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PRESS RELEASE
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PARLIAMENT FINALLY RATIFIES TOLL AGREEMENT FOR THE WELLINGTON-MASIKA HIGHWAY

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has finally on the 03rd March, 2016 ratified the toll agreement for the widening of the Wellington-Masiaka Highway into four-lanes between the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and China Railway Seventh Group (CRSG).

It may be recalled that at the initial presentation of this agreement to the House for approval, it was deferred to a pre-legislative public hearing to clarify some of the reservations and concerns raised by MPs such as timeline, alternative routes, etc.

The Deputy Minister of Works, Housing and Infrastructure, Babagaleh Barrie in his second presentation prior to approval, said among other things, that the agreement constitutes an integral component on Pillar 4 of the Agenda for Prosperity; that over 4000 vehicles are plying the two-lanes Masiaka Highway since its construction in the 90s; it would create jobs, facilitate trade, lead to the expansion of settlements, provide easy access to the would-be Mamamah Airport; an alternative route using Tagrin-Lungi Road etc. He deposed that the agreement costs over \$150 Million for the four-lane road to be constructed in four years with one year extension, in case of defects. He assured continued education to the public on the conditions contained in the agreement; three toll stations at Jui; Mile 38; and Masiaka where 1/3 of the total amount of the toll would be paid and collected at each of the toll stations. He also said that the agreement is a build, operate, and transfer (BOT) of the four-lane Wellington-Masiaka Highway, after a period of 25 years by the CRSG to the GoSL.

In making his contribution for the second time on the issue, Hon. Umar Paran Tarawally said that the initial presentation posed a lot of unanswered questions which have been answered by the pre-legislative discussions they have had as MPs where most of their concerns were resolved by the

experts. He later referred to the agreement as good for the development of Sierra Leone.

Whilst espousing the benefits of pre-legislative briefing, Hon. Rosaline J. Smith reiterated the need for an alternative route which is part of international best practice for an efficient and effective toll system. This, she furthered, has now been addressed in the Minister's second presentation to the House.

For his part, Hon. Mustapha M. Braima also re-echoed the necessity of the pre-legislative hearing, whilst saying that their concerns on the said agreement were exhaustively addressed. He further noted with caution that there should not be any exemption on the toll for all and sundry, including MPs for the very success of the project.

Acting Minority Leader of the House, Hon. Ansumana Kaikai, described the agreement as a "novelty", whilst recalling that even though MPs had reservations, they have put them aside to go with the status quo, noting that the agreement was initiated and signed without the inclusion

of MPs. He also said that the 25 years duration of the project is too long, and called for effective monitoring and supervision of the agreement by SLRA, Parliament, and State House from its inception to conclusion.

In concluding the debate, the Majority Leader of the House, Hon. Ibrahim Bundu, in alluding to the second coming of the agreement, also agreed that monitoring and evaluation of the project is a "sine qua non" for its very success and survival.