



*OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN*

# **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

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**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**THIRD SESSION –SECOND MEETING**

**TUESDAY, 9<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2021**

*SESSION – 2020/2021*



*OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN*

# **PARLIAMEN TARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

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**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**VOLUME: I**

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House  
Held Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2021.

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## **V. MOTION OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

PROPOSER: HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA

SECONDER: HON. HASSAN A. SESAY

BE IT RESOLVED :

THAT THE FIFTH REPORT OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE BE ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE AND THAT THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN BE APPROVED.

### **IV. BILL**

THE MEDICAL EXAMINERS ACT, 2020

SECOND READING, COMMITTEE STAGE AND THIRD READING

THE MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS



*THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE*

## **Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House**

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### **THIRD SESSION – SECOND MEETING OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

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**Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2021.**

#### **I. PRAYERS**

*[The Table, Mr Francis Ernest Farma, Read the Prayers]*

*[The House met at 10:30a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]*

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

The House was called to Order

*Suspension of S. O. 5[2]*

**II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON THURSDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2021**

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, we go through the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2021. As usual, we shall skip Page 1 through to Page 4. We start with Page 5. Page 5? Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? Page 9? If there are corrections or comments, can someone move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 as presented? Honourable Member, you have something to say?

**HON. DR. MARK MAHMOUD KALOKOH:** With your kind permission, Mr Speaker, I did mention S.Os. 47[2], but is not mentioned here.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I am sure you stood on S.Os. 5[2].

**HON. DR. MARK MAHMOUD KALOKOH:** No, Mr Speaker, I stood on S.Os. 47[2]. I am certain that after you had put the question to debate the Medical Examiners Act, I rose on S.Os. 47[2]. I want to know why that is not captured here.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, let me refer you to Page 7. I do recall you making reference to S.Os. 47[2], but you would also recall that we deferred the second reading of the Bill to a future date.

**HON. DR. MARK M. KALOKOH:** Mr Speaker, the observation I made should be inserted in the Votes and Proceedings for record sake.

**THE SPEAKER:** The clerks will take note of that. With that, can someone move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 as presented?

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

**THE SPEAKER:** Any seconder?

**HON. MOSES A. EDWIN:** I so second, Mr Speaker.

*[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]*

*[Record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting, held on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 has been adopted as amended]*

### **III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER**

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, the announcement I have to make relates to Page 8, Paragraph 5 of today's Votes and Proceedings. You would recall that this matter was raised by the Deputy Speaker in our last meeting concerning the appointment of the personnel of local courts including in particular, such as the Chairman and Vice Chairman of local courts. Following that meeting, I have been in consultation with the Minister of Local Government, and the Attorney General and Minister of Justice on this matter. The Minister of Local Government has sought the assistance of Parliament, which I have agreed to do by way of establishing a special Select Committee to assist his Ministry in the process of identifying eligible candidates for appointment as Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons of local courts. I will wish to draw very heavily on the experience of Honourable Members in matters relating to Local Government Administration and I think we do have a good number of our Members who fall into that category. So, a Select Committee would be constituted to assist the Ministry of Local Government in that process, in order to expedite the ultimate appointment of those important personnel by the Honourable Chief Justice. That is the announcement I have.

**HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH:** Mr Speaker, I rise on S.Os. 34, not to obstruct the sittings, but to remind you that we requested the presence of the Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources to come and talk to us about Kingho Mining Company. I patiently waited last Thursday, but the issue did not come up. Whilst exercising patience last Thursday, the Ministry, in a press conference, attempted to respond to questions they are supposed to be answering in this House.

What confused me most was the first paragraph which states: "Some people are confusing Advance Pricing Agreement with Mining Lease Agreement." This is not good and we cannot continue to confuse the public. I do not want to go into the details until he appears before this House. In that very statement, which I forwarded to you, the Clerk and the Leader of Government Business, it was confirmed that they also have a Lease Agreement or a Tenancy Agreement for the use of the Rail and Port separate from the Ore Agreement. I want to kindly plead with you [before we engage the public which we might be forced to do if it continues this way], to use your good office and get the Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources before this House in the next adjourned date. There are many questions he has to answer. I wish he had not done that piece at all Mr Speaker. You have to get him here, so that we lay this issue to rest. I am sure all of us know about Kingho and I do not need to go into the details. Kingho is not a new company in Sierra Leone and this is not their first license. So I do not want to go into the details because there are questions to be asked and the most competent person to answer those questions is the Minister himself. I thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition, but before I venture to respond to the matter he has raised, I do not know whether the Leader of Government Business would like to say a word or two.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the business of modern day democracy is not business as usual in the New Direction Government. We do not want to remember the past, which was a period wherein mining companies that came to this country would just disappear within a twinkle of an eye because of bad Agreements. I thank you very much for bringing us to speed. I was on the other side about seven to eight years ago when I raised the issue relating to the renewal of the London Mining Agreement. Mr Speaker, quite apart from me being the Leader of Government Business, I have what we call the leadership and parliamentary integrity to protect, and the right thing must be done. I have been in touch with the Minister, but the Chairman of the Committee on Mines and Mineral Resources went to my office and

told me that they want to first of all begin at Committee level before the Minister is brought to this Chamber for proper questioning.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister said he went to the press conference for Gold mining exploration and that issue came up and he decided to respond. However, the Leader of the Opposition raised the issue in the Chamber and I told him that if he wanted to engage him, I would ensure that they meet tomorrow and inquire from him before he appears in this Chamber. I am sure when the Minister comes and ask questions, he will explain. We only need the truth. If you have read the piece the Honourable Leader of the Opposition referred to, you would have realised that the Minister raised a lot of issues and those will enable the Committee on Mines to understand and ask relevant questions. I am not saying he will not come to the Chamber and nobody has said that. We want him to appear first to the Committee before he comes to the Chamber. He is going to be brought here, but let him be drilled first by the Committee. This is not business as usual and we will surely bring him here for questioning. I am sure that is the procedure. Let us allow the Committee to do its work first. I have told the Committee Chair to report by tomorrow. Mr Speaker, I want to assure the Leader of the Opposition that his concerns are still in place and I also hold his view. You have the right to critique, but we also have the right to do the right thing. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the next sitting we can agree when to handle the matter. I thank you.

**HON. SORIEBA A. TURAY:** Mr Speaker, I welcomed Kingho in this country in 2011. Mr Speaker, when the African Minerals Limited [AML] was operating in Tonkolili, Kingho was already in my constituency and I was the Operations Manager. I want them to consider me because I have been left out. I have no surface rent in my constituency and they do not want to know about me. I brought Kingho to this country. I was the Operations Manager of Kingho Mining Company. This is the only way I have to support my constituency.

**THE SPEAKER:** I have not given you the Floor, Honourable Member.



**HON. SORIEBA A. SESAY:** Mr Speaker, I brought Kingho just the way Moseray Fadika brought African Minerals to this country.

**HON. VERONICA K. SESAY:** Mr Speaker, the Honourable Member should be sent out of the Chamber.

**HON. SORIEBA A. SESAY:** You do not have any right to send me out.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members from Tonkolili, please stand up. If I hear one more word from you, I will ask the Sargent-at-Arms to march you out of this Chamber.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, when I took over as Leader of Government Business with my team, we went to your office. I am sure we have to be taking erring Members to the Committee on Privilege and Ethics. We started it on this side and will be extended to every Member of Parliament. The Honourable Member was not making a point, but was ranting. I demand that he apologises to the Leader, otherwise he should not continue this proceeding. I give him two minutes; otherwise I will move a Motion to take him to the Ethics Committee.

