

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

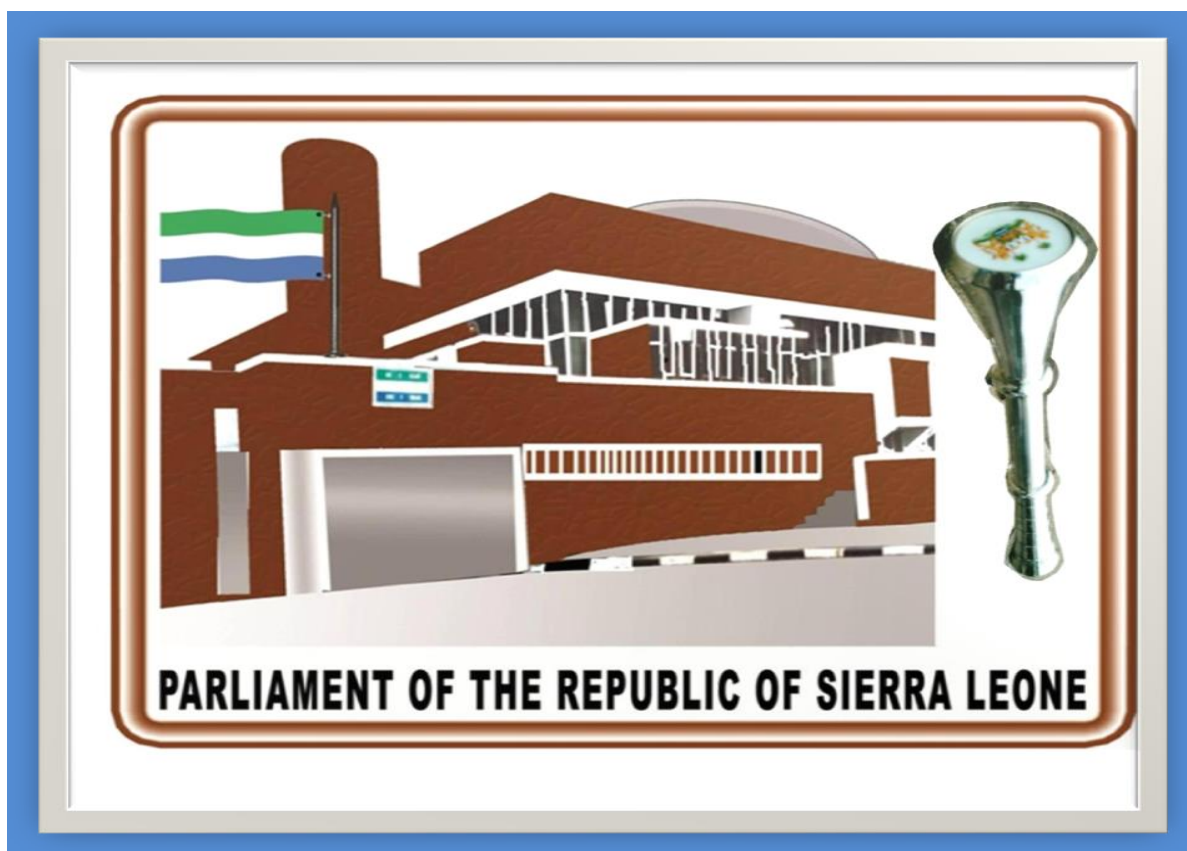
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

SECOND SESSION - SECOND MEETING

THURSDAY, 13TH FEBRUARY, 2020

SESSION – 2019/2020



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

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Second Meeting of the Second Session of the Fifth Parliament
of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held Thursday, 13th February, 2020.

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Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

SECOND SESSION – SECOND MEETING OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC

Thursday, 13th February, 2020.

I. PRAYERS

[The Table Clerk, Mrs Bintu Weston, Read the Prayers]

[The House met at 10:00 a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]

[The Speaker, Hon. Dr Chernor Abass Bundu in the Chair]

The House was called to Order

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

II. RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON TUESDAY 4TH FEBRUARY, 2020

Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Tuesday, 4th February, 2020. As usual, we shall skip the first four pages and start with Page 5. I know the Honourable Ibrahim B. Kargbo is not here; he was the Acting Leader of the Opposition when we had our sitting on that day. There is a statement attributed to him. I do not know whether any Member of the Opposition would like to ensure that our record contains the correct English. If anyone of you would like to avert attention to the last paragraph, where it is said, 'he reminded the House about...' I do not think that language is quite correct; either the warmth of the relationship or warm relationship. Page 5 says 'the penultimate paragraph.' Honourable Members, since English is the official language in this House, we should try and get it correct.

HON. AJIBOLA M. SPAINE: Mr Speaker, I think it should be warm.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you saying 'warm' not 'warmth.'

HON. AJIBOLA M. SPAINE: Yes, Mr Speaker. It should be 'w-a-r-m.'

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member. I observed problems on Page 6, the top paragraph. If my recollection is right, it was not the Acting Leader of Government Business that asked the House to rise for a minute of silence. He concurred with what the Acting Leader of the Opposition said. It was the Speaker who asked the House to rise for a minute of silence. So, please make the necessary correction Page 6. Page 7? Honourable Members, let us look at Page 8. I would like to make the following correction. The statement attributed to the Speaker reads: **"Mr Speaker instructed the Clerk of Parliament to inform the House at the next adjourned date about the number of media houses that had been accredited by the House."** Page 9? Page 10? Page 11? Again, for the records, let us look at the first paragraph. I think the

correct expression should be 'you met your demise' and not 'you do not take your demise.' It is an involuntary thing and if everybody were to meet his demise, can you imagine what would happen; we would be skilfully avoiding our demise. Page 12? If there is no further correction or amendment, could somebody move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the Parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 13th February, 2020.

HON. MOSES B. JORKIE: I so move, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. JOSEPH W. LAMIN: I so second, Mr Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the Parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday, 4th February, 2020 has been adopted as amended]

III. PAPER LAID

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES

CERTIFICATION [PROFESSIONALS, CONTRACTOR, MANUFACTURERS AND IMPORTERS IN THE WATER SUPPLY INDUSTRY] RULES 2019

THE SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I am sure neither the Leader nor his Deputy would want some Members on the Government side to address us on one technical matter before we can proceed.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Mr Speaker, I want to make an observation.

THE SPEAKER: Go ahead, Honourable Member.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Mr Speaker, I think it is always necessary for the Chairman of the Committee of that line Ministry to take the lead in issues relating to the Committee the Honourable Member is chairing. In this case, it is the Leader of Government Business and we have no issue with that, but it will definitely exclude the

Chairman of the parliamentary Committee and that might not be proper at all. This is just a subjective view, not an objective opinion. You will agree with me that that might erode the authority of the Chairman who is chairing the Committee in this House. In future, let us make sure that the people who are supposed to lay this document are here. The Leader of Government Business is not in the House, but his name is on the Order Paper and that has not been altered. I think we can shelve this issue and wait for an appropriate time.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for that observation, but I am sure we have not reached that point yet. I know you are the Chairman of Water Resources.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, I am the Chairman of Water Resources.

THE SPEAKER: I want to hear from you because I have another matter to flag up.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, Standing Orders 18[2] talks about the process of laying documents on the Table of this House. The last paragraph states: **"Where necessary, the consultation process with appropriate stakeholders and other relevant information that the paper should carry."** As Chairman of Water Resources Committee, I only saw this document yesterday on the Order Paper and on social media. I was neither informed nor involved in this process. If you go through the Constitution of Sierra Leone, Section 93[2&3] states the oversight function of Parliament on MDAs. It is during oversight process that Members of Parliament can recommend for legislations. Some of these documents have to take a period of 21 days before they become part of the laws of Sierra Leone or we move a Motion for such documents to be debated. If we ignore them for 21 days without prior knowledge of Members of the Committee and Members do not know the content of such documents, there will be problem. Therefore, I want to kindly ask you to emphasise the importance of Committee Members. These MDAs are undermining us because they are not giving us the due respect and regard we deserve. Thank you so much.

THE SPEAKER: I think that point should be well noted for the future. Again, before we reach that stage, there is a preliminary point of a technical nature that I would like to

raise and I want to be guided. Let us look at Section 171 Constitution of Sierra Leone, because I noticed that what is about to be laid on the Table of the House, are series of Statutory Instruments and the Constitution of Sierra Leone does define what a Statutory Instrument is. Section 171 reads: **"A Statutory Instrument means any proclamation, regulation, order, rule or other instrument [not being an Act of Parliament] having the force of law."** So, Statutory Instruments are instruments once they go through this House, they have the force of law. It is not an ordinary document, but a document that has a force of law and it is a document that prescribes rights and obligations on individuals.

Honourable Members, we must not treat such documents lightly. I want to draw your attention to Section 170 [7], which deals with what should happen to instruments of that kind. For the benefit of those Members who may not have their Constitutions with them, I will read: **"Any orders, rules or regulations made by any person or authority pursuant to a power conferred in that behalf by this Constitution or any other law -:**

[a] shall be laid before Parliament;

[b] Shall be published in the Gazette on or before the day they are so laid before Parliament; and

[c] Shall come into force at the expiration of a period of twenty-one days of being so laid, unless Parliament, before the expiration of the said period of twenty-one days, annuls any such orders, rules or regulations by the votes of not less than two-thirds of the Members of Parliament.

Honourable Members, the Constitution gives us the meaning of Statutory Instruments in Section 171 and it tells us in Section 170 [7] the person with the authority to lay that instrument before Parliament. It says **"Any person or authority pursuant to a power conferred in that behalf either by the Constitution or by any other law."** When I examine the Statutory Instruments that are about to be laid before this House, I noticed that they all carry the authentication of a Chairman not a Minister of Government. I have a question I want to be addressed before I make any ruling. I want

to know whether the Act that gives the power to any person to authenticate these Statutory Instruments allows for the Chairman to authenticate the instrument or the Minister. I am sure in ordinary terms, an Act of Parliament establishing an MDA or a Statutory Corporation vests power in the Minister to make regulation by way of a Statutory Instrument. The power is vested in the Minister not in the Chairman and now I see Instruments before Parliament which are authenticated not by the relevant Minister, but the Chairman. I want this question to be addressed on the issue, whether the enabling Act gives power to the Chairman to authenticate the Instrument before we can proceed.

HON. ALEX ROGERS: I am Honourable Alex Rogers. I want clarification on this chairmanship you are referring to. Are you referring to the Board Chairman or Parliamentary Oversight Committee Chairman?

