



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

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PRESS RELEASE



THIRD. ALLOTTED DAY:

PARLIAMENT CONTINUES DEBATE ON 2025 NATIONAL BUDGET

The Parliament of Sierra Leone on Monday, 25/11/2024, continued debate on the Bill entitled "The National Budget 2025 or "The Appropriation Act 2025" for Sierra Leone's Financial Services of Sierra Leone on the theme "Improving the Well-being and Quality of Life of Sierra Leoneans".

The Bill seeks to authorize expenditures from the Consolidated Fund for Sierra Leone's services for the year 2025 and other related matters.

Continuing the debate, Hon. Ibrahim Abdul Aziz Bangura from Port Loko District, commended the Minister of Finance for the budget and MPs for their various contributions to the debate. The MP also commended his colleagues MPs for withholding the additional 5% tax on the importation on rice.

He said the APC could better manage the economy than the SLPP, comparatively analysing the previous APC Government to that of the current SLPP Government. He said the Government had put the nation in more economic hardship through borrowing. He also said many Sierra Leoneans are stranded traveling by sea from Lungi to Freetown. He encouraged the Government to make additional budgetary allocations for ferries in order to improve the lives of the people of Lungi.

On her part, the Parliamentary Female Caucus President, Hon. Bernadette Wuyata Songa from Kailahun District, predicated her debate on health-related issues and noted that the Free Healthcare drugs are doing well and that supplies are distributed at the district levels.

She encouraged MPs to be highly involved in health-related matters connected to MPs welfare. "When there is needs for an urgent action for specialist attention, let Parliament take the lead in

the health discussion," she pleaded, and went on to narrate how one of their colleague MPs is suffering to get Medical attention abroad.

She recalled that the ambulance services are deplorable regarding monitoring and maintenance. She added that the services provided by ambulances are nothing to write home about. She suggested that the ambulance services be returned to the Hospital Administration.

On HIV/ AIDS, she said the virus level is high and underscored the importance of education about the virus. She advocated for more budgetary allocation to the HIV Secretariat. On gender-related issues, she requested the House for more budgetary allocation to that sector. On NaSCA-related issues, she pleaded for more empowerments on the social safety net project.

Hon. Bash Kamara from Karene District, submitted a request to the Government to construct the Makeni-Kamakwie Road. He commended the Government for constructing bridges in Karene District. He also pleaded with the Finance Ministry to consider the construction of Gbinti Road to Kamakwie.

On the social safety net, he encouraged NaSCA to take older people into consideration when implementing the scheme.

Hon. Ing. Fallah K. Tengbeh from Kailahun District, lavished praises on the President and the Finance Ministry for putting together the 2025 National Budget. He said the 2025 budget is a hope for the people of Sierra Leone and would contribute to regional integration. He said the country's economy was able to survive all external economic shocks.

He said energy is the foundation of economic growth and went on to praise President Bio's administration for championing the development of the energy sector. He narrated the impact of the MCC compact on the country's electricity supply and encouraged the extension of the Bumbuna Hydro Dam for a better energy supply for the country. He commended the President for road infrastructure and requested for more road constructions.

Hon. Abdulai Kamara, from Western Area Urban, predicated his debate on agriculture. and food security. He commended the Government for allocating funds to support agricultural farms. He called for support from other nutritional food products. The MP also called for mechanized farming rather than subsistence farming. He said more revenue would be generated if attention is paid to fisheries and marine resources.

Hon. Musa Fofonah from Kono District said the budget is a realistic document that would stand the test of time for the people of Sierra Leone. In response to critics of the development of Kono District, he alluded to the fact that the 2025 budget is very favorable for the people of Kono. He commended many projects outlined in the 2025 Budget, which are connected to roads and spoke about the development of Kono University. He praised President Bio's Administration for the improvements in the energy sector. The MP narrated the previous government's power failures and made an analogical analysis of the energy sector's development so far as compared to the previous governments. Although the country experienced an external economic shock, he said but currently transformation of developmental is everywhere.

On roads, he said other districts like Kono should be considered for road maintenance and appreciated President Bio's work.

Hon. Lucinda Finda Kellie from Kono District, said she is grateful to the President for mentioning the Mano-Bumpeh Road linking Kenema and Kono. She said many roads are being commissioned in Kono District, but work had not been completed. She said many projects for the Kono people had been mentioned in the previous budget and that this Government had accomplished nothing. She asserted that all the projects the Bio Administration is amplifying are not new to the people of Kono District. "I want to see them implemented but not see them in black and white document" she said.

She called on the President to send an engineer to monitor the construction process of certain bridge in Kono District. The Member of Parliament from Kono also called for subsidy on fuel in order to help electricity supply; adding that the machines consumes a lot of fuel.

