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PRESS RELEASE



PARLIAMENT WITHDRAWS ITS WELFARE BILL

After stern opposition of the Welfare Bill by Hon. Alpha Amadu Bah, the Bill entitled, The Parliament Act, 2023 stands withdrawn after a motion was moved by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas and seconded by the Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma, on Thursday 06/04/2023.

It was a private member's Bill piloted by Hon. Musa Fofanah with the view of harmonizing laws that are dealing with the welfare of Members of Parliament.

The Bill was seeking to provide for the establishment of a parliamentary commission, to provide for the leadership and government structure of Parliament, to provide for the establishment of a parliamentary service, to provide for salaries and other benefits of Members of Parliament and other staff, and to provide for other related matters.

Before withdrawal of the said Bill, the Clerk of Parliament, Hon. Paran Umar Tarawally said the Bill was seeking to codify laws from 2003 into a single document that is far from making a new law.

Hon. Musa Fofanah who moved the private member's Bill acknowledged the solid achievements of the current Parliament assembled in the promotion of good governance and

democracy and representation at international parliamentary fora and the hosting of international conferences successfully.

Furthermore, he said the Bill was about the codification of existing laws into a single document and not the introduction of new laws.

Contributing to the debate prior to withdrawal, Hon. Quintin Sallia-Konneh said he was about to contribute to the debate with mixed feelings because six MPs had died in want of good medical facilities. Supporting the Bill, he said they were not asking for much except good medical conditions and other benefits for Members of Parliament, some of whom are critically ill at the moment.

Hon. Dr. Umpha G. Koroma observed that the Bill was more for the running of Parliament, questioned its timelines and said it catered more for the Leadership and Staff of Parliament and less for Members of Parliament.

Hon. Francis Amara Kai-Samba, Chairman of Finance Committee supported the Bill on the grounds that it was going to maximize the welfare of Members and Staff of Parliament. He also said that the Bill was timely and it was not introducing any new law.

Hon. Alpha Amadu Bah was vehemently opposed to the Bill citing the economy and said that the lives of the six MPs who died were not important than hundreds of ordinary Sierra Leoneans who had died in want of good medical facilities.

Hon. Titus Kamara said he is currently ill and supported the passage of the Bill into law.

Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh supported the Bill for passage into law and said that most of the MPs who were leading the campaigns for the welfare Bill were opposition MPs.

Hon. Dr. Markmoud Kalokoh said he was tasked to represent a group and not himself to maximize the welfare of Members of Parliament.

Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma was disappointed with MPs who were playing to the gallery by displaying a high level of hypocrisy in opposition to the Bill relating to their welfare. He also recalled how he had been defending the welfare needs of MPs and deemed the conduct of those in opposition to the Bill have affronted the dignity of Parliament, the Clerk and the Leadership of Parliament.

Expressing shock and dismay on the grounds of unimaginable political hypocrisy, the Speaker of Sierra Leone Parliament, Rt. Hon. Dr. Abass Chernor Bundu recalled how on countless occasions MPs across the aisles had visited his Chambers advocating for their welfare and conditions of service to be improved.

In another development on Thursday 06/04/2023, the Parliament of Sierra Leone debated and ratified bilateral agreements aimed at deepening diplomatic cooperation between Sierra Leone, Kenya and South Africa.

The following agreements were ratified by Parliament:

1. Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kenya and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone on the establishment of a Joint Commission for Cooperation and
2. Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Government of the Republic of South Africa on the Waiver of Visa

Both agreements were presented to Parliament for ratification by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Prof. David John Francis.

Members of Parliament who spoke to the motion supported the ratification of both agreements as they were going to strengthen bilateral and diplomatic cooperation between Sierra Leone, Kenya and South Africa.

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