THE SPEAKER: You have the Instruments in front of you, Honourable Member. There is an Act of Parliament known as the Constitutional and Statutory Instrument Act of 1999. Part 1, Section 2 states: **"A Statutory Instrument shall be authenticated by the signature at the end thereof of the person or authority empowered to make it."** The question I would like the House to address is whether the enabling legislation under which this Statutory Instruments are being passed empowered the Chairman to authenticate this Statutory Instrument. I would start with the Chairman of the Committee before I go to the Government Bench. We are making laws and we want to ensure that we make good laws in accordance with the laws of our country.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Having listened to the constitutional provisions you have just cited, it has not been a practice in this House wherein we receive documents signed by the Board Chairmen or whosoever and present such documents to Committee Chairs. If this particular document was to the knowledge of the Chairman and the Committee Members, we should have made immense contributions, so that it is not presented in the Well this way. As you can see, the Minister and other officials of the Ministry of Water Resources are not here and we are having important document of this nature to be laid in this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I was just talking about the absent of the entire officials of the Ministry of Water Resources, including the Minister. They are not here to witness the laying of such important document on the table of this House. Again, we are looking up to you as Speaker of this House. Already, they are in violation of the constitutional provisions and the Statutory Act. In my earlier submission, I made reference to how the Committee was treated by the Ministry of Water Resources. It is wrong for such documents to be signed by Board Chairmen instead of the Minister who was given authority to sign regulations or laws on behalf of Parliament and for the information of Parliament. We should also consider the absence of officials of the Ministry of Water Resources. I would like to emphasise the importance of parliamentary Committees and they deserve to be treated seriously by the various MDAs. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Where is the Honourable Member? In the first place, the Honourable Member who is the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Water Resources told us that he was not informed and he was not properly consulted as required by Standing Orders 18. I am not entirely clear whether the Chairperson of the Board who signed these Statutory Instruments is empowered to do so by the enabling legislation. It is quite possible, but I need to see proof of that.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: For us to be clearer as you were saying it may be possible or it may not be possible. I want to suggest for the enabling Legislation to be provided, which is the Sierra Leone Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission Act of 2011. We can get a copy from the parliamentary Library for your perusal. It could be stated in that Act. As far as we are concerned, this has never been a practice in this House, but for us to clear every iota of doubt, let us reference the Parent Act.

THE SPEAKER: The Clerks-At-The-Table, please fetch a copy of the Parent Act for my attention. I am sure neither the Minister of Water Resources nor the Leader of Government Business is here to answer the question that I have just raised. This is a technical issue and it has to be resolved before we proceed with the Statutory Instruments. I am also in doubt, as to whether the person who authenticated the

Instruments is empowered to do so by law. If the document you have in front of you is the Parent Act, let me have it. It is the Act that will confer the power.

HON. HASSAN A. SESAY: Mr Speaker, I am **95%** sure that what we are looking for is not in the Parent Act.

THE SPEAKER: I will halt you right there. I prefer you to stand and be more assertive if your statement is evidence-based. I am getting worried whether going back several years this same mistake has not been made. It is not Chairmen of Boards that should authenticate regulations, orders or anything that falls within the definition of a Statutory Instrument. It is the Minister who is empowered to do so. However, if this practice has obtained in the past, then I am afraid this Parliament must now say that practice must discontinue.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, if you go to Section 11 of that Act, it gives power to the Commission to make regulations concerning water rates.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I now have a copy of the Parent Act and I hope my worst fears in terms of what has been obtaining in the past will not come to pass. I have the Sierra Leone Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission Act of 2011, passed by the previous Parliament. Section 66 states: **"The Commission may, by statutory instrument, make rules or regulations for carrying out the purpose of this Acts."** What this Acts does not tell us is whether the Chairman of the Commission is empowered to authenticate the Statutory Instrument that is now being purported to be laid before the House. The practice is that when the Commission makes Statutory Instrument, it must be referred to the relevant Minister who should then sign and bring same to Parliament and not to the Chairman of the Commission. This is because it all flows from the fundamental principle that the Executive is answerable or accountable to Parliament and to the people. That is the primary origin of the principle of accountability and responsibility. It is the Minister who should sign this document; and in that regard, I am sure you want to move a Motion.

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Honourable Lahai Marah was right when he said that the Chairman of Water Resources Committee should be informed before such important documents are brought to Parliament. This is not only about Honourable Lahai Marah, but for all Committee Chairmen of which I am a part. He was right because before such documents are brought here, the Chairman should be informed. Thus, I want to move that we defer this particular item on the Order Paper to the next adjourned date.

THE SPEAKER: I am sorry, but I will not accept that Motion. I would rather say in the light of the explanation offered, these Statutory Instruments are not properly laid before Parliament and that is the ruling of the Speaker.

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I do not need a seconder, but that is the ruling from the Speaker. I would like to remind all MDAs that if this has been the practice in the past, let them be informed now that that practice is irregular and that they should not come to Parliament with a Statutory Instrument authenticated by the Chairman of a Board; it should be authenticated by the relevant Minister of Government. I am sure that is the proper thing to do. These instruments on the Order Paper are not properly laid before Parliament and we are sending them back for the proper thing to be done by the relevant Ministry *[Applause.]*

Honourable Members, as you can see from today's Order Paper that the deferment of those instruments has brought the end of today's deliberations, but there is a new development, both nationally and internationally and that has made me to directly contact the relevant ministers concerned. This relates to the Coronavirus Disease that is now seen as a pandemic. I think we already have a Motion moved by the Acting Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ibrahim B. Kargbo. I believe he moved a Motion some time ago that we should invite the Minister of Health and Sanitation. If you look at the Votes and Proceedings we have just approved this morning, the matter was alluded to. The Honourable Dr Kande K. Yumkella also made reference to the Coronavirus. So, I have taken the opportunity because we do not want to be taken unaware. I have taken

the opportunity to speak to the two important Ministers concerned with the issue relating to the Coronavirus. This means that the Minister of Health and Sanitation is going to brief Parliament on the health aspect of this virus and the Minister of Internal Affairs is also going to brief this House with regard to measures that have been put in place to secure this country and its population from the ravages of the virus that we are witnessing in China and in other places. What measures have been put in place to protect the people of this country? I will therefore invite the Honourable Minister of Health and Sanitation, Professor Alpha T. Wurie to address us on this very scary development that is arresting the attention of the International Community at the present moment and after him I will invite the Minister of Internal Affairs to inform this House about the measures that his Ministry is putting in place to protect the citizens of this country as well. With your indulgence, Honourable Members, I now give the Floor to the Honourable Minister of Health and Sanitation.

PROF. ALPHA T. WURIE [*Minister of Health and Sanitation*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to express my sincere thanks to you as elected Members of Parliament. It is but fitting for a Member of the Executive to explain to you the details of what could be the major issue relating to coronavirus in Sierra Leone. If history could allow me, I signed the book of Parliament in 1996 and I spent a few weeks here as well. Therefore, I join you when the Speaker said the Executive has to be answerable to Parliament.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the 7th January, 2020 China made a public announcement that there is a form of virus call Coronavirus that is causing major health issues. I said 'a form of Coronavirus' because Coronavirus does exist with us in common cold is indeed a form of Coronavirus. They have called this the 'N-Type,' which is the new type because it is a mutant form of the virus that we know. However, there were more serious incidents of viruses that are forms of Corona; like the 'SARS' and the 'MARS' are both forms of Coronavirus. Our people have been exposed to Ebola and Ebola is not in the same league or the same sequence as Corona. I am sure one is a homorganic fever and the other is not. If we read about Marburg, the fertility rate is

80%. In other words, if hundred people are exposed to it, eighty will likely die. What we knew about is Ebola and the fertility rate of Ebola is **40%.** We should however be reasonable and comfortable with the fact that Coronavirus has a fertility rate of less than **5%,** but this is so in a country where the nutritional status is good. This is so in a country where the level of other ailments is low.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in Sierra Leone, we are exposed to HIV and Hepatitis B. I am sure our children could be stunted because of low nutritional status. What I am saying here is that, the fertility rate of that virus, if it gets to a country with low nutritional and high exposure to other ailments, could be higher than **5%.** Therefore, this country must take every step to work towards mitigating the appearance of the Virus in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone, after Coronavirus, will create a new Directorate for Health Security and Emergencies. The Directorate has activated what is called a level two intervention. The level two intervention is an inter-ministerial invention of which the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and other ministries have come together to revisit our work plan. This is an inter-ministerial intervention. It is clear that we must work with the Ministry of Agriculture because most of these ailments are zoonotic; i.e., transmitted from animals to human beings before they could be transmitted amongst human beings. So, I am sure issues relating to health also bother on the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Information and Communication. Under such critical conditions, we have met at the inter-ministerial level and certain decisions were taken which we must share with our elected Members of Parliament. These are:

1. We have come to the recognition and acceptance that the disease level and prevalence of other diseases in Sierra Leone is high and therefore we will find it extremely difficult to manage if we have the Coronavirus coming to our country. Thus, we have two options:

[i] We must improve sensitisation which we have done with all districts health management teams; and

[ii] We must improve availability of PPEs materials, which we have done and distributed to health facilities. We have improved and strengthened surveillance on the border crossing points. We have three international border crossing points, but there are well over 300 to 400 crossing points between Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, since the Coronavirus has not manifested itself in Liberia or Guinea, our main intervention for now should be the three international border crossing points. As at now, we have instituted new measures in Lungi, Gbalamuya and Gendema with regard to temperature testing. We embark on temperature screening because exposure to the Coronavirus, the individual internal system starts to generate itself to fight the virus and by so doing, the individual temperature would rise up.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, at the Lungi International Airport, we have two forms; i.e., inferred and thermal. The inferred is the one when placed on your forehead, it will show the level of temperature of that individual. The thermal screening is above **37.5%** and you will be held for further screening. At Lungi, makeshift tents have been erected for those who are to be further screened in the main hall, outside the main terminal. However, travellers from pandemic areas are quarantined for a period of fourteen days. The Inter-Ministerial Committee concluded that they should be quarantined. I am sure we have quarantined twenty-nine people from the 2nd February to date. As we speak, there are fifty-two being quarantined. We have about seventeen Sierra Leoneans from China. The quarantined period is going to last for fourteen days because it is now known that people can be asymptomatic and yet carrying the disease, but the symptom will manifest itself within that period.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the first batch has been in quarantined for a period of eleven days and they have three more days to go. I am happy to report here that none of them has manifested any of the CIVID 19 symptoms. There was commotion when one person's temperature rose to **37.5%**. The person was tested, but was not suffering from Corona. I want to state here that we have three testing facilities in the country; one at 34 Military Hospital along with the Chinese Agency, the other is our central public health laboratory Sierra Leone, and the third is at Jui, which is the P3

