

OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

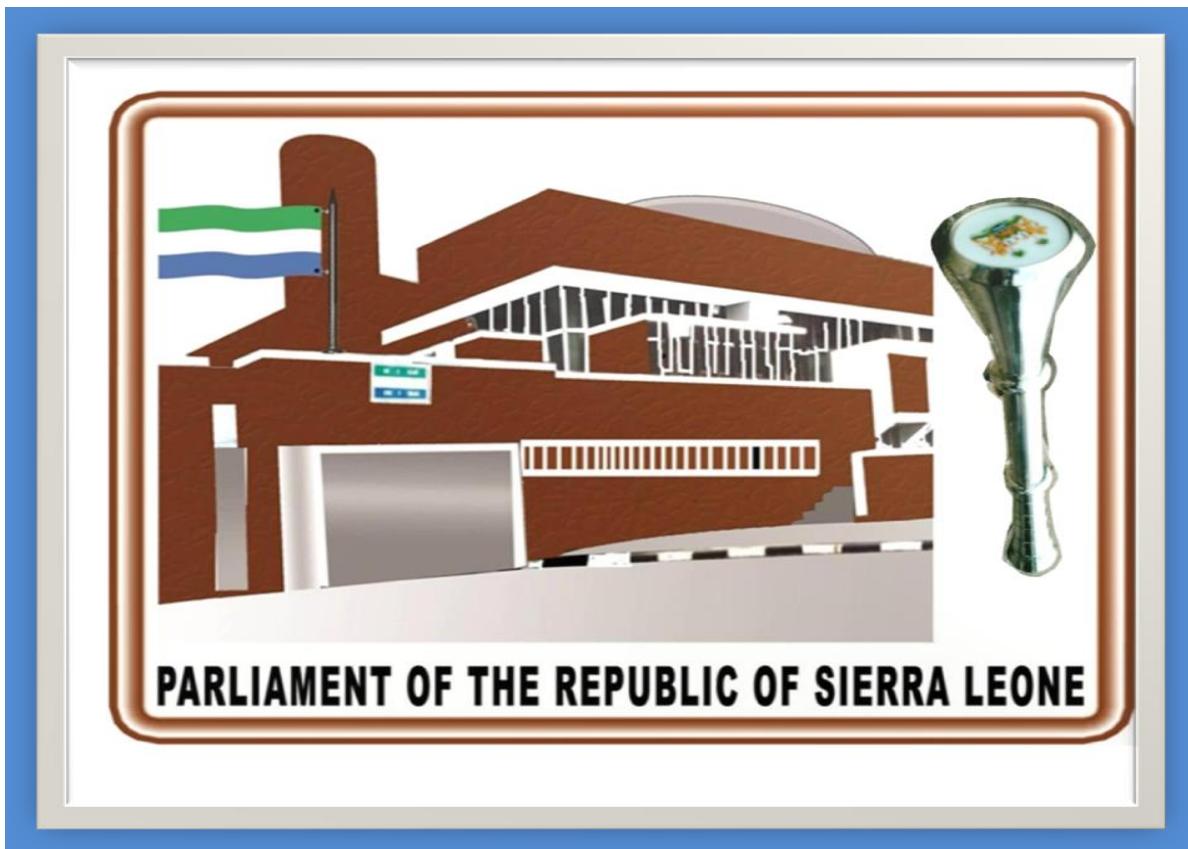
[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

FIRST SESSION – FIRST MEETING

THURSDAY, 11TH JULY, 2024.

SESSION – 2023/2024



OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN.

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

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First Meeting of the First Session of the Sixth Parliament
of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone.

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House
Held Thursday, 11th July, 2024.

