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**AROUND NIGERIA**

Last Updated Friday August 31, 2007

## 2 DIE, TRAIN SERVICES SUSPENDED ...DUE TO ZUNGERU FLOOD

From BALA B. BITRUS, Minna

TRAIN commuter services between the North and South of Nigeria have been cut off following a massive flood at Akare Village near Zungeru, in Wushishi area of Niger State.

The flood swept through the entire village killing at least two people, several hundreds of livestock and washed off vast portions of the rail line that passes through the village and left huge economic losses in its wake.

The flood, the worst ever witnessed in the area, also washed away huge acres of farmlands and crops awaiting harvest, houses, worship places, a school and a railway sub-station.

As a result of the flooding which covered over three kilometers of rail lines, commuter train services between the North and South had since last Sunday been put on hold as the rail line at Akare village has been completely devastated.

Over three bridges and culverts over small rivers and streams at Kerage, Akare and Pankara were completely submerged, and washed away by the flood.

Managing Director, Nigerian Railway Corporation, Mazi Jetson Nwanko who visited the site, described it as "quite devastating." The Managing Director who led management officials of North/West District of NRC on assessment of the disaster, expressed shock at the magnitude of the devastation and the resources required to put the lines back, saying, 'this is a huge, additional burden to the finances of NRC'.

He said however that engineers from the corporation have been drafted to the site and would work day and night, round the clock to restore train services as early as possible.

Mazi Nwako said after a technical analogy of the devastation by the engineers, work would commence. He confirmed that train services between the regions, where the corporation makes its huge income, have been put on the hold.

He said last Sunday's washout was the tenth in less than five years but noted that this year's is the worst and most devastating ever experienced by the corporation in the state.

He appealed to the Federal Government to give the corporation a huge capital budgetary provision to enable it address such unforeseen ecological incidences.

He said with such budgetary provisions, the corporation could plan to avert such incidences by constructing culverts, diversions for water and even canals to carry water from susceptible flood plains away from rail tracks.

He attributed the devastation to low capacity of the existing culverts, which he said were too shallow to convey such volume of the floodwater.

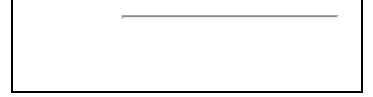
Hundreds of families from Kampany, Kerage, Akare and their adjoining communities affected by the flood now take refuge at the substation of the NRC at Akare. Many others have fled the villages.

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