Lab. So, Sierra Leone can administer test and the result is expected within 24 hours. I am sure before this time, it has been a major problem and that has also been a problem during the Ebola outbreak. We have already put in place quarantined homes, although we have only used two as of now. I am sure we have one in Kambia and one in Pujehun, which has a border with Liberia. With regard the treatment centres we are yet to use, we have the 34 Military Hospital and the one in Kambia. Currently, we are working towards having one at Lungi and another at Jui Hospital. I am sure both facilities will be ready in the next forty eight hours.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Sierra Leone is doing as much as it could to put structures in place to fight this invisible enemy. The Deputy Minister II, Dr Amara Jambai will be leaving the shores of Sierra Leone this afternoon to attend the emergency meeting organised by the West African Health Organisation [WAHO] in Bamako, Mali. The purpose of this meeting is to stipulate the steps we have taken as Sierra Leoneans in mitigating the Coronavirus pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Deputy Minister I, Mr Augustine Sandy, was sent to Gendema border, not only to engage health personalities at the border, but to work with the security sectors in Sierra Leone and the Liberia. The people of Liberia said that this is the first time the Deputy Ministers from both countries work to ensure that we are safe. We have disseminated a public notice through the Mano River Union and through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Corporation to all our Embassies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am sure the essence of being here this morning is for you to feel confident that the onus is on you as elected Members of Parliament. The people of Sierra Leone must know that washing our hands is the best critical medical way. Our hands touch our faces, eyes, mouths and noses over a thousand times per day and that is the easiest way of transmitting the virus. When coughing, its goes within the droplets not necessarily by air. You can however use handkerchief or paper tissue to protect yourself when coughing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we want you to help us with something since our people usually travel to Lungi to visit their relatives who are in quarantined homes, even though the homes were not publicly made known. We have discovered that people take food and drinks to their relatives in the quarantined homes. The virus can survive for a couple of days on surfaces and the bowl of food could be a means of transmitting the virus from the quarantined homes to other places. The essence for today's briefing is for us to come together as one people in one country. All of us should take this fight as a united people and educate our people as much as possible. The Speaker of this House called me this morning to come and brief this House and I must say that he is indeed a father to this nation. He recognises the valuable role of Members of Parliament to the people of this country. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: On behalf of Parliament, I thank the Honourable Minister of Health and Sanitation for his reassuring statement to this House. Honourable Members, before I open this discussion, I would like to ask if the Minister could address one or two issues. I do not know whether we are following the international arrangements that are being put in place to find a cure for this virus. I understood from the news a few days ago that a meeting was being convened in Geneva by the World Health Organisation [WHO] to bring together eminent experts to explore the possibility of a cure for this virus.

The second point is the matter the Minister alluded to in his statement about relatives taking food and drinks to quarantined homes. Frankly, I think that is a little bit worrisome. I want to know if that is a practice we should encourage or you try to bring to a halt immediately. This is because we do not know while those people are in quarantined homes what will be the final outcome. So, if they are in isolation, I think they should be kept in isolation. We should find alternative ways to provide food for them, rather than through relatives who might also come into contact with them and who in turn will get in contact with other people outside the quarantined homes.

DR ALPHA T. WURIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. As we speak, we do not have any confirmed Coronavirus case in Sierra Leone as we speak. What we want to do is to get a vaccine that will prevent others. The meeting with WHO is to look for

possible options of other drugs that were manufactured for other ailment, but could have good effect in the treatment of those that are affected and fast-track the process of getting a vaccine.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the second issue has to do with food and drinks. I want to state here that quarantined homes are not prisons. To quarantine someone means you separate him/her from the others and the person in isolation has the right to television and food. Government is paying hotel bills and food. I am sure some people need special food the hotel could not provide, but we usually tell our people that they are not doing well for their people and communities by getting too close to those who are quarantined. I am sure taking food and drinks to them is very risky because the food containers will go back to them and that is a channel of transmitting the virus. God forbid, if any of those quarantined is carrying the virus, remember you can be asymptomatic for many days, but you can transmit the disease.

THE SPEAKER: Once again, on behalf of Parliament, I want to thank the Honourable Minister of Health. We can take the proceedings in a holistic way by inviting the Minister of Internal Affairs to come and brief this House. I want another chair to be provided for the Minister of Internal Affairs alongside the Minister of Health and Sanitation.

Honourable Members, an issue has been brought to my notice. I know the mandate of the Minister of Internal Affairs does not allow him to tell us about our nationals in China who belong to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but if you have any information about our nationals in China, we will be very grateful to hear about them from you.

MR EDWARD SULUKU [*Minister of Internal Affairs*]: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am here this morning to allay your fears with respect to security measures we have taken in respect of the Coronavirus. As the Minister of Health has just spoken, the Inter-Ministerial Committee met and we arrived at various decisions. We made some recommendations we are now implementing. I want to assure you that my Ministry covers specific areas of operation with respect to those who are coming into the country or going out of Sierra Leone. That is the work of the Immigration Department.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Coronavirus is a health issue, but it also have a security aspects which I believe, during our Inter-Ministerial Committee meeting, we arrived at a conclusive way of handling those who are coming from pandemic areas or that have just travelled from areas known to be carrying the Coronavirus. The Immigration Department profiles passengers who are coming into Sierra Leone. I am sure looking at the passports they carry, we will be able to know those from COVID 19 suspected countries and the Ministry of Health will conduct tests to ascertain those who should be quarantined and those who should not. However, the decision we arrived at that meeting was that whosoever comes from a COVID 19 pandemic area, whether you are a Chinese or Sierra Leonean or any other national, will be immediately quarantined without even going through the processes we are talking about.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we should also bear in mind that for someone to travel from China to Sierra Leone, that individual have to go through various airports and I am sure other airports have their own measures. In Sierra Leone, we concluded that as long as somebody is coming from Corona affected areas, that individual has to be quarantined for fourteen days. It is my responsibility as Minister of Internal Affairs to make sure that we provide the appropriate security for those who are to be quarantined and the areas being identified as quarantined areas. In Lungi, for instance, we have police officers who are providing security to quarantined homes; and in Freetown, the Armed Forces Medical Unit is in charge.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue of relatives taking food and drinks to those who are quarantined was brought to my attention, but I was told that even those who have access to go to those places, they have to be properly dressed and they are the only people who have access to those in quarantined places. Secondly, the food they carry for their relations is usually put in disposable containers. It is not in containers they will have to take back to their homes. So, I want to assure you that we know the implications and we are trying to survive. May God forbid if we have Corona in our midst, I am sure we will live to tell the story and we will not allow that to happen by the grace of God. As it has been explained by the Minister of Health, they are doing their

best to ensure that the necessary measures are put in place. I want to assure you that we have the necessary security to protect every Sierra Leonean.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I do not think I have much to say in that regard, but I want to continue to assure you that with your help, we will come out victorious. You can help us by providing the necessary information. In Sierra Leone, we have over eight hundred porous border crossing points between Sierra Leone and Liberia, and Sierra Leone and Guinea. All of us have relatives and any relative who comes to you means you have an idea of where he/she must have come from and you have a responsibility to make sure that the information reaches the appropriate authority for the necessary action. If you fail to do so, it means you are endangering your life and the lives of your family members and the people of the Republic of Sierra Leone. So, let us make sure we provide the necessary information to the appropriate authority for necessary action.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as the Minister of Health has said, let us go back to our hygiene practices and one of the hygiene practices is regular washing of our hands. This will help us not only preventing us from contacting COVID 19, but other viruses that affect our normal living as human beings. Mr Speaker, that is all I have to say with respect to the security measures being put in place to fight COVID 19. I thank you all.

THE SPEAKER: On behalf of this Honourable House, I would like to thank the Honourable Minister of Internal Affairs for his briefing. I will definitely pay heed to the advice given to us by the two Ministers. I think the hand washing facility has been placed in front of Parliament, so let us start by demonstrating leadership. Let me implore all Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff to make sure they use that facility before entering Parliament. The Floor is now open for questions and comments. I will start with the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on health.

HON. MOSES B. JORKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I also want to thank the two ministers for their presentations. I am sure during the Ebola outbreak in this country, many health workers lost their lives. I want to know how prepared is the Minister for our health workers if there is an outbreak. I also want to know how you have prepared for those who will be taking care of COVID 19 patients in quarantined

homes, especially the cleaners. Have you prepared them, so that in the event there is an outbreak, they will know how to take care of COVID 19 patients? As you mentioned in your presentation, we have several border crossing points in this country. You mentioned three border crossing points, but I want to know the measures you have put in place for the other crossing points. I am sure people are coming in and going out of the country, and if they realise that there are borders where they quarantine people, they may try to use other crossing points. How prepared are you in the event there is an outbreak? Please tell this House. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I will give the Floor to the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Internal Affairs.

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to thank both ministers for their presentations. Mr Speaker, the Coronavirus has brought a lot of attention everywhere in the world and there are certain concerns that I have for the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Minister of Health and Sanitation. In my Constituency, for instance, Nomo and Faama Tunkia share border with Liberia and there is a place called Tolo, which is a forested crossing border point between Sierra Leone and Liberia. The Liberians in those communities eat all sorts of animals. Well, I am not sure, but may have lured Sierra Leoneans into eating all sorts of animals. The Minister of Internal Affairs did mention that we have more than 800 crossing border points in Sierra Leone. I am quite sure one of those areas I have mentioned is part of those 800 crossing border points. I want the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Minister of Health to tell this House the measures being put in place to prevent people from entering the country without proper testing for COVID 19. Also, we have Sierra Leonean business people who usually go to China. I want to know if Sierra Leoneans are still issued with visas to go to China. If the answer yes, what measures are being put in place to ensure that COVID 19 is not imported into Sierra Leone? I thank you very much.