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THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION

**BE IT RESOLVED: THAT THIS HONOURABLE HOUSE HEREBY RATIFIES THE
FOLLOWING AGREEMENT WHICH WAS LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE ON
TUESDAY 9TH JULY, 2024:**

**[I] CONCESSION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE AND GENTO GROUP OF COMPANIES SL LIMITED, FOR THE DESIGN,
FINANCING, CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF A SEA PORT WITHIN
THE DUBLIN AND RICKET COMMUNITIES OF BANANA ISLAND AND LOGISTICS HUB,
HARBOUR TERMINAL AT KENT IN SIERRA LEONE, DATED 5TH JULY, 2024.**



THE CHAMBER OF PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

Official Hansard Report of the Proceedings of the House

**SIXTH SESSION – FIRST MEETING
OF THE SIXTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

Tuesday, 11th July, 2024.

I. PRAYER

[The Table Clerk, Mr Gilbert Bosco N'bay, read the Prayers]

[The House met at 10:25a.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown.]

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

The House was called to Order

Suspension of S. O. 5[2]

II. THE RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR TUESDAY 9TH JULY, 2024.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, record of Votes and Proceedings. Pages 1 to 4? Page 5?, Page 6?, Page 7? Can a Member please move for the adoption of the Record of Votes and Proceedings held on Tuesday the 9th July 2024, to be adopted?

HON. MOHAMED B. SHAW: I so move, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder?

HON. IDRIS M. DAUDA: I so second, Honourable Speaker.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To].

[The Record of Votes and Proceedings for Tuesday 9th July 2024, has been adopted].

III. ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR SPEAKER

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let me tell you what my position is. The attendance before 10:00 o'clock or at exactly 10:00 o'clock is still not impressive. Let me tell you what I am going to do; I am putting in place a package for MPs to travel by next year for various trainings especially for those MPs who have not travelled. And that is going to be strictly for those who come to Parliament in time; those who are regular and punctual. So, I would not want a situation by the next budget year, for anybody to start telling me '*I have not travelled, others are traveling, and I have not been given the opportunity to travel*'. So let me say this in time; it is strictly going to be according to your punctuality and how regular you come to Parliament. Yes, Honourable Daniel Koroma.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, this is an innovative initiative which we like so much. My only issue is that you are limiting it to only those who have not travelled, and for others who have travelled but are committed to Parliamentary work, may say, 'since I have travelled, my commitment is no longer required, I think if it is...

THE SPEAKER: It is for all MPs anyway. I just wanted to be particular about those that have not travelled. I am putting together a package so that MPs go on study tour and they go for various trainings in other jurisdictions, but it is going to be limited to those who are punctual and regular. Let me say this again; for those who are punctual and regular. Mr Acting Clerk, take note, because when it is time I would invite you to tell me exactly those who are punctual and regular, thank you very much, proceed.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, before we proceed.

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for your motivation. But Mr Speaker that is what we have been paid for and that is why our people voted for us to come to this Parliament. Your position is good because it motivates us. But Mr Speaker, two weeks ago, I stood in this Well and announced that whosoever wants to go on oversight should inform us before they go. And Mr Speaker, this thing is becoming too perpetual. A day before yesterday I called the Chairman who was on her way with her team to Sierra Rutile for oversight; I told them to come back because we were to have an important sitting that day. She promised me that they would return and depart after the sitting but they never did, instead, they went on the trip. Mr Speaker I want to suggest that we start taking disciplinary actions against Chairmen who abandon sittings for oversights.

THE SPEAKER: Give me the list of those Chairmen who go on oversights without permission; just give me a list of them.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: One of them is... Okay, I will give you the list.

THE SPEAKER: Give me a list of them, and let me inform you that those Chairmen who go...

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Mr Speaker, before you rule, Sir.

THE SPEAKER: Yes

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Mr Chairman, Oversights are part of Parliamentary duties, and it is our role as Leaders to release the funds and release the timetable. At the time we released the first set of timetable, there was two weeks period given during which there were no sittings. And within those periods that we were supposed to go on Oversight, MPs were recalled to come for emergency sitting.

THE SPEAKER: When, here?

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Yes, we had a sitting on a Friday here which disturbed most Committees from going on Oversight.