**HON. SORIEBA A. TURAY:** Mr Speaker, I tender my apologies to you, the Leader and the entire House.

**HON. CHRENOR R. M. BAH:** Mr Speaker, I thank you very much. I also want to thank the Leader of Government Business and to assure him and this House that he is one of those that know me very well. I am not a media man and I do not enjoy the headlines. I hardly go to the media and I am also not a social media freak. I am sure you do not see me on Facebook except for those 419ers who uses my name.

**THE SPEAKER:** I would not see you because I am not a member of it either.

**HON. CHRENOR R. M. BAH:** Mr Speaker, the Leader saw you once, but I will not tell you when. Mr Speaker, as the Leader has said, I will patiently wait and I am sure within 48 hours, the Committee would have completed its work.

**THE SPEAKER:** Well, you pre-empted me, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**HON. CHRENOR R.M. BAH:** I thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** I was actually going to ask the Chairman of the Committee on Mines and Mineral Resources to give the assurance to this House as to when this matter will be taken up by his Committee before I make any further pronouncement on it.

**HON. EMERSON S. LAMINA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Leader of Opposition's fear about the appearance of the Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources is allayed. As we speak, the Committee Clerk has been charged to summon the Minister on Thursday at 2:00 p.m. I will not go to the details of the request of the Leader of the Opposition, but I can categorically debunk the very prelude of the Article he read that it did not come from the Ministry of Mines. The first paragraph he read states: "Some people are confusing Mining Lease Agreement to that of Advance Prising Agreement." This did not come from the Ministry.

**HON. CHRENOR R.M. BAH:** Point of Order, Mr Speaker!

**HON. EMERSON S. LAMINA:** I just want to set the records straight. Mr Speaker, I hope I am I protected.

**THE SPEAKER:** When the Leader of the Opposition spoke, he spoke generally. He was not attributing the prefatory comment that you are now talking about to the Minister or the Ministry.

**HON. CHRENOR R.M. BAH:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** So, let us not confuse the two situations. All I want from you is an assurance that this matter will be dealt with by your Committee and you report to this House accordingly.

**HON.EMERSON S. LAMINA:** Definitely, the Minister will appear at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to understand, Honourable Member. Are you saying that the Minister will be summoned before your Committee on Thursday?

**HON. EMERSON S. LAMINA:** The Minister has already been summoned to come Thursday and he will appear before the Committee in Committee Room 1.

**THE SPEAKER:** He will appear before your Committee?

**HON. EMERSON S. LAMINA:** Yes, Mr Speaker. I will report the coming week

**THE SPEAKER:** Very well; let it be on record.

**HON. EMERSON S. LAMINA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

#### **IV. PAPERS LAID**

##### **THE MINISTER OF FINANCE:**

**MRS PATRICIA LAVALIE [*Deputy Minister of Finance*]:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with your leave, I beg to lay on the Table of this Honourable House the following papers:

1. Loan Agreement between the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development [EBID] and the Republic of Sierra Leone for the partial financing of the construction of the University of Science and Technology at Koidu town, Kono District in the Republic of Sierra Leone, Loan No. 147/ AP/ LA/ BIDC/ EBID/ OS/ 2020; and
2. Loan Agreement between the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Islamic Development Bank, regarding the Maternal Neonatal and Child Health Strengthen Project in Sierra Leone dated, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 [*Applause*].

#### **V. MOTION OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPOINTMENTS AND PUBLIC SERVICE**

PROPOSER: HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA

SECONDER: HON. HASSAN A. SESAY

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I present to you the Tenth Report of the Third Session of the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service:

##### **Introduction**

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service, in tandem with its Constitutional obligations, met on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021, and interviewed presidential nominee for the appointment as Minister of Health and Sanitation, a crucial nomination in the current pandemic period.

## **Procedure**

The Committee maintained its established procedures and interviewed the nominee on issues pertaining to educational background to ensure that he has the relevant education and necessary backup experience to hold such important Office of State, especially in this period when strong and healthy leadership is required to lead government decision on current global health problems. Probing questions put to the nominee covered wide ranging issues relating to his track records in pertinent work situation, declared assets, tax obligations and his vision for a nationally productive tenure. Issues of unsustainability or otherwise were closely looked into by the Committee.

### ***Twelfth sitting of the Committee on the 3<sup>d</sup> February 2021***

The Committee met and interviewed the following nominee on oath:

#### ***Dr Austin Demby, Proposed Minister, Ministry of Health and Sanitation***

Dr Austin Demby is a Research Scientist, Epidemiologist and Monocular Virologist, and holds a Master of Public Health in Bio-Statistics and Epidemiology, University of Michigan, USA 1985, and a PhD in Clinical Micro Biology from the University of London 1998. Prior to the nomination, the intentionally revered scientist was the Acting Director of the Office of Global Health Resources and Services Administration [HRSA] in the United States Department of Health Bureau that protect the health of Americans through global actions.

He manifests a plethora or wide experience in conceptualising; designing and implementing complex and effective national programmes to combat any ravaging health situations, including Viral Haemorrhagic fever viruses, AIDS and HIV etc. His long service with the Centre for Disease Control [CDC] gave him the platform to fully understand the emerging African health problems and the required scientific solution as were noted during scrutiny.

In 1987 to 1989, as a research scientist and country director for CDC, he conducted research on Laser Fever and other Viral Haemorrhagic Fever that helped the treatment of the epidemic, especially in South and Eastern Regions of the country then.

In 2014 to 2015, during the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak, he conducted a rapid technical assessment of the escalating situation in Sierra Leone, and sounded an alarming bell to the global community for various interventions which the country immensely gained from. From 1999 to 2006, he headed the CDC's Global Aids Programme to Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, etc. and built research capacities of these countries to lower mortality rate, amongst others. From 2020 to 2021, he became member of the Tax Force of Covid-19 that updates and advises the President on the current pandemic.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, all accomplishment, laurels, etc. of this nominee cannot be catalogued here now as they are many, but the Committee considers this high profiled nomination timely and important as we continue to flatten the Covid-19 curve. After serious analysis of the nominee's Bio-Data and spanning work experiences in the global health sector, Members asked and commented on varying issues ranging from the opportunity cost of sacrificing his high level employment and emolument at the United States, handling of the current pandemic; Covid-19, Covid-19 vaccination and other general views of our health sector, amongst others.

Responding to questions, the learned Doctor said: "I have passion to serve Sierra Leone, for greater part of my education was sponsored on scholarship from Sierra Leone government. Besides, if I am serving other countries with my talent and my country is in dire need, I must answer to a call of patriotism. I know it is uneasy after a spell of comfortable life existence abroad for many Sierra Leoneans, but I am here to face the challenges. On critical analysis of the current Covid-19 situation in Sierra Leone, I am convinced that Sierra Leone learnt immensely from the Ebola as infrastructures, awareness, education and community response were achieved. For the current situation, there are mistakes of complacency amongst lots of Sierra Leoneans refusing to mask up, non-compliance to social distancing and regular washing of hands. I admit that in order to consolidate gains made in containing the virus, and to avoid the second wave of aggressive attack, biomedical responses must be equivalent to community partnership relating to safe burial, voluntary testing, etc. The vaccines are medical

products, and these need public education for the masses to understand their complex biology and usefulness. These can be driven through community mobilisation after assurances of the health sector.”

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Dr Demby said that to strengthen the health sector with qualified professionals, a whole review of our health institution curriculum requires changing the old academic delivery of catering for and training calibres to deliver on various health needs. He pointed that the country had potentials in the diaspora, but the inflexibility nature of our constitution was an impediment to investment in human capital, which he emphasised, also requires a serious routine.