HON. SEGEPOH S. THOMAS: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I must state with all sincerity that I am extremely impressed by the presentations made by both ministers. It would seem from their presentations that they are on top of the situation. They have

done quite well in trying to put mechanisms in place to ensure that we are protected. My only worry is the nature of some Sierra Leoneans. Of course, you have held inter-ministerial meetings and you have put certain measures in place, but you have to do more. I want you to leave the comfort of your offices and visit these areas you have designed for that purpose. The Speaker mentioned something about relatives taking food and drinks to their love ones in the quarantined homes. To me, this is very scary.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to admonish the ministers to ensure that the mechanisms they have put in place are in the best of form. This is because you might have put in place all necessarily measures to protect our people, but at the end of the day some careless people out there contract the virus. Again, even those quarantined officers must be checked properly to ensure that they are doing the right thing. If you quarantine somebody, I am sure that is enough to tell you that the person might be a carrier and before you approach such person, you must ensure that you are properly protected. I am a Sierra Leonean and I know how Sierra Leoneans behave. They are careless to the fault. The slightest mistake one makes will cause a whole lot of disaster to this nation. So, I am urging you to do more by leaving the comfort of your offices and see things for yourselves. You have to visit those places unannounced to ensure that the proper things are being done; otherwise if we have many confirm cases, we are doomed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am sure it is not enough for you to just put measures on paper and to agree on certain procedures. Sometimes those who are charged with the responsibility of carrying out your orders might commit errors in the process and this is why I said earlier that you have to do more. Thank you very much.

Suspension of S.O [5] being 12:00 noon]

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Minister of Health and Sanitation, and the Minister of Internal Affairs for explaining to us their preparedness to fight this evil virus called Corona. I am worried, as the Deputy Speaker said earlier because we have learnt many lessons during the Ebola outbreak. The Minister of Health at that time came to this House and explained to us her

preparedness. I am sure we witnessed the impact of the Ebola and it was very devastating on our health and the Economy. Mr Speaker, considering the role China is playing at the moment not only in Sierra Leone, but Africa as a whole, they are helping to boost our Economy. The Minister of Health, in his presentation, did not mention to us clearly how many Sierra Leoneans are still applying for Chinese visa. As mentioned by the Chairman, we want to know how many Sierra Leoneans are travelling to China presently. I am certain that majority of Sierra Leoneans are getting their livelihood by buying goods from China to be sold in Sierra Leone. If those traders are stopped from going to China, I am certain that they will run at a loss. This is because our exchange rate is almost the same as Guinea and that is why our local traders are no longer going to Guinea to buy goods. If they continue to go to Guinea, they will not be able to make profit.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want the two ministers to tell us the state of our preparedness to fight this virus. We have to look at our preparedness in both economic and the porous borders. My constituency also shares boundary with Guinea and there are porous crossing points in that part of the country. If I shout somebody's name from my constituency, some in Guinea will answer. In fact, in certain areas within my constituency, they do not use the Leones currency, but the Franc Guinean currency.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister highlighted three border crossing points and those are international gateways. I am sure his explanation was not enough, because we need to consider the porous crossing points. Another point the Minister briefly mentioned and which is very key is sensitisation. I could remember when Ebola broke out in this country, Members of Parliament were fully involved and we went to our various constituencies to sensitise the people. In fact, we were competing amongst ourselves because every Member of Parliament wanted to see his/her constituency Ebola free. We asked ourselves what was happening in other constituencies and that was how I was able to ensure that Koinadugu District never recorded any Ebola case. There was no single case of Ebola recorded in all Chiefdoms my constituency covered because of the proactive measures we employed at that time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister has made his point, but you did not mention anything about the Committee on Health to indicate that you have met with the Committee on Health and Sanitation. How are you going to involve Members of Parliament in making sure that we take part in sensitising our constituents? We have the ability to talk to our constituents because we are their elected representatives and I am sure they will listen to us. It is very important, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about the issue of quarantined homes. The Honourable Minister tried to allay our fears about the internal security of this country. You cannot say that to us because we know the role the police officers are playing. Mr Speaker, the police are unable to put a stop to the rate of violence in this country. The police cannot also prevent other crimes like thefts. So, the Minister cannot allay our fears at all. We are worried about the security of this country. I am sure this was why the Honourable Deputy Speaker said that the police officers should be thoroughly checked, especially those who are manning the quarantined homes. He was correct when he said they needed to be thoroughly checked. I think we should also involve the Office of National Security to conduct surveillance, which is very important.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to remind the Honourable Minister of Health about the importation of animals. I am certain that some of the diseases are contracted from animals. For instance, Ebola was contracted from animals to human beings and I am sure Corona is not an exception. We saw on social media how pigs were set on fire. Well, I do not know how true that is, but what security measures you have put in place regarding the importation of chickens. I am sure it is another way of transmitting diseases to human beings. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity.

HON. FODAY M. KAMARA: I would like to express my sincere gratitude to both ministers. Personally, I want to say I am fully satisfied with what they have told us. My worry in circumstances of this nature is high handedness in treating certain matters. For instance, when Ebola broke out, the way Sierra Leoneans handled Ebola was quite different from the way Guinea or Liberia handled it. What we saw in Sierra Leone at

that particular time is what we call in French, S.O [2] 'Reglema De'cont,' which means paying people back on certain issues. I want to advise we improve the testing methods and how we can join other countries to find a cure.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am sure we have to look at those leaving Sierra Leone to China. We should know if those people are going on a mission or going on private business. I want us to discourage this for now. In Ghana, for instance, the Minister of Health discouraged the idea of going to China because the Chinese have isolated themselves. The boutiques and some offices in Ghana are not functioning now and we have millions of Chinese on quarantine. China is the second largest Economy in the world, but if they cannot contain this virus, what do you think will happen? Of course, people are expressing doubts about the porous nature of our borders. I am not worried about that for now because we have not heard an outbreak in Guinea or Liberia. The question is, why preventing the people from continuing their daily activities. We are worried because some time ago, a Corona virus case was detected in Guinea from somebody who came from Asia. He was taken to the quarantined home immediately, but the people thought the virus had entered in Guinea. That was not true at all. I am sure some people wanted to blow things out of proportion. It is common for people to say things that are not true. They say things in order to frighten other people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I believe the presentations of minsters are quite satisfactory. This is not the time to be inconsiderate or create mountains out of molehills. We have to wait till a case is reported in Guinea before we begin to monitor our borders. As we speak, there is no COVID 19 case in Guinea and Liberia. Thus, let us continue our daily activities. In fact, before we invited the ministers, they have already started doing something and this tells you that they care about us. They are aware that we are all Sierra Leoneans and we are equally concerned. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

HON. PC BINTU M. K. MEAMA KAJUE IV: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I want to know if the Ministry of Local Government is among the ministries that are involved in the fight against COVID 19. I want to remind this House the role played by Honourable Paramount Chiefs Members of Parliament in this country during the Ebola scourge. So, I

do not want you to downplay the role of Paramount Chiefs at all. All what you are talking about is to be in constant touch with the people. The Chiefs have to be more involved in this fight. So, I do not want you to leave us behind at all. I want you to engage the Paramount Chiefs, so that we can play our parts in this fight. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Paramount Chief for reminding us about their existence and the role they could play in the fight against COVID 19.

HON. PETER Y. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, you are exonerated. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the two ministers for their presentations. The Ebola virus dealt with us decisively because of denial on the part of our people at some point. Again, the frontline workers also compromised the fight against the Ebola Virus. When I heard the ministers' report, I realised that they paid more attention on air travel. I know they never meant to forget that there are lots of people who come to Sierra Leone by sea. So, I have some questions I want them to answer. I want to know the assurances they will give us in terms of ensuring that those who will be charged with the responsibility to provide security will not compromise our security. Also, I want the Minister of Health to assure this House that the health workers will not corrupt themselves. During the Ebola outbreak, for example, nurses became susceptible to bribes and thereby allowing the people to get out of quarantined homes. The security officers are also part of this syndicate. The Minister said relatives take food and drinks to their people in quarantined homes, but I want to know the measures you have put in place to ensure that security officers are not corrupted. I thank you very much.

HON. JAMES O. THOLLEY: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think this is an opportunity for us to reflect when we had Ebola in this country. There is a proverb which says, 'one who stops or prevents a fight has won it.' Some of my colleagues said that the virus is yet to enter our neighboring countries. I want to know if we should wait until Guinea and Liberia are affected. I am sure when the Ebola broke out in this country, our people suffered and the Paramount Chiefs were worried. They spent huge sums of their financial and human resources within their jurisdictions to fight alongside

Government. Many lives were lost and many families disappeared. If China, which is a very powerful nation in the world [with all their powers, technology and medical advancement], are worried because the Coronavirus is killing them, it will be a very big calamity for Sierra Leone. Therefore, I want to remind the ministers that this is the best time to fight. I think this is the time for us to assemble all necessary resources to fight this invisible enemy. Any measure that is important to fight against Coronavirus must be accessed as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am sure it is not advisable for us to wait till Guinea and Liberia are affected. I am saying this because Guinea may not be affected, but somebody with COVID 19 could come from any part of the World without going through Guinea and enter into Sierra Leone. So, the idea of waiting for our neighboring countries to record their first cases before Sierra Leone put measures in place is unfortunate. I want to admonish the Minister of Health to empower the Paramount Chiefs, especially those along the porous border crossing points. We start with the Paramount Chiefs because they are permanently staying with their people in their localities. My colleague Honourable Member has moved a Motion for Members of Parliament to be capacitated, so that we can engage our people. This is because they listen to us and they trust us as their representatives.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when I was coming to Parliament, I came across the Chairman of the Committee on Health and I asked him what he had done to engage the Ministry of Health on this issue. Coincidentally, when we entered the Well of Parliament, the Speaker had the same vision and he invited him. So, I think we should work collectively with the Government to win this fight. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Again, I want us to regulate ourselves. I will be giving two minutes to every speaker.

HON. EMMANUEL S. CONTEH: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: There are many of you wanting to catch my eyes. I will now limit you to two minutes.

HON. EMMANUEL S. CONTEH: I want to ask a question.

THE SPEAKER: Hold on, Honourable Member. Do not pose a question on a matter that the Ministers have already covered.

HON. EMMANUEL S. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, this is different Sir.

THE SPEAKER: You can go ahead, Honourable Member.

HON. EMMANUEL S. CONTEH: I want to ask both ministers. I want to know their state of readiness on the aspect of sensitisation. How are you going to take the message to the four corners of this country? I am sure public awareness is one of the most important aspects in the fight against the virus. I also want to know how the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the ONS and other MDAs can work together in this fight. We can go back to the days of washing our hands with soap and water in various schools, hospitals, local markets and other public places.