Hon. Yusuf Mackery from Bo District, commended the President and the Minister of Finance for transforming the nation in terms of development.

On Climate change, he narrated the negative environmental effects, including deforestation and land degradation. The Member of Parliament outlined Government measures to combat illegal activities closer to the Guma Valley Water Dam. On the wage bill, he said the President had done well in creating agencies for the development of the State.

Hon. Alpha Ben Mansaray from Moyamba District, applauded the President for considering roads in Moyamba District. He acknowledged that such road construction if realized will alleviate the suffering of the people of Moyamba District. He pleaded for timely and quick intervention in maintaining key roads in the district. He called on the mining companies operating in the district to complement the Government's efforts. In the health sector, the MP from Moyamba District called on the Government to consider Bumpah Chiefdom for the construction of a PHUs. He decried the huge amount given to the office of the First Lady on sanitary pads. He said is a misplacement of priority. He added that such allocation to the Office of the First Lady should have been given to the education sector.

Hon. Alie Bayoh from Kenema District encouraged MPs to use their emotional intelligence to discuss the budget, adding that the budget is realistic for the nation. He said the offices created by the President are on the right trajectory, adding that it is spelt out clearly in the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone for the President to create agencies. He advocated for the Bio's Administration to prioritize the construction of Kenema-Zimmi Highway and other roads in the Kenema District.

Hon. Mohamed Conteh from Falaba District said roads are vital for the development of any State. He added that roads linking Kabala to Falaba District, as captured in the budget, would be appreciated by the Falaba people if completed. He said if these roads were constructed, they would be economically viable for revenue mobilization for the nation.

On Tourism, he said many cultural heritages are languishing due to lack of maintenance and bad road network. He called for environmental protection and referred to the budget as the "Corona budget."

Hon. Simon Johnny from Kono District referred to the budget as a provision to provide vision. He added that the 2025 Budget is in the right category. He praised President Bio's Administration for building the University of Kono, adding that the promise was transformed into reality. He said the SLPP had been a debt-free Government compared to the APC Government's. He said this budget would take this Government into more development. On roads linking Kono and Guinea, he pleaded for its construction for economic growth.

Hon. Mohamed Papa Bangura from Bombali District predicated his submission on bad governance and dubbed the 2025 Budget as "Dombolo" budget. On sports, he said it is sad to see what he referred to as a minimal budget, adding that more budgetary allocations are needed, if football and other sporting disciplines are to be developed.

He continued that the youth must be taken seriously, but noted that the budgetary allocation is not enough. He pleaded for more agricultural development and called for fair distribution of the national resources.

Hon. Komba Quee from Kono District submitted his debate on inflation, saying that inflation is a microeconomic problem for any nation. The MP highlighted the different types of inflation and

cited examples to clarify his position. On monetary policy, he highlighted the work of the Central Banks and its effects on the nation's development. He praised the President for the Kono University and another projects for the Kono people.

Hon. John Charles Conteh from Bombali District said Domestic Revenue Mobilization is important for developing a nation. He said the Government is not serious about revenue mobilization. He added that the unfair tax system is causing people not to pay taxes, adding that those who are paying taxes are not seeing development. He advised the Government to implement good economic policies to boost economic growth. On agriculture, he said money meant for farmers should be utilized judiciously.

Hon. Mahmoud Kamara from Western Area Rural said that since 2018, the people of Sierra Leone had remained poor. He appreciated the Government's school feeding program but decried the Government for the huge economic burden on parents, citing low economic growth and economic hardship. He said his community at Lumley and its environs are suffering for safe drinking water. He called on the Government to address some of the challenges affecting those communities. He said the budget affects sustainable development for the people of Sierra Leone.

Hon. Sahr Kortu Momodu from Kono District narrated the background of the Kono University and applauded the Government. On roads, he said, the people of Kono are pleased with the Bio's Administration. On bridges linking the towns in Kono District, he said it is on the right trajectory for the people of Kono and welcomed the good initiatives by the Government. He said Kono District is not a swing state, adding that the people of Kono just want development. He expressed hope for the country's success and development. He also appreciated the Government for the positive construction of a hospital in the Kono District.

Hon. Daniel Forna from Tonkolili District questioned a Member of Parliament referencing the low price of rice as stated by that MP. He said there is no credible information from statistics Sierra Leone. He said the GDP is grossly under-reported at present. He narrated the country's public debt and noted that it is huge for any country's economic growth. He went on to highlight the depreciation of the Leone to that of the US dollar and asked the Government to work on it and address the measures of the exchange rate to that of the Leone. He called on the Government to construct the road linking Tonkolili District and its environs, citing that the District had contributed to the development of the nation. He applauded the Government for the education sector but cautioned about the changes in the curriculum system for Senior Secondary School and called on the government to address the issue.

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