**Recommendations:**

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Committee has judged the presidential nominee to be adequately qualified for the proposed appointment and recommended to the House for approval Dr Austin Demby, proposed Minister, Ministry of Health and Sanitation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Tenth Report reflects the unanimous view of the Committee. I therefore move that the Tenth Report of the Third Session of the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service be adopted by the House and that the recommendations contained therein be approved.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of Government Business for that presentation? Honourable Members, any seconder?

**HON. HASSAN A. SESAY:** I so second, Mr Speaker.

*[Question Proposed]*

**HON. HASSAN A. SESAY:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the nominee has a rich resume and he is one of those Sierra Leoneans we should be proud of. We are in the process of approving an individual who has been nominated by the President to act as the Minister of Health. The nominee is a consummate professional, one that has served over the years in the healthcare and a well-known researcher. I think we have no reason to doubt this individual’s capacity to serve this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have always made it very clear that if you bring people with talents, we will always accept because we know that we have Sierra Leone and only Sierra Leone to support. I am sure Dr Austin Demby has made a name for himself in the area of disease control. I am certain that during the Ebola scourge in our country, we knew he came and worked with the Laser Fever Project in the Eastern Region. The nominee has acquired a wealth of experience in other African countries and thus has no reason to doubt his competence and ability to address issues relating to our health system.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to remind the nominee that he is going to work with people different attitudes in that Ministry. He has worked in America for so long and in America, there are established structures which he might not find in that Ministry. I hope he is psychologically prepared to face the differences that he will experience in our healthcare system. We all know that the attitudes of people in our MDAs are nothing to write home about and most of them loathe and are not result oriented.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have no reason to doubt Dr Austin Demby's ability to perform. I therefore endorse his nomination. I thank you.

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

**HON. KANDEH K. YUMKELLA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity.

**THE SPEAKER:** We welcome you back from your sojourn abroad. We know you were taken abroad by circumstances that we all pray should never have happened, but since everything is in the hands of Providence, we wish your wife a speedy recovery. We are pleased to have you back.

**HON. KANDEH K. YUMKELLA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I think I am probably more qualified than anybody to talk about Dr Austin Demby for a number of reasons. Mr Speaker, before I give those reasons, I want to premise my comments on the fact that I strongly believe that this nation is one of the poorest in the world and is one with paucity of professional. This is why we need to tap from the intellectual

resources and capabilities of our citizens around the world. Dr Austin Demby and I attended the same school, but he was my senior. The record they set was very difficult for us to break. They had thirteen candidates with division one in the GCE O'Level. We wanted to have fourteen candidates with division one, but we could not; we only had ten candidates with division one and I was one of them. So, this is a man who I know has been an intellectual and a professional for a very long time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I was in the United States when he joined us there and I know his career at the CDC. I know what he did when he was sent to Malawi and he was promoted as Director in Washington. I also know that he is making a huge sacrifice to come back *[Applause]*. I admire him and I pray that he does not lose his professionalism. I also want to state here that Dr Austin Demby trained Dr Kahn and his staff before Ebola. Dr Austin Demby and Dr Khan instituted the PPE to treat Ebola people. When Dr Kahn died, he cried because he built that team in Kenema and Kailahun. We tried our best to get Dr Kahn, but we could not. I can remember my phone calls with His Excellency Dr Ernest Bai Koroma. The WHO Director General told me that we should do everything to get him out because if he died, people would be scared of Ebola. Unfortunately, with all the help, negotiating transit for that flight in other countries was not easy for the President at that time.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Dr Austin Demby received an award few years ago out of over ten thousand people trained by USAID. He was chosen for the distinguished Alumnae Award four years ago *[Applause]*. I was in that ceremony in New York and I was very proud of him. I also received the same award six years. One of his colleagues said: "By the way, what do you do in Sierra Leone that both of you got the same award?" We said it was due to the good school we attended, which is the CKC.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a good choice at a time when the world faces a huge pandemic. It is time for him to give back to this country and we pray that the system will not ruin his professionalism. There is bureaucracy and corruption. In fact, there are four ministries in this country that are super corrupt and that is why they are difficult to manage. I was a minister twenty-seven years ago, when Honourable Bashiru



Silikie was still in Primary School. In those days, under the Structural Adjustment Credit, I had the privilege of being a minister and my colleague ministers and I used to checkmate every Ministry to get rid of ghost workers. There were lots of problems people burnt down the Medical Stores to cover up the issue relating to the drugs that were stolen.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to remind the nominee that he has a herculean task. Again, he should not compromise professionalism because if we are not healthy, we will die. If we fail to fix the medical services and the education system, we are nowhere. Please, do not compromise professionalism at all. If they frustrate you, it means they do not need you there and you have to resign and go back. I am telling you the fact, my brother. I am saying this in public because the moment you resume work, they will S.Os. 'we go show you say, this na Salone.' Show them that if we want to be first world, then things have to change and sometimes you change things radically. If you need advice once in a while, we are available. I am sure health and education are not partisan issues. This is about the future of this country. I thank you *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I rarely make comment when anyone of you speaks. I seldom comment when anyone of you speaks in commendation of a nominee, but let me take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Member from Kambia for his very brilliant introduction of our nominee. I agree with him entirely except when he advised the nominee to resign if they frustrate him. I will counter that by saying if they frustrate you fight back. You have to show them that you are a professional. That is the Bai Bureh spirit. If we say we are ready to change, we must never give up the fight.

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have in our midst a presidential nominee. He has been nominated by His Excellency the President to occupy the position as Ministry of Health and Sanitation. As a government, we have always promised the people of this country that we are going to provide change and the change is here in the health sector. I want to remind the nominee that we have a social contract with the people of this nation. The social contract is to improve the lives and livelihood of the people of this country

and and there is no way the New Direction will fail to achieve that. This nominee is going to play a pivotal role in achieving our promises to the people. We have to read our scorecard to the people of this country few years from now and the health sector will have to play a pivotal role in the scorecard.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the expectations of the people of this country are very high and they want to see new community health centres. Our responsibilities, as Members of Parliament, are to represent, oversee and make laws. If approved by this House, you have a huge task ahead of you. Of course you have huge ideas about the health situation in Sierra Leone. You have been around for some time now and judging from your CV presented to the Committee, we clearly see that you have worked in Segbwema, Kenema and Freetown. This suggests that you have an overview of the health sector of this country. It is no secret that our health sector is challenged.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when I listened to the Honourable Member from Kambia showering praises on this nominee, I knew the nominee is going to face some challenges. I am sure with his wealth of experience in the health sector, he will definitely deliver. The pressure is going to be on him because the President is expecting a lot from him. Again, the Committee on Appointments and Public Service is expecting a lot from you, including Parliament as a whole. The general public is also expecting much from you.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, during the Ebola scourge, we went through Ebola, Dr Austin Demby came to help his country. We have experience Ebola scourge, but it seems as if we have not learnt anything. We should be giving expert advice to other countries, but it seems as if we have not learnt. He is here again to help his country. He is going to be part of us and he is going to take the lead. We expect him to deliver and save this nation. Our priority is education, but education will not be achieved if the health sector is weak or if our children are dying. You are going to take over a Ministry with lots of challenges.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to conclude by congratulating the nominee in advance. I am sure you will enjoy the best support of this Parliament. I am here for you

as a brother. I thank His Excellency the President for nominating somebody from Baoma Chiefdom. I have always said in this Parliament and I have always told His Excellency that not just Baoma Chiefdom, but Bo District. We need more nominees to be presented to this House for approval. I want to thank His Excellency the President for considering Baoma Chiefdom and for considering Bo District. I congratulate you in advance and I wish you well.

**THE SPEAKER:** I am sure the nominee will enjoy the support of this House, including you. We shall now wind up the debate. I know the Chairperson of the Health Committee wants to say something. I am giving him one minute and he should understand why I am giving him one minute.