HON. HASSAN SANKOH: I thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to talk about the Coronavirus. Today is a very good day for some of us and some of us are very happy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to take this opportunity to talk to the Minister of Health and Sanitation, not specifically on the Coronavirus, but the issue relating to sanitation. I listened to the national radio discussion programme on sanitation. The discussions painted a horrific picture about the sanitary aspect at low-cost housing community. I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Sanitation what is happening at the low-cost housing community because as far as I am concerned, sanitation is directly related to pathogens. The Minister spoke about the Coronavirus in China and I am sure there is another virus in Sierra Leone. So, I think there is a tendency for us to generate another virus and that is why we should not only focus on the Coronavirus that is still in China. We also have other viruses in this country and sanitation is one of the issues we should improve. Therefore, I would like the Minister to explain the measures being taken to look at the situation at low-cost housing.

THE SPEAKER: I thank all Honourable Members who have spoken to this debate. I think it is a convenient point for us to pause here and give the two ministers the opportunity to respond to the various comments and observations made by Members of Parliament. I will take the other set of speakers after the ministers would have responded. It is quite possible that from the responses that we will get from the ministers, some Honourable Members may not consider it necessary to take the Floor again. I start with the Minister of Health and Sanitation, followed by the Minister of Internal Affairs.

DR ALPHA T. WURIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me express my sincere thanks for the contributions and education I have received this afternoon in this Well. Generally speaking, we live with animals and diseases in our various communities. There are diseases with animals we either domesticate or come across. The means of food preparation has a mode of deterring the possibility of transmitting diseases. Therefore, the inter-ministerial meeting we held with the Minister of Agriculture, for example, was to discuss the zoonotic diseases that is transmitted from animals to humans.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the public notice that has been released mentioned those who are coming into the country. We have Sierra Leoneans and foreigners who are either entering Sierra Leone or leaving the country to go to China. The public notice clearly talked about what we are discussing now. As we speak, we have not imposed any travel ban. However, people are not encouraged to travel to China; and the Chinese Ambassador is not encouraging people to travel as was highlighted by a Member of Parliament 'that shops are not open in China and public transportation is not fully functional. In fact, the chances are limited for someone to get a flight from Europe to China at this time. Therefore, there is consonance between the inter-ministerial team and the Chinese Embassy to discourage people from travelling to China, even though there is no official travel ban as we speak. As was expressed by Honourable Segepoh S. Thomas that 'this time we do not have to stay in our comfort offices, but rather to go out and find out what is happening.' I mentioned earlier that the Deputy Minister 1 was

at Gendema Post and had interacted with the authorities in Sierra Leone and Liberia. I failed to mention that the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and the Acting Chief Medical Officer was at the Gbalamuya Checkpoint to supervise setting up of quarantined center in Kambia.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the main difference this time in relation to the Ebola is that during the Ebola outbreak, we refused to accept that Ebola was real and was with us. This time every single Sierra Leonean is concerned; but whiles we are showing concern, we are still not doing the right thing and that that has been a problem. I am certain that the easiest entering point of the virus is through your eyes, your nose and mouth. People touch their faces with their hands one thousand times a day and the virus can also survive on surfaces. If, for instance, I sneeze here and I leave here for a day or two, the virus will still be on any surface within this Well. This is why regular cleaning of your environment is recommended. We should wash our hands regularly and avoid touching our faces.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to state here that Sierra Leone has the capability to conduct tests that have to do with the Coronavirus for the first time in the history of this country. The second country is South Africa. Our science based has improved, but not the best. Somebody talked about Marburg Virus we are aware of the Marburg Virus. Remember that there are two institutions; one at Njala and the other at Makeni. We have discovered Marburg in fruits eating birds in the caves in Moyamba and Bombali. I have also indicated that Marburg fatality rate is **80%** transmission from animals to humans. It is for us not to disturb the ecosystem of certain animals and we have been living with them for many years. You will agree with me that majority of us do not know that these fruits eating birds has been carrying a virus similar to Ebola and the one that is called the Bombali virus. It is an Ebola type of virus which we have discovered in Sierra Leone. We have also discovered Marburg, but there is no history of transmission from birds to humans.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we recognise that if we do not involve Members of Parliament or the Paramount Chiefs, we will be failing the sensitisation team at the

inter-ministerial level. The Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Health was at the meeting and the Ministry of Information and Communication was also represented. There is a strategic committee which we hope will help us, together with our health education to disseminate the information to all corners of the country. There is no way we can talk to Paramount Chiefs without working with the Ministry of Local Government, which is part of the Inter-Ministerial Committee. There are lots to tell this House, but we should not raise the alarm before there is an alarm. We should be doing the right thing. I want to state here that while Marburg fertility is **80%**, Coronavirus is less than **5%**. The major issue about the health status of Sierra Leoneans is that we are exposed to HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis is on the increase. In fact, our nutritional status is weak; and therefore, our internal immunity to fight against diseases is very low and the vigilance of all of us is paramount.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as I conclude my submission before the Minister of Internal Affairs responds to certain comments being raised by Members of Parliament about security, I want to state here that this fight is not a fight for one ministry, but include the three Arms of Government. I thank you very much.

MR EDWARD SULUKU: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I am sure out of the numerous concerns raised by various Members of Parliament with respect to our presentations, the most interesting concern is the concern raised by Honourable Lahai Marah. As a country, we have to be honest, sincere and God fearing. The Honourable Member said he was worried and lacked confidence and trust in the police. Well, I want you to know that out of a population of over seven million people, God directed His Excellency the President to nominate me as Minister of Internal Affairs and this Honourable House approved my nomination. I am certain that since I became Minister of Internal Affairs from 2018 to date, I believe I have done what is humanly possible with the fairness of God to handle that particular Ministry to the best of my ability.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to inform this House that all the security architecture we met when we took over power are still maintained and we are working with them. I want you to be rest assured that as a Government, we cannot sit by and

allow things to happen the way they are not supposed to happen. I want to remind all and sundry that politics is over and it is time to govern this country. Mr Speaker, for security and peace to exist, we have to be our brothers' keepers. We have bad elements amongst us and those are people we neither trust nor believe. They are neither from the sky nor from the underground, but they live with us. Therefore, it is our responsibility to ensure that the bad people are taken to the appropriate authority for necessary action, so that we can live in peace. I am here to assure you that we have put in place robust security measures as far as the fight against the Virus is concerned. We are here to allay your fears and to trust the police. You will agree with me that the Sierra Leone police, the Republic of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces, Office of National Security and all security sectors are working towards ensuring that we have a secured environment for those in quarantined homes.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to remind this House that the security of the state is in the hands of all of us because the police are just few people who have been employed to serve as police officers. You will agree with me that the security of this country is in the hands of the people of Sierra Leone. You have to help the police officers to dispense their duties and I am there to oversee Government's interest in their operation. I want to emphasise that the police will only succeed if all of us put hands on deck and work towards the betterment of Sierra Leone. We have to put politics aside and focus on the development of this country. I can authoritatively tell Honourable Members that most of the problems I am experiencing in that Ministry are mostly political problems. We have to stop this and wait till it is time for politics. This is my appeal to all of us, Honourable Members. We have to do our work without fear or favour and let us allow Government infrastructure to operate without obstruction.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to talk about the porous borders. I would like to state here that it is impossible to provide security measures for over eight hundred porous border crossing points in this country. Therefore, my continuous appeal is information and communication by all of us. I am sure none of your relatives will come to Sierra Leone without knowing where he/she comes from. It is your place to report

that person, so that we can monitor him/her. This is why we are here to inform you what we have done at inter-ministerial level. What we are doing is to take on-board all measures being put in place.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to mention some of the conclusions we arrived at during the inter-ministerial meeting. We agreed that those coming from China within the last fourteen days, irrespective of one's nationality, must be quarantined for fourteen days, so as to ensure that they are safe to join us. We have people who are responsible to manage quarantined homes.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I stated earlier that the Joint Medical Unit in the Armed Forces are in charge of case management of those in quarantined homes in the Western Area and those in quarantined homes in Lungi are being managed by the Sierra Leone Police under the auspices of the Office of the National Security. The 2019 National Preparedness Plan has been activated and it is on the standby to test whatever sample we may want to verify. We also have holding centres established at Kambia, Gbalamuya and Gendema. We discussed about the categorisation of travellers as essential and non-essential travellers and this has to be communicated to the immigration authorities on the appropriate actions to be taken. This was agreed and the Chinese Embassy has been informed. Mr Speaker, considering what is happening in China, Sierra Leone Ambassador to China informed us about Sierra Leoneans in China, especially students in Wuhan Province. I am sure majority of them are taken care of by the Chinese Government. They are in quarantined homes and food is being provided. We were told that movement of Sierra Leone Embassy staff is restricted because public transport is difficult to get and most public places are being closed. So, why business person in Sierra Leone will want to go to China at this time? We are working on that and it is yielding dividend. Of course, most of the things we want to do need financial support. Therefore, the Ministry of Health is working closely with the Ministry of Finance, the National Procurement Authority and the Anti-Corruption Commission to ensure that the logistics they want to procure go through the right process.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have held high level stakeholders meeting at the Freetown International Airport and we came to the conclusion that sensitisation should include the chiefdoms. This is why a representative from the Ministry of Local Government was part of that meeting. We also concluded that the clinical management of potential cases is done at the point of entering the Airport. We agreed that health workers are trained on the treatment of airborne diseases and immediate training on risk assessment and management with oversight by the Office of National Security. The Sierra Leone police should be deployed for 24/7, so as to provide services at the point of entering and providing security support and other holding facilities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the SLP will lead in Freetown and SLAF is expected to occupy the terminal building and issue out Authorise Access Form to passengers. We also have to ensure clear and standardise information about Coronavirus and disseminate same to all communities across the country, in order to avoid misinformation that will lead to unnecessary panic. I would like to remind the Honourable Member who said that when Ebola struck Sierra Leone, there were denials and that led to lots of casualties. Well, we do not want that to happen in this case and that is why we have intensified the education and communication aspect of this virus.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, without much ado, I believe we are all Sierra Leoneans and this is not about politics; this is about the future of all of us and the betterment of this country. So, it is our responsibility to do whatever it takes to avert the emergence of Coronavirus in Sierra Leone. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I thank both ministers for their presentations. I now recognise the Honourable Hafiju Kanja, followed by Honourable Aaron A. Koroma, Honourable Abdul K. Kamara, Honourable Kandeh K. Yumkella and Honourable Paramount Chief Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III. I am giving every speaker two minutes. We all know that the ministers have their normal functions to perform what we are doing is rather impromptu. I had to get them to divert attention from their normal duties to come and attend to us. So, we cannot keep them for too long.

