tuesday, 6 November, 2018, the House of Representatives considered a motion on the *Need to end the Recurring Boat Mishaps and Loss of Lives at the Buruku Crossing Point on River Katsina Ala, Benue State.*

The House noted the several times the incident had recurred including in 2012, 2013, and the most recent in 2018. It recalled the several legislative interventions on the matter, regretted that the Executive arm has not demonstrated enough political will in providing lasting solution, which would be the construction of a bridge linking Buruku, Benue State through the Crossing Point to Taraba State and the other States in the Eastern flank of Northern Nigeria. As a result of the several legislative interventions, the Ministry of Works had initiated and completed Engineering designs of the Buruku Bridge and put its cost at about Nineteen (19) billion naira since 2009. Currently, probably due to delay in action, the cost of constructing the Bridge is estimated at over Forty (40) billion naira.

To activate a practical move toward resolving the avoidable and embarrassing carnage at the crossing point occasioned by recurring boat mishaps, the House resolved inter alia to:

Commiserate with the Government and People of Benue State, the families that lost their loved ones and observe a minute silence in honour of the victims.

Constitute a delegation of the House of Representatives to visit the Buruku Crossing Point along River Katsina Ala for an On the Spot Assessment.

The delegation was constituted as an Ad – Hoc Committee vides the Votes and Proceedings of Thursday 8 November, 2018.

Membership: The Ad – Hoc Committee Membership, as contained in the Votes and Proceedings of Thursday, 8 November, 2018 is as follows

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| 1. | Honourable Pally Iriase | - | Chairman |
| 2. | Hon. Johnbull Shekarau | - | Member |
| 3. | Hon. Abbas Tajudeen | - | Member |
| 4. | Hon. Anayo Nnebe | - | Member |
| 5. | Hon. Hamman-Julde Garba | - | Member |
| 6. | Hon. Joseph Bamgbose | - | Member |

Mandate

The Committee's mandate is to Commiserate with the Government and people of Benue State on the unfortunate mishap, and visit the locus in quo for on the spot assessment of the situation.

The Delegation scheduled the trip to Benue State to hold from Tuesday 12 to Thursday 14 December, 2018.

Visit to Makurdi, Benue State

The Delegation arrived in Makurdi, Benue State by road at about 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 12 December, 2018 and went to the Government House for a courtesy call on the Governor. It was received by His Excellency, Samuel Otorm, governor of Benue State and the state executive council.

Chairman's Remarks

In his introductory remarks, Hon. Pally Iriase, the Deputy Chief Whip, House of Representatives, who is also the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee and leader of the delegation, briefed His Excellency on the purpose of the visit. He stated that the House had considered a motion sponsored by a member of the House of Representatives who is a son of the State, Hon. Oker Jev Emmanuel Yisa (Buruku Federal Constituency), on the recurring accidents at the Buruku crossing point on river Katsina Ala which has attracted the attention of the House of Representatives over the years, and that the House resolved to address it conclusively. While recalling several earlier mishaps which had claimed many casualties, Hon. Iriase described the most recent occurrence on the 12th of October 2018, as most worrisome as it reflected serious insensitivity on the part of government. He pledged the commitment of the National Assembly, especially the House of

Representatives, to ensuring a final solution through the inclusion of the Buruku Bridge in the 2019 budget estimates.

The Chairman officially delivered the message of condolence from the Hon. Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives to the Government and people of Benue State in general and Buruku Federal Constituency in particular, especially survivors and relatives of victims of the unfortunate mishaps.

Remarks by His Excellency, Governor Samuel Otorm

The Executive Governor of Benue State, Dr. Samuel Otorm, while addressing the assemblage in the Banquet hall of the Government House, Makurdi, expressed gratitude to the Hon. Speaker, House of Representatives, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara, and the entire members of the House for their solid and unflinching support for Benue State which has been demonstrated in the way and manner the House has stood by the State in times of tribulations.

He recalled especially the unequivocal resolution of the House against the decision of certain forces to annihilate their citizens through the marauding herdsmen, and how the House stood in solid support of the only right solution to the crisis – the Anti-Open Grazing Law. The governor declared humility in his appreciation of the House in this regard.

He welcomed the delegation and pledged total support and assurance that the visit yield fruitful results. He commended the Committee to God and safety as it journeyed to the Locus in quo which is the Buruku Crossing Point, Buruku Local Government Area.