**HON. MOSES B. JORKIE:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to say a word or two. I want to join my other colleagues in thanking the President for nominating you to that Ministry. Of course what I wanted to say has been said by the previous speakers. As already mentioned, the Ministry of Health is challenged. I however believe that you are going to change the narratives. The outgoing Minister, Professor Alpha Wurrie, has done a lot in that Ministry. I know you are going to take from where he left off. We are expecting you to work harder. Your resume is superb and that is why we expect much from you. You have to ensure that the wealth of experience you have garnered over the years is fully utilised for the benefit of this country. Sierra Leone's health sector should be the envy of many. I am sure many projects are underway for the health sector and we have to work towards improving the health status of our people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to admonish the nominee to work with those he will meet in that Ministry. There are lots of professionals in the Ministry, but the only difference is that the system he was under is not the same with ours. Therefore, even though you are coming from Sierra Leone, your home country, you have to cope with whatever situation you will meet on the ground. If you work with colleagues professionals, they will help you to achieve a lot. You cannot do it alone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want the nominee to realise that there is an existing Committee on Health that is overseeing the activities or operations of the Ministry. In other words, the parliamentary oversight Committee on Health is here to help you achieve your objectives. I want to congratulate you in advance and I wish you well in your new assignment. I thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I really wanted us at this point to round off the debate, but I would want the Honourable Ibrahim B. Kargbo to have his say.

**HON. IBRAHIM B. KARGBO:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. We are paying tribute to a son of the soil, Dr Austin Demby. We on this side have said this time and again and we continue to remind the Speaker and other Members that whenever this government makes sound decision, we will applaud them. We are applauding them today because they have appointed a scientist with lots of experience. Dr Austin Demby is going to be part and parcel of the development strategy of this country. I want to inform the nominee that the praises from the APC are from bottom of our hearts. This is not political gimmick because we respect you and you also deserve the position you have been appointed to serve. We believe that you are qualified for this job and that is why we believe that you deserve it and we will give you the fullest of support.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we had a great academician in this country at Fourah Bay College who once compared Wole Soyinka [the great academic and literary giant], to Pablo Picasso, a very important Artist in Europe. This is the man whom Prof. Eldred Jones referred to as one of the people who brought civilization to the world. Prof. Eldred Jones said: "They have Picasso, we have Wole Soyinka." Well, I can extend it to mean that they have Dr Anthony Fauci, [the Chief Medical Adviser to the President of the United States], and we have Dr Austin Demby [*Applause*].

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, like the Honourable Member from Kambia said, this has been an opportunity and it will continue to be an opportunity for us to utilise our people to be part and parcel of the development of this country. I respect Dr Austin Demby principally because he volunteered during the Ebola outbreak to save his people

from the horrors of the epidemic. He flew from the United States and decided to become part and parcel of the strategy to fight the Ebola disease. I know him and I have worked with him before. I will continue to respect him for the decision he took at that material time. It was a hard decision he took. He is one of the few Sierra Leoneans we want. He does not believe in politicising national issues. He simply saw the need for us to come together at that time and fight this epidemic and we succeeded. Today, he is here again to continue to be part of another fight, COVID 19 pandemic and I want to assure you that he is going to succeed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to believe that those of us who feel that we are part and parcel of the development of this country will support him, so that he succeeds. Mr Speaker, what is important is for us on this side to stand up and make it clear to the citizens of this country that the President has made a wise decision that will benefit all Sierra Leoneans. I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank our veteran politician from Bombali.

**HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH:** Mr Speaker, I want to join my colleagues in acknowledging the good choice made by the President. I keenly listened to the Leader of Government Business when he was reading the report. However, not everything that transpired during the interview was captured in the report. The interview was very interesting and we learnt a lot from the nominee's exposé. He lectured us and we appreciated him so much.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we raised many issues on that day and one of them had to do with denouncing his other nationality simply because he wants to serve his country. Dr Austin Demby was born, raised and schooled in Sierra Leone. The question is why are we still keeping the issue of double citizenship in our law books?

**THE SPEAKER:** This is because we are respecters of the law.

**HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH:** I agree with you, but I think we have to revisit that law. I raised the issue during the interview and I am re-echoing it in the Chamber. There was no need to put this fine gentleman through the stress of denouncing his other

citizenship. There was no need because I was told and I confirmed during the interview that it took a lot of cajoling to get Dr Austin Demby to come back to Sierra Leone. Now that he has accepted, we should use this opportunity to get other good Sierra Leoneans in the diaspora to come and serve this government and future governments. You know what will happen in 2023.

**THE SPEAKER:** Well, I am not a political clairvoyant.

**HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH:** Well, this is just a presumption and you have the option to rebut it. Mr Speaker, I am sure there are good Sierra Leoneans who are willing to sacrifice for this country. Dr Austin Demby is now 64 years, but there are those who are below 40 years that would want to come, but they are weighing the situation. We need to encourage them to come and serve this country. It is not everybody that will be President, but there are other areas they could serve in governance.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also asked the nominee a question, which I shared with you in private, but I will also make it public. With his expertise, he will also need a good team to help him deliver. I am sure we to do the things that will encourage more competent and good Sierra Leoneans to come back home and serve. It is happening in other countries within the sub-region and we need to do likewise. This is because the more we get competent people in our governance structure, the better for all of us.

*[Suspension of S.Os. 5 [2] being 12:00 noon*

**HON. CHERNOR R.M. BAH:** Mr Speaker, the Deputy Leader of Government Business was looking at the Chairman of SLPP, who also doubles as the Chairman of the National Commission for Privatisation [NCP], when he mentioned that governance is no longer business as usual under the New Direction Government. I want to remind the Deputy Leader of Government Business that there is an Agreement which was signed by Government and Logistic Solution and that Agreement replaced the TPMS. I will not go into the details, but I am merely reminding him that business seems to be more usual than before.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we welcome Dr Austin Demby and encourage this House to support His Excellency the President in actualising the statement he made in the United Kingdom, promising those who are challenged with the issue of double citizenship. I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his contribution.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Thank you very much. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we appreciate all contributions. I want to say special thanks to Dr Austin Demby for helping us capture one of the fraudsters who has been using our names to defraud the people of this country. Members of Parliament have become public ridicule due to impersonation recidivists. Fraudsters have been extorting moneys from the members of the public using our identities. I thank Dr Austin Demby for helping us capture one of those criminals. He is now in the custody of the police.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to continue using the words of Honourable Ibrahim B. Kargbo when he said: "They have Dr Anthony Fauci and we have Dr Austin Demby." I want to say at this point that we have read your resume and it is clear that you have the expertise. You would however have to combine both the international and local expertise if you want to achieve. You have worked in many places, but you have the mental picture of working in Sierra Leone during the 80s. I am certain that you are coming with a blend of ideas from Africa, United States of America, etc. We want you to bring all experiences and expertise mustered over the years into the health sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have in our midst supporters of the nominee in the galleries and staff from your Ministry are also here. You can have all the knowledge, but you need other people to help you deliver because you cannot do it alone. I like to use the motto of Liverpool football club which says: 'Never work alone.' You have to work with your team if you want to succeed. The Leader of the Opposition said that you need a good team to work with. You need a good team in order to achieve your goals. I do not want to restate the things you have done or the laurels you have won internationally. I want to thank you for the sacrifice you made during the Ebola