HON. HAFIJU M. KANJA: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I want to address the Minister of Health. We know that during the Ebola outbreak in 2014, there was no PCR template to prove the Ebola virus, but only the laser fever template was used by John Goba, a colleague who discovered the Ebola virus in Kenema at the Viral Haemorrhagic Fever Lab in Kenema. Today, we are talking about Coronavirus and I want to know if we have a template to conduct test. We have the Genomics Laboratory at Njala and UNIMAK and I am sure you mentioned about the discovery of Marburg and the Bombali Virus. They have the Ebola template they are using to detect those viruses, but Corona is completely a new virus. They have not got any test kits to prove this particular virus.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you spoke about vaccine and I know there is no cure for viral diseases. We know that vaccines are meant to prevent diseases and most of the vaccines are neither for Sierra Leone nor for Africa. The Ebola vaccine trial is in progress in Portloko and Kambia and it was tested on us, but it is not for us. For example, Hepatitis Vaccine is free in the western world, but if we want to use it, we have to buy it at a cost of **Le 450,000** for one viral. So, I think we need to pay attention to research for curative for all of us, rather than vaccine. I know vaccine will not just come over night. As the Ebola Virus is still killing people in African, the vaccine is still on trial. So, I want your Ministry to pay attention to what you did during the Ebola outbreak in 2014. We were trying different curative drugs and we are proud of the few Ebola survivors through the efforts of the medical practitioners during the Ebola scourge from 2014 to 2016. I want to however emphasise here that the vaccine will not come over night, but I wish to appeal to the Ministry to hearten your medical doctors and other health workers to use all the techniques used during the Ebola outbreak if there is an outbreak of Coronavirus in Sierra Leone. We want those who will contract the virus to survive. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: I call on Honourable Aaron A. Koroma to make his contribution.

HON. AARON A. KOROMA: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I will start my contribution with the adage, 'he who feels it, knows it,' and that is why two of my questions relate to the students who are presently in China. I am sure we have about

four hundred and fifty students presently studying in China; and out of this number, there about thirty six students who are in Wuhan province, which is the epicentre. There are about twenty-two students living in pandemic areas. We have about eight students who are in Nanchang, which is one of the pandemic centres of this virus. As Coronavirus confirmed cases keep increasing every day, the number of deaths keeps rising. We know that many countries have evacuated their students who are staying in China to go back to their respective countries, but we cannot ask Government to do same because of the economic challenges facing our country. However, I know Government should be able to put modalities in place to evacuate Sierra Leonean students from pandemic areas to safe areas within China. Therefore, I want to know the preparedness of Government to ensure that these students are safe.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the second issue I would like to talk about is the Sierra Leone Granting-Aid scholarship. Two weeks ago, you would recall that there was a circular from the Ministry of Finance, indicating that **\$259,000** has been remitted for students studying in China. As we speak, those funds are yet to reach the beneficiaries and it has taken over two weeks now. I am sure these students need money. The Embassy or whosoever is responsible has not made any payment to the students who are supposed to benefit from this scheme

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other issue I want to discuss is that we cannot go without considering the importance of China in the economic sphere of the world. I am sure every country will face the economic implication of this scourge and Sierra Leone is no exception. What I am saying is that we have to find time to summon the Minister of Finance to come and tell us Government's preparedness to take care of the economic shocks of this virus might have caused.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we know that Sierra Leone is a very poor country, but we give what we have. Therefore, considering the bilateral ties between China and Sierra Leone, and considering the fact that Sierra Leone has been on the receiving end, we have to think of ways of appreciating China. I am sure we have benefitted a lot from China. For instance, when the Ebola Virus broke out in 2014, China was the first

country to come to our aid. As we speak, we do not have medical supplies to give to China as a country; we do not have money to give to China as a country, but I think we have something that is more than money to give to them and that is the unique experience or expertise we have in handling viral diseases. Mr Speaker, during the Ebola outbreak in this country, many of our medical practitioners were trained on how to handle viral diseases and I am sure China could not have such personnel. We have to put modalities in place by engaging the Chinese Embassy in Sierra Leone to see how our trained and specialised personnel can go to China and help them in this situation.

On this note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am sure the relationship between China and Sierra Leone has been beneficial to us and it is time to reciprocate. We should not always be on the receiving end. We should also learn to give whatever little we have, financially, materially or human resources. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my contribution is just a clarification of what the ministers do. The Minister of Health said that people usually take food to their relatives in quarantined homes. He added that after eating the food, they take back the dishes home. However, when the Minister of Internal Affairs was making his statement, he mentioned disposable dishes. At a time like this, the ministers are expected to speak from the same page, especially after their inter-ministerial meetings, but their presentations in this particular issue do not seem to align with each other and that sends waves of worries to people who are concerned. Mr Speaker, the fact that those in quarantined homes are protected by the Sierra Leone Police makes it worrisome. However, I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Minister of Health. Members of Parliament have been calling your good office to ensure that the Minister of Finance appears before this House. We read on social media how certain people and institutions were debunking information that they have received salaries when in actual fact they have not received salaries as we speak.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to use your office again to call on the Minister of Finance to this Parliament to tell us the issues concerning the bread and

butter. For me that is also dangerous and it is a concern we must discuss. If people have not received their salaries for the month of January, it is worrisome. The Minister of Finance issued out a Press Release, claiming that Government workers have been paid their salaries, but people are saying they have not received salaries yet. Let the Minister of Finance come to this House and tell us what is happening with workers' salaries. Our people are without salaries and this is worrisome, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I am fully aware of the extant Motion before the House to bring both the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Central Bank. Hopefully, I will see how best this can be achieved by next week. I am fully aware of your concern and I want to thank you for reminding us.

HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I want to thank the ministers for honouring our invitation. We have learnt a lot and I leave here with real confident that our people are protected.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to know if there are attempt to discuss with Guinea and Liberia the measures we are taking, so that we can have a harmonise approach. I asked because the three countries suffered during the Ebola outbreak. The three countries may decide to close all borders for a while. This will seem like a unified Manor River Union approach. We are more vulnerable than others and that is why we should meet and discuss the closure of our borders and share information.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the second issue is for the Honourable Minister of Health. During the Ebola outbreak, the Government of Sierra Leone and donor partners constructed a holding centre outside Freetown, at Kerry Town to be specific. I am sure that should be our first defence if there is another Ebola or similar outbreak. If that facility is still in existence, we should make use of it. They keep bringing people to 34 Military Hospital and Kenema. The Holding Centre at Kerry Town was constructed for a disease of this nature and it was well equipped. So, I am just curious if that is functional, but if it is not, what do we do to revive it? Two days ago I was with Professor A. Kpakima and he is our lead epidemiologist in this country, and probably West Africa. I was asking him about Kerry Town but he could not answer the question.

Mr Minister, how can Parliament help to ensure that the Holding Centre at Kerry Town functions? If it is no longer in existence, what do we do?

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. The last speaker on my list is the Honourable Paramount Chief.

HON. PC BAI KURR KANAGBARO SANKA III: Thank you, Mr Speaker. We have to congratulate you because this particular Motion was not on the Order Paper, but because of your concern for this nation and for the welfare of the people of Sierra Leone, you brought the two gentlemen to update this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as we are debating this disaster, I am already a victim; a victim in the sense that my heart is beating and I am worried. The Minister of Health could attest to the fact that I am constantly sending messages to him and I am in touch with the Sierra Leone Ambassador to China. It is a pity for some of us because my two daughters are in China. My elder daughter is in Wuhan Province. I call them more than five times a day. In fact, they have started laughing at me because they are of the opinion that I am worried more than them. As a father, however, I should be very worried. The younger one is eighteen years old. This is something that bothers me constantly. So, I want to thank you and thank the Government and the Embassy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, few days ago, the Deputy Ambassador called my daughter because she is in the University of Shanghai. She is lonely in her room and she has nobody to talk to because they have quarantined them. She only goes out in the morning to take her temperature and go back to her place. I am sure there are other Sierra Leoneans in China who are suffering or going through the same psychological trauma.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I had sleepless night reading the update my younger daughter from Shanghai sent to me. The Chinese Government provides daily update on the pandemic situation in China. The last update I received from my daughter was on the 12th February, 2020 and it reads: **"The death toll in China is 1,368; recovery is 5,928; confirmed cases are 52,587; accumulated cases are 59,983; and new**

suspected cases are 1647.” So, you can see why I am trembling. When my younger daughter was promoted to SSS3, the principal of Annie Walsh Memorial Secondary School advised me to allow her take the private exams. So, I paid for both of them and they passed with flying colours. The Chinese Embassy provided scholarship for both of them. The younger one is my mother because she carries my mother’s name, which is Haja Gbama Conteh. I am however worried about them. She always laughs at me any time I call her. Well, she has been telling me that Shanghai has not been devastated like Wuhan Province. She said by the time she would have completed her studies, she would learnt how to speak the Chinese language.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to once again thank the Government and the Embassy because I am constantly in touch with them. I do not want to read out the messages I have been communicating with the Ambassador and his Deputy, but they are doing a very good job. We communicate three times a day and they respond to my calls. The Honourable Aaron A. Koroma spoke about the money, but the Embassy already informed the students that the money has arrived. The banks were not functioning and that is why they have not received the money.

THE SPEAKER: It is important for him to get that vital information.

HON.P.C. BAI KURR S. KANAGBARO III: The Ambassador had done it about two weeks ago. The Deputy Ambassador called them in Wuhan and told them that the money is available. Government has sent the money, but because banks are still closed, they could not send money out. I thank the Minister for reading the messages I have being sending to him. I am just a concern Sierra Leonean and a concern parent. As a concern father, I am worried about my children. They are brilliant students.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I was listening attentively and learnt a lot from Members of Parliament. What should we do to sensitise the people? I think we should have programmes, especially for the schools. When we were going to school, we used to open our mouths during morning devotions, so that our teachers would look at our teeth to see if we brushed them before going to school. We used ashes to brush our teeth and sometimes we go to the bush to get chew sticks to brush our teeth. They had

sticks that were very sweet and at the same time they brighten our teeth. It was a routine exercise to check our teeth.