Visit to the Locus In Quo

On Wednesday 13 December, 2018, the delegation left Makurdi to Buruku Local Government Area and arrived Buruku Crossing Point, the scene of the incident where throngs of natives, including the Chairman, Buruku Local Government Area (LGA), Mrs. Hon. Mrs Justina Yator Sorkaa and Members of the her Legislative Council. relatives of victims of the boat mishap, youths and community leaders, and media personnel were waiting expectantly. The Chairman of the LGA conducted the delegation round the stretch of the bank of River Katsina-Ala to the Crossing Point which is the flash point and where most of the boat accidents have happened over the years. She lamented the apparent show of insensitivity by the federal government regarding the long expected

bridge at the point and prayed the Chairman of the delegation to ensure that the story changes for the better after the visit.

Visit to the Palace of the Traditional Ruler of Buruku

The delegation, as part of its itinerary also paid a visit to the palace of the traditional ruler of Buruku Kingdom, Ter Buruku, HRH Moses I. Hanior where all the traditional chiefs in the kingdom were in attendance. It turned out to be the climax of the delegations visit as all segments of the Buruku community were represented including the opinion leaders, academia and intelligentsia, the State cabinet, with the governor represented by the Commissioner for Information and Orientation, the business community, students, market women, among others.

The Ter Buruku and his chiefs, and indeed the entire traditional institution and people of Buruku were excited at the visit of the Committee and this was expressed in the warm reception accorded the delegation and the conferment of titles on the chairman and Members of the delegation.

Remarks by the chairman Buruku LGA

The Chairman of the LGA, Hon. Mrs Justina Yator Sorkaa, echoed the voices of the populace when she stressed that the visit of the delegation was proof that the House of Representatives listens and responds to the people's distress call on the accident that claimed 18 lives on Wednesday 14 October, 2018, which was a sad reminder of a similar catastrophe that claimed 17 lives in 2013. She reiterated that the timely response of the House was testimony that it is a House of responsive and responsible law makers for the nation.

She prayed the House to intervene by practically causing the construction of a bridge across River Katsina Ala at the Buruku Crossing Point, as well as the construction of the Yandev-Zaki Ibiam and Yandev – Katsina – Ala Federal Roads, which will ease the transportation problems of the people of the areas concerned.

Remarks by the Committee Chairman

The Chairman, Hon Iriase, in his intervention in Buruku reiterated his earlier assertions to His Excellency the Governor on the reason for the Committee's visit and the position of the House of Representatives on the recurring accidents at the Crossing Point.

He expressed the solidarity of the House of Representatives with the leaders and people of Buruku, and reassured them that a positive end to the burden of the Crossing Point was in sight.

Findings

During its tour and inspection of the Buruku crossing point on river Katsina Ala, and in its interactive sessions with various groups either in Makurdi or within the Buruku Kingdom, the Committee made several findings among which are the followings:

1. The Buruku Crossing point lies in a trunk 'A' road which serves as a link between Buruku, Benue State in North Central Nigeria and Taraba State and several others including Borno state in the Northern flank of Nigeria.
2. A bridge at the Buruku crossing point is the only permanent solution to the perennial boat mishaps within and around the crossing point on River Katsina Ala as it would help reduce the slow traffic caused by ferrying motor vehicles across the river by boats.
3. The Federal Ministry of Works had already concluded a design of the bridge since 2009, which put the cost of constructing the bridge at N19 billion, but delay and current economic realities puts the cost estimates of constructing the bridge now at about N40 billion.
4. The people of Buruku and all the chiefdoms around it, and indeed Benue state are very good, hospitable and peaceable people and this is demonstrated in the warm reception accorded the committee and the high regards expressed by them for the leadership and members of the House of Representatives.
5. The people are primarily agrarian and the river serves as a main waterway for evacuation of produce from inner water ways to both rural and urban markets which engenders a heavy traffic on the waterway thereby occasioning collisions from time to time either due to poor visibility at night or heavy vessel presence.

Recommendations

The Committee therefore makes the following recommendations:

- i. Urge the Federal Ministry of Power, Works and Housing to ensure the inclusion of the Buruku bridge project in the 2019 budget estimates; and
- ii. Mandate the Committees on Appropriations, Finance and Works to capture not less than 30% of the total cost of the Buruku Bridge Project in the 2019 budget estimates to ensure availability of funds for the award of the contract.

Appreciation:

The Chairman and Members of the Ad-Hoc Committee and Delegation to Benue State sincerely appreciate the Hon. Speaker, the Hon. Deputy Speaker, the Leadership and entire members of the House for confidence reposed in them to serve in the Committee.

Signed

Signature

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| 1. | Honourable Pally Iriase | - | Chairman |
| 2. | Hon. Johnbull Shekarau | - | Member |
| 3. | Hon. Abbas Tajudeen | - | Member |
| 4. | Hon. Anayo Nnebe | - | Member |
| 5. | Hon. Hamman-Julde Garba | - | Member |
| 6. | Hon. Joseph Bamgbose | - | Member |
| 7. | Ezennia Nwanekezie | - | Clerk |