THE SPEAKER: That is no excuse, Honourable Member.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: No, no, it is not an excuse; I am saying for this one, now that he is raising the matter, we can henceforth going forward, we would ensure as Whips we control our Chairmen to communicate with us, then we would look at our schedule before we know what to do. I have always said that as Leaders, we need to be mindful of what we say because we are before the Media. Otherwise, the media would just say there is no proper coordination in Parliament and that is why MPs do what they want.

So, I am saying going forward, we would work together with my opposite Member; I have called for a meeting with Chairmen so that we would correlate their activities. But to make a swift statement like this is also not good for the progress of Parliament.

THE SPEAKER: No, no, Honourable AKK, I do not agree with you on this because we have agreed as a Parliament. In fact, the Leader of Government Business raised this particular issue on several occasions; do not go on oversight without permission, it is as simple as that; do not go on oversight without permission.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Mr Speaker, if somebody manuscript for oversight, you have given him the permission. The truth is that we do not want to go deep into this, and that is why I am looking forward to meeting with you and the Leadership. This year's oversight is just one-way approval, and we the Whips are not involved. He would not tell you that he was consulted before going on oversight, and that is not the normal

tradition. So we are saying, let us shelve the issue and discuss it after the sitting, Mr Whip, please. Let us not bring everything to the Chamber, or else it would not...

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, he is the one raising the point or an eye-brow on this matter...

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: No, I am not...

THE SPEAKER: Hold on, Honourable AKK. Chief Whip, please sit down. I am not opening this matter for debate. This is no debate, this is the ruling; do not go on Oversight without my permission. All Chairmen are Chairmen because they represent me in those Committees. You cannot go on oversight or hold meetings without informing your Principal; it is not fair *[Undertone]* yes, make sure you inform me; you take my permission before going on oversight. Otherwise, let me say this for the attention of Members of Parliament; any Chairman that goes without my permission, do not be sure of maintaining your seat *[Applause]*. I am going to ensure that, thank you very much.

Please indicate that ruling in the Votes and Proceedings: *'Any Chairman that goes on Oversight without my permission will be removed as Chairman'*. This is because your action is affecting the effectiveness of Parliament. Just imagine we have a sitting now, and look at my right, almost empty *[Undertone]* well, the left is doing quite well *[Applause]*. At this point, let us proceed.

IV. GOVERNMENT MOTION

The Minister of Transport and Aviation

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION *[Mr Fanday Turay Esq.]*: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved; that this Honourable House hereby ratifies the following Agreement which was laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday 9th July, 2024:

I. AN AGREEMENT FOR THE DESIGN, FINANCING, CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF A SEA PORT AT RICKET, BANANA ISLAND AND LOGISTICS HUB, HARBOUR TERMINAL BY THE GENTO GROUP OF COMPANIES.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as was alluded by Mr Speaker a week ago, Sierra Leone is a virgin ground for investment. It is in confirmation of Mr Speaker's statement that I lay before this House an Agreement for the construction of a new Port; a project that will not only transform our Transportation Sector, but will also serve as a corner stone for our nation's progress.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, The Gento Group of Companies intend to undertake the development of a world-class Port facility in the Southern part of Ricket, Banana Island, with the support of Sea-Land and International Construction Firm that is specialised in the Marine Sector. The proposed Sea Port is intended to primarily serve as a transhipment hub, with the aim of tapping into the existing transhipment market in the sub-region and wider African Continent. Our nation stands at a critical juncture where the demand for efficient modern infrastructure has never been greater. Our existing Ports have served us well but the increasing volume of trade, the advancement in marine technology and the need for enhanced connectivity demand that we expand our capabilities. The construction of this new Port is a necessity in order to keep pace with global standards and to meet the growing needs of our people and industries.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Sea Port is approximately **\$2Bln** investment which is expected to be in full operation within three years. The proposed Port will in no way affect the existing operations of the Queen Elizabeth II Quay, as the proposed port will primarily target transhipment operations.