The teachers on duty will go from one student to the other to point out their fingers and open their mouths, the teachers will look at their hair cut and pass through, again if their teeth are dirty they will beat you up. Sierra Leone is an interesting society where good things are abandoned and bad things are promoted. The good things we had before, when we had what we called health inspectors. The health inspectors of course, will go from house to house to look and see that nobody comes out at night to urinate without going to the toilet.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to remind the Minister of Health that people use plastic bags to defecate and later throw them away. If you go around Freetown, especially crowded places, you will understand what I am saying. Do we have inspectors of the environment in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Masingbi, Makali, Matotoka and other places? Mr Minister, health and sanitation, goes with the adage, 'prevention is better than cure.' I am happy because the Minister of Internal Affairs gave a very good sound statement in this Parliament and we are looking up to you to maintain the balance of being a neutral person in terms of ensuring law and order in our society.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank the Speaker for inviting the two ministers to come and update this House *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Paramount Chief. I think I will now call on the two ministers to give us the parting messages before they take leave of us. Thank you.

HON. NENEH LEBBIE: Mr Speaker. You are saying they will depart immediately after they would have responded. I would want to use this opportunity perhaps to bring to the attention of the Minister of Internal Affairs some issues.

THE SPEAKER: The issues are outside what we are discussing?

HON. NENEH LEBBIE: They are outside the Coronavirus we are discussing sir.

THE SPEAKER: No, let us deal with the Coronavirus first.

HON. NENEH LEBBIE: Okay Sir.

PROF. ALPHA .T. WURIE: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me first of all use this opportunity to pacify the parent, the father and Paramount Chief that indeed our Ambassador in China, Ndomahina Rogers has been valuable to the Sierra Leonean community in China. They keep in touch with most of the students, if not all. You have confirmed that the COVID 19 is not as acute as Ebola. If there are 52,587 confirmed cases with only 1,306 deaths, then we are talking about less than **5%** fatality. Comparatively, the fatality rate of the Ebola virus we were exposed to was approximately **45%**. I would like to state here that China has done a marvellous job in trying to quarantine Wuhan and Shanghai. China is also doing self-quarantine for most people, hence the incident rate is not as rapid as it could have been.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to assure the Honourable Paramount Chief that the Ministry is working to help schools and by September, 2020, we will start with the boarding schools with personal hygiene and family planning. The fact of the matter is the number of young girls who get pregnant is increasing every day. As we speak, we do not have health inspectors. Njala University is offering first degree in public health and we will engage public health graduates in each of the chiefdom and health inspection will be one of their roles.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am happy because the Honourable Dr Kandeh K. Yumkella mentioned what could have happened to Kerry Town. Kerry Town is about 380 acres and the Military has already been contracted to fence that piece of land at an estimated cost of **Le7bln**. We will protect that place as a health village, not only as the emergency operation centre, but for Oncology Centre for cancer. We could build Oxygen Factory and a Blood Banking Unit. We are also going construct 150 beds referral hospital.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to inform this House that the perimeter fence will start before the rainy season. If you go to Kerry Town now, the ground has already been prepared for the construction of 7000 meter stores for medical supplies. As we speak, we rent rice stores to put medicines and that has to stop. We hope that

Kerry Town will be an all-encompassing health village. We have the Emergency Operation Centre at Wilkinson Road, very close to 34 Military Hospital and that is what we use as the hub to disseminate what we do with regards to health emergencies. I want to assure you that we will ask the heads of all political parties to join us when we turn the sod for the construction of the perimeter fence of 380 acres at Kerry Town and that will mark the beginning of the health village in Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the experience we have had in handling Ebola is impacting on how we handle the Coronavirus. We have put in place the surveillance teams and the lab technicians are ready to give treatment to people. A Member of Parliament spoke about the grand norm that happened at Njala University as well as UNIMAK for which we have worked on Marburg and Ebola. We do not have PCR mechanism for Ebola, but be rest assured that we have the kits and these kits are on PCR for Coronavirus and that can be done in Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the question concerning allowances of Sierra Leoneans studying in China has been answered because approximately three hundred thousand dollars has been sent to support our students in China. Most of the institutions in China are not actively functioning and that is why it takes some time for bank transactions to take place. I am sure **\$ 259,000** has been sent to support the four hundred students studying in China.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I will like to end again by saying we are pleased to have come this afternoon and we feel that we are in this as a family. We also believe that sensitisation is key and we shall get back to you when we would have put resources together. I want to assure the Honourable Paramount Chief that we will put structures in place for self-hygiene in order to prevent not only the Coronavirus, but a host of other diseases. I thank you Sir.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Minister of Health. I call on the Minister of Internal Affairs.

MR EDWARD SULUKU: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to respond to the Honourable Dr Kandeh K. Yumkella from Kambia. He wanted to know whether we have made any attempt to discuss with our neighbouring countries. Well, I want you to be rest assured that the discussions are on-going and we preparing to hold a Mano River Union meeting from the 17th to 18th of February, 2020. We will explain to them what we have done and what we expect them to do because they are our neighbours and are our brothers and sisters. We have to keep each other's back. Again, the Chief Immigration Officer went to Gendema and Gbalamuya to discuss with his counterparts. I pray that the Coronavirus will not come to Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Ivory Coast. I want to emphasise again that this is the responsibility of all of us. Security is not just for the police, the military or the Office of National Security, but it is the responsibility of all Sierra Leoneans. If we want Sierra Leone to be safe and secured, we have to work together.

THE SPEAKER: On behalf of Parliament, I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Honourable ministers for their brilliant presentations. I want them to leave this Chamber fully assured that our common fight to prevent the Coronavirus from coming to our country is a national fight. It is in our national interest that we fight it together, we fight it as a multi-partisan enterprise and I am sure I speak on behalf of the entire membership of this House. When I say thank you and you can be rest assured that you have the fullest support of Parliament in our quest to forestall any possible danger that this virus might pose to our people and to our country as a whole. Thank you once again for coming and for your presentations to the House. Honourable Members, let us show our usual appreciation *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Mr Minister, just a minute please.

HON. NENEH LEBBIE: I am very sorry to take you back, but I would like to draw the attention of the Minister of Internal Affairs to some security issues in Bo and other parts of the country. I will start with the last statement made by the Minister of Internal Affairs. He said security issue should be everybody's concern that is correct, but we have the issue of 419 in this country. Mr Speaker, criminals are using names of people

in high authority in this country to extort money from people. This has happened with one of my daughters and it is happening everywhere. They took my daughter's phone and ran away. I reported the issue to the police station and the evidence is still on my phone. I went to the police with the evidence because my daughter bought the phone from one of the enterprises in Bo. As we speak, the police have not started investigating the issue and I am sure they have the capacity for cyber-crime investigation. They told us to pay some amount of money and we have paid, but nothing has been done. I am sure if you produce IP address of phone, they should be able to use it and search for the phone. It is an expensive phone, Mr Speaker. As we speak, the police have decided to extend the time to search for the phone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Bo Town used to be called 'sweet Bo,' because people used to enjoy themselves on weekends. People used to travel from Freetown to Bo in order to enjoy themselves. I do not know if you have got the correct report on the crime rate in Bo Town, but we have security issues in that part of the country. Mr Speaker, burglary is now a common phenomenon in Bo. In fact, thieves are now going to schools at night in search of whatever they could find. Interestingly, if they do not find anything, they set the school ablaze. This incident has happened in my Constituency and you might have heard the report because I reported to the police for investigation. I am sure the police should be giving you the correct report. I am not sure whether your men are reporting to you about what is happening. I am not also sure whether they have patrol teams at night. Some of us live in Bo, but we seldom see police patrol teams at night. We want you to respond on this issue. This concern has been brought to the stakeholders of the community. I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for her contribution. I do not know whether the Minister came prepared to take this particular question on board. If he wants, he may treat your question as notice and then come back to us in due course, but if he is well disposed to answer, he is at liberty to do so.

MR EDWARD SULUKU: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. For the 419 criminals the Honourable Member was talking about, we have Cyber Unit at the Criminal Investigations Department and if somebody's phone is missing, he/she should provide the IMEI number. If the IMEI number is provided, any individual who uses the missing phone will be traced, but if the phone is not in use, it will be difficult for them to trace it. Well, I will encourage you to give me the details of the phone to make follow-ups.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Member talked about thieves. I believe it is not only happening in Bo, but all over the country. We are however working very hard to ensure the safety of lives and property. The security of our locality is in the hands of all of us. Those who are causing mayhem in our localities are living with us, but we have to put hands on deck, so that we can identify and report them to the necessary authorities. If action is not taken, then we will know who should be held responsible. However, I will discuss this information you have just conveyed to me with those in charge. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I do not want to open a Pandora's Box, but let us agree that the 419 criminal activities are rampant and they are affecting every corner of this country, not just one particular area. As the Minister has said, let us give them the information when we are directly affected by it and give them the opportunity to do what they can to stamp it out. I am sure we have never been famous for 419 and we should never be famous for it. Thank you, Mr Minister for your contribution to our proceedings this morning. It has been very enlightening and you can be rest assured that you have the fullest support of Parliament in your new endeavours. Thank you. I know there is one or two S.O [23] waiting for us. I will start with the Honourable Emmanuel.

HON. SEGEPOH S. THOMAS: Mr Speaker, with your kind permission... - *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: Please Honourable Member, I did not see you.

HON. SEGEPOH S. THOMAS: Mr Speaker, you gave me a responsibility to lead a small team... - *[Interruption]*.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, maybe that is an appropriate subject for Committee Room 1.

HON. SEGEPOH S. THOMAS: I just wanted to give some information. I will not discuss the details of the report here.

THE SPEAKER: I was going to do that anyway.

HON. SEGEPOH S. THOMAS: Mr Speaker, we held the meeting and I would ask that you refer us to Committee Room 1 for proper reporting.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member.