outbreak. I was told that after Ebola, he helped to set up the CDC in Sierra Leone. He was the man behind the formation of the CDC in Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think the nominee helped the previous Administration to explain to President Barack Obama that Sierra Leone needed help to setup our her own CDC. Today, we are proud of having a good response team and he is part of the team for the current COVID-19 pandemic. We are now being copied by other countries because we learnt a lot from Ebola. As my colleagues have said, it is good to have you, but it will be better if you perform exceptionally well. We need positive results in order to change the narratives in this country. If you fail to perform as expected, then all what we have read about you and the laurels you have won are nothing. So, we are expecting you to form a very good team around you.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, some of us know there is going to be pulling down syndrome and that is typical of Sierra Leoneans. However, do not allow yourself to be taken aback. You have to raise your head above the waters, so that you can deliver and achieve your goals. You cannot solve all the problems in the health sector instantly, but you have to do your best. Please work with your team and if they do not want to work, you have the Executive powers to take decisive decision. You must however have to be careful with civil servants, but work with them when necessary. Those civil servants have been in the health sector for so long and that is enough to be very careful with them. You have to be professional, so that you can save your image and reputation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the nominee had the better part of his education in Sierra Leone and he got scholarship from the Government of Sierra Leone. You are here not because you want to make money, but to change the narratives in the health sector. I want to implore the Committee on Health to support the nominee. I am certain that with in spite of all the academic awards and professional ideas, he can only succeed if he has a good team around him. I thank the Speaker for presiding over this particular sitting.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the 10<sup>th</sup> Report of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Committee on the Appointment and the Public Service be adopted by this House.



**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Leader of Government Business.

*[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]*

*[The Tenth Report of the Third Session of the Committee on Appointments and the Public Service has been approved]*

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I will now exercise my right of having the last say by extending a very warm appreciation and congratulation to Dr Austin Demby. His Excellency the President made no mistake whatsoever. From the resounding voice of unity, this House has spoken with one voice in fully endorsing the decision of His Excellency the President in nominating you as the new Minister of Health and Sanitation. The same confidence he reposed in that appointment has been re-echoed across the aisles in unity. I think you can ask for no greater accolade than that.

Honourable Members, the previous speakers said that accolade will go to other Sierra Leoneans in the diaspora who at the opportune time will take the decision and the courage to come home and serve this country. We wish you well in your new assignment. I am confident that you are going to succeed. I can see from your body language that you are a fighter and not a loser. Therefore, do not go by the advice the Member from Kambia suggested to you. You should never give up. The more you are challenged, the more you should show them that you are determined to succeed. You are going with our blessings. You may now take leave of us *[Applause]*.

Honourable Members, this sitting will now continue under the speakership of my Deputy because I have some urgent matters of State to attend.

*[Sitting adjourned for five minutes and resumed at 12:10 noon]*

*[The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas, in the Chair]*

## **V. BILL**

THE MEDICAL EXAMINERS ACT, 2020

THE MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

[CONTINUED PROCEEDINGS]

THE HOUSE RESUMED

**MR LAHAI LAWRENCE LEEMA** [*Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs*]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Medical Examiners Act, 2020 be read the second time. Mr Speaker, I was here seeking the approval of this Bill some time ago, but I would want to make a recap. This Bill seeks to repeal and replace the Coroners Ordinance, Cap 9 of 1907, which content does not seem to fit for purpose in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. On that note, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had been constrained to conduct credible investigations into deaths occurring as a result of suspicious circumstances, unexplained circumstances or deaths occurring as a result of gang rape, violence, disaster, clique and gang related activities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if the Medical Examiners Bill is passed into law, the State, through the Ministry of Internal Affairs and also through the establishment of the Chief Medical Examiner's Office, will be enhanced to facilitate the conduct of credible investigation that will help State authorities conduct a proper prosecution before the courts intervene to help the State to send the criminals that that are posing threats to the security of peaceful citizens behind bars. Besides, this Bill will help people who find themselves in accident situations in work places or occupational hazard to be able to make claims. Thus, I am here for the second time to present to this noble House the relevance of this particular Bill. I am sure it is not a controversial Bill.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Act makes provision for the establishment of a permanent Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, who performs a more specialised and professional functions as opposed to that of the Coroner's functions. With the Chief Medical Examiner, they will be able to conduct forensic examination or scientific analysis that has to do with forensic investigation as opposed to that of the Coroner. These were never in existence and looking at the dynamics in the crime rate these days and the

nature in which the criminals have metamorphosed, we need a legislation that is fit for purpose to tackle the current challenges we are facing in fighting crime.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is just a summary of what I said a week ago as far as this Bill is concerned. I am sure this House will see the strategic relevance for the State as it helps to prevent crime in the country. Once this Bill is passed into law, it will help to prevent crime. I want to assure this House that the provisions in this Bill will be enforced against those who commit offences. This Bill will also help to build a more prosperous and harmonious nation that is less dangerous for everybody. This country is going to be comfortable for investors if this Bill becomes law.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Bill entitled the Medical Examiners' Act, 2020 be read the second time.

*[Question Proposed]*

**HON. ALUSINE KANNEH:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, the Opposition Leader and Leader of Government Business have agreed that this Bill be committed to the Committee Stage. In view of that, I want to advise that we shorten this debate. The environment is not conducive and that is another reason for us to shorten the debate.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to restate here that the Coroners Act of 1907 is as old as Methuselah. It is an old law in our law books and is long overdue. Today, we are here to make sure that it is repealed and replaced. I want to believe that the one that is going to be enacted by this House will stand the test of time. I am certain that the period this Act was promulgated, none of us, including the Right Honourable Speaker was born. There used to be Board members, but they were very few on the Board. This particular issue is being taken care of in this Bill.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am sure this Bill, when enacted into law, will serve the purpose it is meant to serve. Mr Speaker, before this time, the Coroners were the ones in charge of investigating untimely or suspicious deaths. On the other hand, this Act makes provision for the Chief Medical Examiner and the Deputy to be in charge of investigating cases of suspicious deaths. We used to have District Commissioners, but

this Bill makes provision for the Commissioners to be appointed by State authorities to handle issues under consideration.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as Chairman of the Committee on Internal Affairs, I am happy for this Bill. We will do the necessary amendments at the Committee Stage. In fact, this Bill also has to do something with the Judiciary because the Judiciary had been prosecuting people sometimes unnecessarily. This happened in the case of Khadija. I am not sure whether Khadija wanted to die, but unfortunately she died a painful death. As we speak, the case is still in court because we do not have a pathologist who can conduct proper forensic investigation. This Bill makes provision for that. We have a role to perform as Members Parliament, so that the Judiciary adheres to the provisions in this Bill. We are here to ensure that the right thing is done. We have to make sure that the necessary amendments are done. I believe this Bill is good and I know it would yield good results for Sierra Leone.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to crave the indulgence of my colleagues to support the passage of this Bill into law. It not a controversial Bill and I am quite sure it is not going to be difficult to amend. I thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, since this Bill is eventually going to be committed to the Committee stage, I would crave your indulgence not to waste unnecessary time in debating it. I will take two more speakers from either side of the aisles. We will have to look at the entire Bill at the Committee Stage page by page and clause by clause.

