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PRESS RELEASE
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2016 BUDGET DEBATE ENTERS ITS SECOND DAY

The debate on the 2016 Budget has entered its second day. The budget is an appropriation act to provide for the general services of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Hon. Dr. Aiah Dabundeh said that the 2016 budget would be implemented in line with the post-ebola recovery plans. He also said that despite the huge allocations for the health sector, shortage of qualified personnel would seriously hinder efficient service delivery across the country. He called on Government to do quarterly and robust monitoring on the health sector, whilst saying that diagnosis and early treatment should be improved and strengthened.

Hon. Lahai Marah said that despite the drop in the iron ore price which resulted in the closure of the mines, the ebola virus disease which had been beaten back, and Government has paid and increased regular salaries for all public sector workers effective July, 2015. He also spoke about the wastage of Government's resources in the 19-Councils because of incapacity and inefficiency in the use of the Petra system. Against this background he said his Constituency, 42 miles to Kono and 110 miles from Kabala, has no good roads and no senior secondary school in Krubola, Koinadugu District.

Hon. Jusufu B. Mansaray referenced provision in the Parliamentary Service Act, 2007 outlining the submission of estimates on Parliament to the President of Sierra Leone for his attention and comment. However, he called on the Leadership of Parliament to ensure better conditions of service for MPs, provide an enabling work environment, and strengthening of oversight. He said inadequacies like poor toilet facilities, no medical and vehicles to undertake oversight are due to inadequate funding of the Parliament of Sierra Leone.

Next, on Karifala S. Conteh apprised the House on the progress that had been made in the energy sector. This he attributed to the unbundling of the sector which is yielding positive effects such as less frequent outages. He predicted that by 2016 Freetown would go with sustainable and uninterrupted power supply for 24-hours. He also said that the service providers as per law should be held accountable for unsuccessful calls and call drops which directly impact on their customers. He also advocated for support to SLBC which is not in the budget, lamenting that his constituents are not receiving SLBC's signals at Wellington.

Hon. Abdulai Sesay queried the Minister of Finance whilst talking on building a resilient health sector and the status of payment to health workers who died during the ebola outbreak. He also spoke on the improved use of contraceptives and still births, but observed that the maternal mortality rate still remains high in the country. The debate continues till its third allotted day.