HON. SAA E. LAMINA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to bring to the attention of this Honourable House that Kono has lost another illustrious son in the person of the late Honourable Sahr Randolph Fillie Faboi. Hitherto to his demise, Sahr Randolph Fillie Faboi, if I am not mistaking, was the oldest MP and died at the age of 96 years. Sahr Randolph Fillie Faboi served as Ambassador to Guinea and Liberia. He was also a onetime Resident Minister, East. He was a Member of Parliament for three terms. Honourable Members, the family is requesting that we join them in the laying out tomorrow in this Honourable House. So joining also the family as a native from Kono District where the late man hailed from. I want to implore you to be here tomorrow to give him an hour or two to his honour. He served this House diligently.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also realised that we are still battling with the procedures of this House. I want us to reflect on the Bo Declaration, where Leaders of this Parliament met six months ago regarding procedures. Today, the business of the House came to a standstill as a result of procedural conundrum. With your leave, Mr Speaker, I ask that we utilise S.Os. 70 [2a&b] and advise ourselves accordingly. We do not want a repetition of what happened this morning.

THE SPEAKER: You have raised two very salient points. The one I am constraint to draw the attention of the House, so that we would not be found wanting tomorrow, that indeed we received communication from the family of the late Honourable Member and diplomat about his death, but what was requested was the civic laying out and

Parliament does not do civic laying out. I am sure that is the remit of the Freetown City Council.

HON. SAA E. LAMINA: Mr Speaker, it must be a mistake from the writer.

THE SPEAKER: However, we would endeavour as best as we can to respond favourably to your request and I will want to ask all Honourable Members to please make their presence felt tomorrow to honour and respect the memory of one of our former Members. And with that, I will ask all of us to rise and observe a minute silence [A minute of silence was observed]. May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace. Thank you.

HON. JOSEPHINE MAKIEU: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have a complaint in my constituency. There is a gentle man called Lansana Juana. He was an NGC candidate and we contested during the 2018 elections. The defeated candidate has been intimidating me in that constituency. He has been asking me to give an account of the constituency's office fund to the tune of **Le18, 000,000** I am receiving as a facilitation fund. He has done it several times by attacking me, but I have not responded. I have not said anything on the Media. We have a forum known as 'Family Forum for Malegohun Chiefdom. He has molested me on that forum several times, Mr Speaker. He used some obscene words against me yesterday. He said that if I did not step off, I would be a disgrace to my womanhood. He said I am an arrogant and a barren woman. He said I have taken my subject to court and that I am a shameless woman. He has said a lot of things about me and I have audio recordings and written evidences with me. I was disturbed by those offensive statements against me. He is one of Honourable Dr Kandeh K. Yumkella's NGC candidates who contested against me, but I won the elections in that constituency.

THE SPEAKER: I think this is a matter that touches on privilege and I would encourage you to write to me officially for the attention of the Committee on Privileges.

HON. JOSEPHINE MAKIEU: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: We have a Committee on Privileges, but you have to write officially, so that we will take appropriate action.

HON. MAADA A. LEBBIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on the 9th February, 2020, a village in my constituency called Fwenda in the Baabe Chiefdom; Constituency 083 was engulfed by wildfire that left six houses entirely burnt down, two local rice stores and nineteen households entirely displaced. Again, in December, 2019 a truck going to Njala Komboya to collect Cocoa was involved in a fatal road accident, which was as a result of bad road network in my Constituency. My constituency is one of the challenged and deprived constituencies in Bo District. For the past thirteen years, I can tell this House with all seriousness that the main road leading to my constituency had not been rehabilitated. And that particular road has been abandoned because it is a mere death trap. A lot of appeals have been made and we have lobbied a lot for the rehabilitation of that road, but we are yet to realise anything.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, within the last two to three years, flooding took place on different occasions in three different chiefdoms and an assessment was made, but neither the Sierra Leone Red Cross nor any humanitarian organisation has come to the aid of the people. So, I am asking you to however use your good office to ask the SLRA to ensure that RMFA to look into the rehabilitation of our roads. Thank you very much.

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, thank you very much. After the Minister of Health and the Minister of Internal Affairs made their submissions, I had an accident. The seat is not good and I fell down.

THE SPEAKER: What happened to it?

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Mr Speaker, the seat is not good sir. I am experiencing a very serious pain on my back.

THE SPEAKER: Did it happen by accident?

HON. LAHAI MARAH: Yes, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Are you too heavy for the seat?

HON. LAHAI MARAH: I am not sure, Mr Speaker. I do not know what happened. The lower arm of the chair fell off. I am feeling a very serious pain. I am worried because I do not have medical allowance. Honourable Members, what I am reporting will happen to you one day. These are Chinese Chairs in this Chamber. I am asking for your immediate intervention because I am performing one of my functions when the accident took place. Our medical system is directly linked with the Presidency because it is only the President that will allow Honourable Lahai Marah to go for medical check-up in America. If the President says you will not go, you will not go. As we speak, His Excellency the President is the Leader for the SLPP and I am a member of the APC. I am feeling pain and where do you expect me to get the money for medical treatment?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, please pay attention because what I am saying is very serious. Sierra Leone is the only country where Members of Parliament are not being catered for medically. Our colleague over there did not have anything to be taken to other country for proper medication because we are the poorest Members of Parliament in the entire world. I am sure medical facility is our right as Members of Parliament. This pain is very serious and the accident happened in the course of performing my duty in this Well. I was not here when the Minister was addressing my question not because of negligence, but I was feeling severe pain. So what do you have to say to me before I die, Mr Speaker? I cannot even seat in this Chair anymore. I am sure after making my statement, I will move to my Deputy Chief Whip's Chair, so that I can listen to you.

THE SPEAKER: Do you need crutches as well? I do not know whether you need crutches. I take note of what the Honourable Member has said. You are not alone; the entire House is affected. I went for medical examination very recently at my own expense. There was no provision whatsoever for me to invoke the assistance of anybody, but I have noted what you said. I think is going to continue to form part of the general welfare issue that we have started addressing. I am sure we will be going

to Committee Room 1 immediately this sitting is adjourned and we will continue to address the welfare of Members of Parliament.

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: Mr Speaker, we have a very serious issue nationally and I am sure it will interest you and every Member of Parliament. You said we will be going to Committee Room 1. As a Sierra Leonean, I have been informed and as a Member of Parliament, the Deputy Speaker is aware that there is a serious problem at the Sierra Leone law School. I implore this House to intervene with all seriousness. Mr Speaker, 112 students were shortlisted; some are 2-1 degree holders, while others are 2-2, but the school can only admit 65 students. There were others who are qualified by the Act, but they were not even shortlisted. As we speak, classes have commenced.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we wrote a letter to summon the Registrar and he is here. However, due to the meeting in Committee Room 1, I am not sure whether Members of the Legislative Committee will be available. I want to inform this House that when I was in LLB 4, the rumour was that many people failed and I wanted to commit suicide at King Harman Road if I did not succeed to go to Law School. So, what is going on in the lives of these young students who want to read law? I am sure their parents paid their fees and they have graduated with 2-1 and 2-2 degrees. If you look at the Act, you will find out that they are qualified to enter the Law School. They were shortlisted, but only 65 students were admitted and classes have commenced. There are students with second class, first division and some are second class second division, but were not even shortlisted. This is a serious national issue.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am certain that for the past four years, Sierra Leone Law School has been one of the most sensitive issues in Sierra Leone and we have to nip it in the bud because if we continue to produce over fifty disgruntled young people from that institution, it will not augur well for this nation. It is very serious and we must do something.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member. We have the Legislative Committee.

HON. HINDOLO M. GEVAO: I am the Chairman of that Committee.

THE SPEAKER: Please look into this matter and recommend to this House.

HON. JOSEPH W. LAMIN: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, having listened carefully to my colleagues for what we have deliberated upon, I really want to move a Motion that electronic signing be suspended for further notice as a precautionary measure until COVID 19 is defeated. Again, we should stop sharing mobile mikes for now. I want to encourage the electricians who are responsible for these mikes to ensure that we continue to use individual mikes, instead of mobile mikes. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Well, I am a bit surprised because before we came to the Well, I enquired from IT personnel about the working condition of the mikes and I was assured that everything was working properly. I am surprised to hear that this is not the case. I would ask the Clerk to ensure that this issue is brought to the attention of ICT personnel.

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I just want to inform the public and Parliament that there are people who are using my name to extort money from different people. The Secretary to the President [SP] called me when I was in London, and the Deputy Director of NATCOM also called to ask my whereabouts. I said 'I am in London.' He said, 'somebody just called and told me that he needed the sum of **Le 2,000,000**. I am sure the 419ner told the man that the Honourable Member was very sick and was currently in the village and he needed help. The man told the 419ner that he did not know that young man to be a beggar and that he had never seen him begging. The Secretary to President also called me after few days and told me that somebody called and told him that I was in Tunkia, and I needed money. He also told the 419ner that Honourable Alusine Kanneh has never asked him for money. I was in the office of the Minister of Finance two days ago and he showed me messages of somebody trying to extort money from him in my name. Mr Speaker, I want to state here that even when I was in opposition, I never begged any Minister or Head of Agency. I have never done that even though they were very nice people. To me, this is something we have to discourage forthwith.

THE SPEAKER: Well, if you are complaining here and you are the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Internal Affairs, I mean what will the rest of us do?

HON. ALUSINE KANNEH: Mr Speaker, you also complained about this same issue and you mentioned that someone was using your name to extort money.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please get to work as Chairman of the Internal Affairs Committee. This problem falls within your mandate. Honourable Members, let me finally draw your attention to a matter that I should have done at the beginning of this sitting, but I reserved it to this point. Thanks to the Honourable Daniel B. Koroma when he first raised the matter. There has been some improvement in our punctuality, but unfortunately, we seem to be suffering from some lapses again. Just last week, I observed the great effort that was being made by Members of Parliament in undertaking the trip to Bo. I only wish the same measure of effort was put into making sure that they comply with Standing Orders that require their presence in this House before 10:00 a.m. There were only about three or four Members of Parliament seated when I entered this Chamber at 10:00 a.m. This is not good at all and I will again take this opportunity to implore all of us to try to be punctual. We owe it to this country; we owe it to our constituents; and we owe it to ourselves. After all, all of you asked to be elected and the election that brought you here was not foisted on you willy-nilly. You asked to be elected and you have to please measure up to the expectation of your constituents and the nation as a whole. A word for the wise is quite sufficient.

Honourable Members, we shall meet in Committee Room 1 at 3:00 p.m. on the matter of welfare we started talking about the last time. So, we will meet at 3:00 p.m. and we will give the opportunity to the Deputy Speaker to report to us on the mission we charged him to execute on our behalf.

ADJOURNMENT

The House rose at 2.10 p.m., and was adjourned to Tuesday, 18th February, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.