**HON. EMERSON S. LAMINA:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I was definitely going to implore you to invoke **S.Os. 51 [1]** for this particular Bill to be committed to the Committee Stage. The Medical Examiners' Act, 2020 is long overdue. The existing Act is older than every Member of Parliament in this Well. I begin to wonder what the past administrations have been doing in this Well.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue with autopsy is very critical and I hope that good recommendations will be preferred at the Committee Stage. I am sure we will

need forensic machines and forensic labs in order to do justice to the cases that may come before the coroners. I can recall that a Nigerian was hired few years ago to work in that office, but he later left the country. He had to leave because the machines and even the labs were not available. He was paid over **\$5,000**.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think we will have to recommend to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to work closely with the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education for the creation of postgraduate courses. I begin to imagine how a medical doctor will spend eight years in the university, but no postgraduate courses for specialisation. This is why our medical doctors [after spending eight years in Sierra Leone], go to Ghana, Nigerian and other countries to specialise.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Sierra Leone has sixteen political district mortuaries being manned by people who are not medical doctors. We hope that this particular law will create rooms for some of these things. We have been attributing some of the deaths to underworld causes because we lack offices to conduct autopsy. Most deaths are attributed to witch gun. What is the science concerning witch gun? Unfortunately, witches have no lawyers to stand on their behalf. I am sure with the passage of this Bill into law, some of these issues will be addressed. Mr Speaker, gone are the days when people attributed deaths that ought to be investigated to witch gun. We also hope that the hegemony concerning the Law Department will not be referred to the medical science. There is only one Law School in the country. The Ministry of Internal Affairs should work with the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education for the creation of postgraduate courses. We want to see professionals and not just medical doctors with first degree. We should have professionals in different medical fields for the betterment of this country. I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

**HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA:** Mr Speaker, I support the repeal of this Act. I wanted to give a real case for the attention of the Minister why this is necessary. A relative of ours was murdered two months ago. We got the information and the police were involved. We asked for an autopsy to be carried out, so as to determine the cause of death. The poor family was asked to pay for five litters of the chemical that should

be used to keep the body, otherwise they said the body should be buried and exhumed later. So, the family they came to me for help. I gave them **Le 450,000** and the corpse was kept. The next day, we demanded to know the cause of the death. Already, the court had ruled that it was a hit and run issue, but the brothers in the village said that it not a hit and run matter. They said the body seemed to have been dragged from somewhere.'

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the corpse was brought to Freetown for examination. Well, maybe they can do it in Kenema or Kono but in this case, we were told that it can only be done in Freetown. This was a big challenge because we had to pay **Le 1.5mln** for the ambulance. We also had to pay for the two police officers who accompanied the body to Freetown. Again, we had to pay for the body to be kept in the mortuary. Mr Speaker, to ascertain what happened to the body, this poor family would have to pay **Le2,500,000 to Le 3,000,000** for all the services. They said the victim's family should bear the cost, but fortunately I was there to help.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a good Bill, but we have to look at some of these issues we are bringing out, especially when we go to the Committee Stage. We should look at access to justice. The question is who should pay for these services? We said this is a criminal issue that should be taken care of by Government. We said government should bear the cost. The issue seemed like a murder case and therefore expected Government to bear the cost. They told me that they do not have the resources.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the question is how can we set up the system, especially for the poor people? The poor mother said: "All I want is to bury my son, but I know that they killed him." If you have such thoughts in your mind, they will live with you for the rest of your life and you will always regret. Thank God the autopsy was done in Freetown. The coroner said that the kid was killed and it was not hit and run." You can imagine the cost of going through these challenges. Mr Speaker, I have just given a scenario why I am supporting this Bill, but we should think about the systems that should be put in place. There should be one coroner in the South, East, North and

North-West for effective delivery of justice. People should not have cause to come to Freetown. There must be provision in this Bill for the Government to bear the cost in cases where there is a suspicion of criminal homicide. One police officer told me that for a poor family like this, we just send them off to a mass grave. I thank you very much.

**HON. HASSAN A. SESAY:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, it is absolutely necessary to repeal and replace the 1907 Act. I have always said that we cannot use a legislation enacted during the colonial period to transform a new nation like ours. If you ask me, I will say this Bill is long overdue because even the language used can testify to that. I refer you to Section 5 and with your leave, it reads: "A Deputy Coroner shall be entitled to receive a fee of two guineas." What are guineas? That means two shillings. I am sure a law enacted in 1907 cannot be effective in 2021. This is long overdue and we have no reason to delay it further.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Leader of NGC said that we should ensure that we put systems in place, so that the poor people can benefit from this Bill. We have no issues with this Bill. Sometimes people bring issues for the sake of clarity and to know what led to a particular death. Let there be a consistent methodology whereby people do not need to come from Bo, Makeni, Magburaka, Kenema or any other part of the country just to come to Freetown to certify that somebody was killed or died due to certain circumstances. We should have coroners in all regions, so that they can help to investigate causes of certain deaths before burial. People normally say, S.Os. 2, 'na witch gun kill am.' That is an easy explanation because there is no professional to ascertain the causes of certain deaths.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think it is time for us to repeal and replace this law, but I will move that we commit it to the Legislative Committee for proper scrutiny. Let us have something that will be appreciated by the people of Sierra Leone.

**THE SPEAKER:** Certainly, Honourable Hassan.

**HON. ISHMAIL S. SANDY:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the face of human rights and access to justice, all deaths that are not caused by natural phenomena are

subject to investigation. Unfortunately, the system that conducts this investigation has faced many challenges in the past. Mr Speaker, I used to work for Access to Justice and Human Rights and I was managing the access to justice project. We faced many challenges in this area. For instance, there were proves to show that people died of unnatural causes. In the UK, the coroner is a system and in the America, they call it the Medical Examiner. It is a system and not an individual. It unfortunate in Sierra Leone, whenever we talk about coroner, we are referring to individual. Dr Owis Kamara is always referred to as coroner in Sierra Leone. Sometimes even before contacting Dr Owis Kamara or immediately after his investigation, the fact perishes and justice is either delayed or denied, and the victim or survivor languishes in pain.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am certain that Sierra Leoneans are interested in this particular Bill. Therefore, we should make it one of the fastest Bills to be enacted. In fact, if we are talking about committing it to the Legislative Committee, it should not go beyond this week, if possible by tomorrow. This is because the essentiality of this particular Bill cannot be overemphasised. A relative of mine was killed in cold blood and as we speak, the perpetrator is still walking free because the coroner said that the victim died of natural death. I am sure he was killed.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the legal system is nothing to write home about because the lawyers or judges can turn black to white. As my colleague from Kambia was saying, we need to make provisions for adequate resources and put in place proper infrastructure. We should not continue to deprive our people of natural justice. In view of this, I am calling on you and the leadership of this House to give this Bill the utmost concern and attention it deserves. We should commit this Bill to the Legislative Committee, so that the Committee's report is tabled here on Thursday. I thank you.

**HON. JOSEPH W. LAMIN:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am pleased to add my voice to the Medical Examiners Bill, 2020, as it seeks to repeal and replace the Coroner's Act of 1907. It is true that this law is out-dated, but it served its purpose at that time. What we are doing now is simply building on the Coroners' Act of 1907. It is from the experience of 1907 and emerging issues in our society that the Ministry of



Internal Affairs and its technocrats thought it wise to bring this Bill before this noble House for consideration. I am sure with the recommendations we are proffering and with the trained and qualified members of the Medical and Dental Association, I am sure the issues we are talking about in the Coroner's Act of 1907 will be no more.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we however have to bear in mind the spate at which deaths are occurring in this country, especially with the booming population in Sierra Leone. Some years ago, we had three million people in Sierra Leone, but that figure has increased over the years to approximately seven million. The capital city of Freetown used to have a population of five hundred thousand people, but we are now talking about two million people. If you look at the people and our surroundings, they are so edgy that a small situation will make them blaze like a petrol fire. We have heard about a story wherein an uncle was stabbed by his nephew for asking the nephew why he was wasting time watching television and doing nothing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we need to set up the framework, so that the right thing is done. I am sure this is the right time with the right people and the right Parliament. We have to make sure that we are on the right track. We have been talking about crimes, Sexual Offences Act and forensic examination, but the question is do we have trained and qualified personnel? Well, the Medical Examiners' Act, 2020 is before us and I am certain that provisions have been made for trained and qualified personnel. These personnel will belong to a group that will save lives and the image of this country. I am sure when you are a member of a group, such as the Bar Association or the Medical and Dental Association, you are compelled by the ethics of those organisations to do the right thing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, you will agree with me that suicide was not common in this country. The countries that were commonly known for committing suicide were the Scandinavian countries because everything was bright and beautiful for them. They were not facing challenges. In Sierra Leone however, for you to have S.Os. 2 Tapalapa' bread was a big challenge. So, before you thought of committing suicide, you would have thought twice. Today, people who are not able to go to certain places will feel

disappointed and the next thing they will do is to commit suicide. I am certain that with this Bill [which makes provision for trained and qualified personnel], I am convinced that everything will be fine if we put in place the necessary mechanisms. This will enable us address the issues we are talking about. I want to believe that this House will do the right thing.

