



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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PRESS RELEASES



PARLIAMENT PASSES THE FINANCE ACT, 2024

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Thursday, 09/11/2023 at around 9:00 PM debated and passed into law, with some amendments the Bill entitled: 'The Finance Act 2024', for the economic growth and development of Sierra Leone.

The Bill seeks to provide for the imposition and alteration of taxes, to give effect to the financial proposals of the Government, and to provide for other related matters for the Financial Year 2024.

Presenting the Bill to Parliament, the Minister of Finance, Sheku Ahmed Fantamadi Bangura said the Bill is a measure drawn from the Finance Act intended to increase and improve revenue generation for the State.

The Minister said the Finance Act aimed at generating and protecting local farmers and also providing incentives for the local markets.

The Minister informed Parliament that, the Finance Act is proposing to amend several Acts to meet and address revenue mobilization for the State to improve domestic revenue collection from various taxes.

Making his submission to the debate, the Parliamentary Chairperson on Finance, Hon. Francis Amara Kai-Samba said any alliteration to the laws established has to meet Parliamentary approval and went on to commend the Minister of Finance for doing the needful and for presenting the Bill to Parliament. He said wider consultation has been done on the Bill and measures taken to boost revenue mobilization for the

State. The Chairman made reference to past amendments of the Act that give way to revenue generation for the country.

The Deputy Leader 2, of Opposition, Hon. Aaron Aruna Koroma said the Bill is very important, noting that it deals with the welfare of the citizens. He commended the Minister for adjusting the expansion of the GST threshold and the additional time for demurrage at the Customs Services Department of the Sierra Leone Port Authority.

He said the hardship in the country, is not related to the Ukraine and Russia war, but rather made by the government and went on to recall other regional countries that have free subsidies on basic food items. The Deputy Opposition Leader decried the proposed increase in taxation on cement, rice, and iron rods and went on to advise the government to look into the proposed amendments. He also urged the Finance Ministry to protect the local industries, "If this Bill is passed as it is, it would cause suffering for the people of Sierra Leone", he concluded.

Hon. Alph Bah from the Western Area Urban said the Finance Act, if passed into law would adversely affect the people and went to note that what is affecting the running of the State is bad management of expenditure. He advised the Minister to maintain zero taxation on rice and called for the protection of the local industry. "We need a radical modification on our expenditure and not an aggressive increment on our tax", he concluded.

Hon. Mustapha Sallu from Moyamba District said the suffering of the people of Sierra Leone is in no way caused by the government as stated by an opposition MP, but rather by external factors. He said the Bill intended to generate revenue mobilization in return for development.

Hon. Sallieu Osman Sesay from the Bombali district said the opposition is not against tax increments, but cautioned tax levied on those essential commodities.

Hon. Ibrahim Barrie from Bombali District in his maiden speech said the country is currently facing economic difficulties and went on to highlight a World Bank Report for 2022 about Sierra Leone's economy. He advised the government to put the interests of the citizens first and address the economic challenges of the country.

In rounding up the debate, the Opposition Leader, Hon Abdul Kargbo said the current economic circumstance of the citizens of the country is not easy. He said to increase taxes, the government should put a policy in place to alleviate the challenges of the people. He also said when it comes to the services of the people, due diligence has to be observed and went on to touch on the flagship project Feed Salone which he referred to as 'non-operational'. He also said if taxes are imposed on rice they are not doing justice to the people of Sierra Leone. He prayed for the Feed Salone project to be implemented and materialized.

The Opposition Leader decried the proposed increments in taxes on rice and went on to inform the House that he would not support the Bill. He said corruption should not be politicized and urged that the Audit Report for 2021 to be looked into by the ACC. He called on the House to be considerate in passing the Finance Act into law and urged that it should be a people-centered Bill.

In concluding the debate, the Leader of Government Business Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma highlighted the memorandum of objects and reasons for the Bill and went on to differentiate the excise duties and import duties relative to the Finance Act.

The Leader said there is no way the economy can be controlled without saying the truth of the matter on inflation.

The Leader acknowledged the tremendous stride taken so far by this government to improve the socio-economic development of the State.

Hon. Nyuma said It is only the increment of taxation can improve the economy

The MP went on to note that for the past years, the current government had never levied tax on the importation of rice.

"We are very honest and truthful on the improvement of the economy," he said.

He said in the past this Parliament had protected local industries, but in the end, the price of its products kept on rising. He defended the increase in taxes on cement and iron rods.

He said the Audit Report is not a political tool and went on to highlight the measures put in place by the Finance Act to address issues of audit matters by the ACC.

"We are altering taxes based on the current circumstances to address the economic challenges of the country", he said and went on to state that the records are there that showcase the development of the nation

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