

... Revokes Lokoja Port Contract

The Federal Ministry of Transport has revoked the contract for the reconstruction of the Lokoja seaport.

The port which has suffered so many setbacks in the past is situated on the bank of the River Niger in Kogi State capital, Lokoja.

Transport Minister, Alhaji Ibrahim Isa Bio who disclosed this in Abuja also revealed that only 13 per cent of the project had been completed.

He expressed dismay that the

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contractor who was awarded the multi-billion naira contract during the tenure of Prince Okechukwu John Emeka as the Minister of State for Transport had abandoned the job. The contractor was alleged to have diverted the funds meant for the project to something else.

The Minister also revealed that the contract for the reconstruction of the Onitsha port had been awarded for nine months duration.

Bio equally added that the contracts for the reconstruction of Baro and Oguta ports in Niger and Imo States respectively, had been awarded by the Federal Government.

He explained that the on-

going dredging of the River Niger was designed to boost river port development in the country.

These include the establishment of dockyards, warehouses, and tank farms along the channels, as well as movement of boats, barges and other vessels to ferry passengers and goods into the hinterland.

On the dredging of the Calabar channel, Bio said that the project had been badly conceived, and, consequently, the channel was not properly dredged.

He directed the management of Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) to get another consultant to do a proper survey of the channel with a time-line.

He projected that the dredging of the Calabar channel

would commence March 2010.

He also ordered the authority to immediately produce a master plan for the development of the nation's seaports so as to expand it in the years ahead.

His words: "It appears NPA has not got Port Development Plan. Any organization without a developmental plan, according to him, will continue to drift and not improve. Let the NPA have a 25 to 30 years port development plan. NPA has the capacity and the resources, if they only plan. NPA has not presented him a master plan for onward delivery to the Federal Executive Council (FEC) for approval".

Noting that Nigeria controlled 70 per cent of maritime trade in Central and West African sub-region, Bio posited that so much is expected of the nation as a regional and global maritime player.

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