On that note, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to implore this House to do the needful because this is the right time to do it. I thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, Honourable Member. Honourable Members, I would allow Honourable Moses B. Jorkie.

**HON. DR MAHMOUD M. KALLOKOH:** Mr Speaker, I want to make a request.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I want this particular Bill to proceed speedily to the Legislative Committee Stage.

**HON. DR MAHMOUD M. KALLOKOH:** With your leave, Mr Speaker, I want to make a request.

**THE SPEAKER:** A request?

**HON. DR MAMOUD M. KALLOH:** Yes, Mr Speaker. You would agree with me that this Bill is not controversial, but we want to ensure that we have a law that will stand the test of time. In this regard, while this Bill will be committed to Legislative Committee, I want to request that the Ministry of Internal Affairs invites the professionals. They have to be here, Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Certainly, Honourable Member. I thank you very much for that observation. Mr Minister, please take note of that information. We want to see all the professionals here in the next adjourned date, which is Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2021. Please ensure that all the professionals are here to listen to this debate.

**HON. MOSES B. JORKIE:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I also thank my colleague, Dr Mamoud M Kalokoh because his point is one of the suggestions I wanted to make because the professionals should be part of this process. The Honourable

Member also said that this Bill is not controversial and that it should be repealed and replaced.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the only thing I want to say here has to do with the ordeals my colleague from Kambia and his family went through regarding an autopsy to have been conducted on a deceased. Well, I am sure the Honourable Member spent that money probably because he was in a haste to get the right thing done. If that was not the case, you probably would not have spent because time would have elapsed, and they would have buried the corpse and later call for exhumation. As we speak, similar incident happened to me. When I resigned my position as CHO, I performed circumcision on two patients in 2011; and after three days, the two patients died. It was really not easy for me at that time. I was arrested and detained, but the corpses were buried. Mr Speaker, after two weeks, Government ordered the exhumation of the two corpses. Dr Owis Kamara who is seated here exhumed the bodies and took the parts he needed to Freetown. Mr Speaker, when the authorities got the results, I was declared free simply because I did not do it intentionally. According to the results, the patients were homophilous, which means their blood never clots and that caused their deaths. In that instance, I did not spend a single cent. I want to state here that this particular Bill is timely.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other area of concern has to do with something interesting that usually happens in the riverine areas. Mr Speaker, I have noticed that when somebody drowns, people are most times afraid to retrieve the corpse[s] simply because when you rescued a corpse, you are going to be part of the investigating team. When the police come, you will be arrested and asked to make statement. This is why even if people see a corpse drifting down the river, they will not touch it. They will allow that corpse to drift until the family members discover it themselves. So, this is another aspect I want us to consider. We have to do something about it; otherwise our people will continue to perish. Sometimes when you report cases pertaining to mysterious deaths, you will be the first person the police will arrest to help them with the investigation. This is why people are now afraid to assist.

In view of this, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want this particular aspect to be addressed in this Bill, so that our people living along the rivers will have the courage to retrieve or raise alarm to the authorities about a drifting corpse or a drowning person. Mr Speaker, this Bill is fine, but we have to ensure that regional offices are established, so that suspicious or unexplained deaths are investigated speedily in the region[s] they occurred. You will agree with me that Dr Owis Kamara is struggling because he is the only one performing autopsy in Sierra Leone. I am not aware of any other person doing this work except him. I am sure doing this job at his age is not easy for him. I wonder what we are going to do about the number of people to be included in this Bill, so that Dr Owis Kamara's workload is reduced.

With those few words, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank you for bringing this particular Bill to Parliament. I hope we are going to do due diligence on it, so that our people cease to suffer.

**THE SPEAKER:** I totally agree with you and I think that is a matter for the police. The Chairman of the Committee on Internal Affairs is here and I want him to take note of that issue. You can bring that issue to the notice of the police.

**MR LAHAI LAWRENE LEMA [*Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs*]:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, having listened to the debate and with your leave, I would like to respond to some of the issues or concerns raised by Honourable Members. I want to start with Honourable Moses B. Jorkie from the riverine area. He raised concerns on reporting. Well, I have jotted a proposal which I will forward to the professionals, so that they can make provision on training rescuers for the riverine areas. We would ensure effective public education, so as to allay whatever fears they might have. However, in situations where fears still exist, it is my view, which I will share with the professionals, to make provision in this Bill for the training of rescuers. So, places where people are scared, the trained rescuers would serve as experts to perform that job.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the only professional in this country, Dr Owis Kamara, is here with us. In fact, he is the brain behind the replacement of this obnoxious law. I want to encourage those in the medical profession to ensure that

mortuary forensic services are attractive. We will also work closely with the Ministry of Higher and Technical Education to see how best we can train interested personnel who will be willing to work with the Medical Examiners' Office.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in terms of accessing justice, of course with the passage of this Bill into law, there are provisions for decentralisation, whereby offices will be established in the provincial areas to help our poor people get access to justice and also ensure that the deceased are treated with the utmost dignity it deserves. Again, the Honourable Member from Kambia mentioned that all charges should be paid by State. Well, we will ensure that it happens; and besides, I have not seen any part in this Bill that is asking people to pay certain amount for such services. The only thing that is created in the Act is where people report deaths. However, it is my view that death certificate is going to be paid for. I stand to be corrected by the professionals, but when you go to the Committee Stage, you can make some amendments where necessary.

With those few words, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you very much for the concerns you have expressed regarding this Bill. I am sure all of you appreciate this Bill and I am hopeful that once we get to the Committee Stage, these issues are going to be addressed. Again, giving the fact that there are no controversial provisions in this Bill, and also giving the fact that budgetary provision has already been made in the 2021 budget, we are only looking forward to the passage of this Bill into law and then start operations immediately. Mr Speaker, once this Bill becomes law, the President will then appoint the Chief Medical Examiner and the Chief Medical Examiner in turn will appoint the other staff in consultation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

With this, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I moved that the Bill entitled 'The Medical Examiners' Act, 2020 be read the second time.

*[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]*

*[The Bill Entitled 'The Medical Examiners Act, 2020, being an Act to repeal and replace the Coroners Act, 1907, Cap 9 has been read the second time]*

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I move that the Medical Examiners Act, 2020 be committed to the Legislative Committee.

**THE SPEAKER:** Any Seconder?

**HON. MARRAY ABDUL S. CONTEH:** I so second, Mr Speaker

**THE SPEAKER:** Any counter Motion?

*[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]*

*[Pursuant to S.Os. 51[1], the Bill entitled 'The Medical Examiners Act, 2020 has been committed to the Legislative Committee for further scrutiny]*

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Mr Speaker, I will read the internal Notice Paper.

## 1. LAYING OF PAPERS

### THE MINISTER OF LANDS, HOUSING AND COUNTRY PLANNING

The Government of Sierra Leone and Land Registration Sierra Leone Limited, Government Support Agreement relating to the procurement of Biometric Property Registration Project on a build to operate and transfer base, dated, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

## 2. BILLS

### A. THE CYBERCRIME ACT, 2021

Introduction and First Reading

The Minister of Information and Communications

Second Reading, Committee Stage and Third Reading

The Minister of Information and Communications

### B. THE ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ACT, 2021

Introduction and first reading

The Minister of Health and Sanitation

Second Reading, Committee Stage and Third Reading

The Minister of Health and Sanitation

## C. THE WAGES AND COMPENSATION COMMISSION ACT, 2021

Introduction and First Reading

The Minister of Finance, Second Reading, Committee Stage and Third Reading

The Minister of Finance

## D. Financial Services Amendment Act, 2021

Introduction and First Reading

The Minister of Finance

Second Reading, Committee Stage and Third Reading

The Minister of Finance

**HON. HASSAN A SESAY:** Mr Speaker, I stand on S.Os. 23 to draw the attention of this House to an issue I raised here last week. The Speaker assured us that he was going to call the Bank Governor. However, the Bank Governor wrote a letter and in that letter they asked for deferment of the summon. That was quite understandable and we have no problem with it. However, the Speaker promised us that issues raised by other Members of Parliament will be discussed when the Bank Governor comes. In the letter, however, nothing of such was mentioned. I just want to draw the attention of the stakeholders that they must be prepared to respond to the issues raised because the Speaker did promise that those issues will be discussed altogether. If possible, the Bank Governor will bring the finance team to respond to those issues. This is just a reminder, Mr Speaker. I thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** Mr Clerk, please take note.

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Mr Speaker, I want to assure the Honourable Member from Tonkolili that the Bank Governor will be summoned here. I am sure when the Bank Governor comes, other relevant questions will be asked and answers will be given. So, I want to ask the Honourable Member from Tonkolili to exercise patience. Of course we know that the Bank Governor does not have the legal backing to address us in this Well. It is only Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Government that can address us here. However, we will discuss with the Bank Governor in Committee Room 1 and the

Chairman of the Committee on Finance will assist us. We are going to ask the Bank Governor critical questions.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it could be recalled that we had series of riots around the country last year, especially in Makeni and an ad hoc Committee was formed in this House to investigate that issue. As we speak, a report has not been laid in this House for Members of Parliament to look at it.

Again, Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we had the Tombo incident and other seeming violence around the country, including the Pa Demba Road incident. I want to call on the Internal Affairs Committee to ask the relevant stakeholders to present a comprehensive report to Members of Parliament. We want to know the underlining factors associated with those atrocities that cost the lives of our people for political reason.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to bring to your notice the way issues raised by Members of Parliament are trivialised by the leadership. In other words, we usually raise issues bothering on the lives of our people in this House and the leadership always promises to ensure that those issues would be addressed in the next adjourned dates, but when we come, they pretend as if nothing was raised. This kills the spirit of Honourable Members to raise important issues. For instance, we raised the issue on education last week and the responsibility was given to Members of the Education Committee to investigate that issue. Some of these issues will help the Government to make informed decisions. The Education Committee met yesterday and I hope the Chairman of that Committee will come and explain to this House the outcome of that meeting. If some of us are bringing these issues and the next day we pretend as if nothing happened, then it is a shame on us as Members of Parliament.

**THE SPEAKER:** Your point is noted, Honourable Member.

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Mr Speaker, in the last sitting I was clear that when responsibilities are given to Committee Chairpersons, they should present report. In fact, I have stated here that the distribution of parliamentary Committees in the next



session will be dependent mainly on the number of reports a particular chairperson has presented to this House. You will not be made Committee chairperson if you have failed to submit a report that this House has asked you to investigate an issue. Mr Speaker, like the Honourable Member said, the Committee on Education met yesterday, but we are not expecting verbal report at all. We expect the Committee on Basic and Senior Secondary Education to have completed their investigation and present the report within the stipulated timeframe. Of course, it was very important and urgent too. So, I crave the indulgence of Honourable Members, especially chairpersons and deputies to ensure that they execute whatever responsibilities given to them on time; otherwise you stand the chance of losing your position as chairperson or deputy.

**HON. EMERSON S. LAMINA:** Mr Speaker, with reference to what the Honourable Member from Kambia said, I would like to check the Hansard. I am saying this because in 2019, a Committee of nine was set up in this House to investigate reasons for the violence across the country. In that Committee, I found it difficult to get the cooperation of Members of that Committee. However, we did our level best by engaging all the MDAs concerned, such as the Military, Office of National Security [ONS], prisons, police, etc. We also engaged the traditional authorities for their views and how we can curtail such violence. I want you to remember that the said Motion was raised by the Opposition Whip and was seconded by the governing party Whip.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if the Honourable Member from Kambia has been following the proceedings, he would have applauded our efforts because we have done a good job. Mr Speaker, that particular report was laid here and was captured in the Hansard report. Of course the Honourable Marie Bangura, Honourable Abdul Kargbo, Honourable Dickson Rogers and many others were part of that Committee. The report disclosed many reasons for the spate of violence in the country. Mr Speaker, one thing we should understand is that whenever an assignment is given to a Committee, it is not Parliament that will implement the recommendations of the Committee. I am sure the Speaker should engage the relevant MDAs for the implementation of the

recommendations contained in that report. So, I want the Honourable Member from Kambia to check the Hansard for details of that Committee report.

**HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, the fact that he has mentioned my name, I want to make clarification on the two issues. He is talking about a matter that happened in 2019. The Honourable Member is always out of the country, whilst I have always been here. I am a regular Member of Parliament. You were not the Chairman for the Committee that was formed for the Makeni incident. I asked for that report and not his own report. I also asked for the spate of violence in the country, including the Pa Demba Road Prison incident, which is for the Chairman of the Committee on Internal Affairs. I am sure these are different matters. Maybe the only similarity is that they are all dealing with violence. Of course, you need not to tell me that because I am an expert in peace and conflict. Therefore, I am still asking that we have the report for the Pa Demba Prisons incident, Tombo and other incidents across the country.

**THE SPEAKER:** Mr Clerk, please ensure that you include that in your report for the attention of Mr Speaker

**HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH:** Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this privilege. I want to draw the attention of this House to the incident that took place at Jui. There was a total destruction of Stores and Shops along the high way at Jui Junction. I am not going to question the action, but I want to question the procedures and the timing of the action on that day. I believe the action of those who were responsible brought serious destruction to Sierra Leoneans. I want to ask this House, through your leadership, to investigate on the procedures and even the timing because the destruction took place during curfew hours. We want to know whether those who did the action followed the due process or the processes were followed before destroying those stores as they did on Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2021. I want to ask this House, through your Leadership, to institute an investigation on this matter. I thank you very much.

**HON. MUSTAPHA SELLU:** Mr Speaker, I am sure the District Council Chairman for Western Area Rural District Council [WARDC] did issue a press release on this issue,

informing all occupants and the relevant stakeholders, i.e. the LUC in Jui, the Jui Headman, the ONS, etc. about this action. So, I do not think instituting an investigation on this particular matter is relevant because all the stakeholders were duly informed. This matter is in the hands of the law enforcement bodies and the District Council Chairman is fully in charge. It is not something that happened overnight.

**HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH:** Mr Speaker, I do not want my colleague to make this thing controversial. We should not put political lens on this issue. The people we are talking about are Sierra Leoneans..

**THE SPEAKER:** I have taken note of both concerns relating to this particular incident and probably the Honourable Aaron A. Koroma will conduct an investigation into this matter, as Chairman of the Committee on Local Government.

### ***ADJOURNMENT***

*[The House rose at 1:25 p.m., and was adjourned to Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.]*