Economic benefit of this Project:

The proposed Port will be a catalyst for economic growth, in that, the Gento Group has allocated **10%** shares to the Government of Sierra Leone and will also be paying royalties and other related fees and charges. This port is also expected to create thousands of jobs during the construction phase, and even more permanent positions

once it becomes operational. The port will serve as a hub for international trade, attracting foreign investment, boosting our exports capabilities and reducing the cost of import; this will ultimately lead to lower prices for goods and services, thereby benefiting every citizen. The location of the Port is strategically selected to maximise efficiency and accessibility, and it will feature state-of-the-earth facilities; these include: advanced Cargo handling systems, expanded docking spaces and cutting-edge security measures, thereby attracting more international shipping lines and logistics companies leading to increased economic activities. This Port has a natural deep water harbour with a water depth of up to **23** meters, making it the deepest Port in Africa, with an estimated **60** million tons of cargo capacity annually. The depth allows it to accommodate larger container vessels, and it is essential in transforming Sierra Leone into a major transhipment hub in Africa.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Port is expected to generate a profit margin of over **\$800mIn** for the first three years of operations. The overall vision is to create a Port that is not only efficient and secured, but also environmentally sustainable; incorporating green technologies and practices to minimize its ecological footprint. This Port will be a significant source of revenue through Port fees, Custom duties and other charges related to shipping and logistics services. This would help in integrating our nation into global trade networks.

Connectivity:

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the development of this Port is part of a broader strategy to enhance our nation's connectivity. The transhipment activities will link Sierra Leone's main trading partners in the sub-region, including Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria etcetera; thereby leading to improvement in related infrastructures such as roads, railways, warehousing; benefiting the broader economy.

Economic and Social Considerations:

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, while we embrace progress, the Gento Group is equally committed to protecting our environment and supporting our communities.

Comprehensive environmental Impact assessments have been conducted and measures will be implemented to mitigate any adverse effect. Gento Group will also engage with local communities to ensure that they are represented and also benefit from this development.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in conclusion, this Agreement for the construction of a new Port is more than just a blue print for infrastructure. It is the vision of His Excellency the President, Brg. Rtd. Dr Julius Maada Bio for the future of this nation. It embodies and encapsulates our commitment to growth, progress and prosperity for all. It is on that note that I humbly call on this House to support this project, recognising the enormous benefits it will bring to our beloved nation, Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, be it resolved; that this Honourable House hereby ratifies the following Agreements which was laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday 9th July, 2024:

- *Concession Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Gento Group of Companies [SL] Limited, for the design, financing, construction and operationalization of a Sea Port within the Dublin and Rickett communities of Banana Island and Logistics Hub, Harbour Terminal at Kent in Sierra Leone, dated 5th July, 2024.*

QUESTION PROPOSED

THE SPEAKER: Yes, the Chairman.

HON. AMBROSE M. LEBBY: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Minister of Transport and Aviation and the Minister of Finance for facilitating this Agreement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, these Ministers are doing extremely well in ensuring that they transform President Bio's manifesto promise into reality. Few days ago, the Ministers of Transport was here with one Agreement, and today again he is here with another. I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the Committee, to thank him.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, President Bio in his manifesto told this country that he will diversify the economy, and today we are seeing Agreement of such nature that tends to transform the economy, ranging from Transportation, Agriculture, Tourism, Infrastructure etc.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Agreement before us is to design, finance, construct and operationalize a Sea Port within the and Ricket communities of Banana Island at Kent.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a big boost for our economy, and I am sure the Members of Parliament representing those communities would be celebrating in their minds, especially those along the peninsula area. Whatever the situation, we all know that with such an Agreement, the job creation project which the President promised this nation is gradually becoming a reality.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in Clause 2.3; '*the scope of this project*' Mr Speaker, it is clearly stated in the Agreement that both parties; the Gento Group of Companies [SL] Limited and the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone, in consultation with the Principal Regulatory Authority; the Sierra Leone Ports and Harbour Authority, will sit together to develop the specific scope that would be carried out by this Agreement. Mr Speaker, I want to assure Members on both sides of the aisle that this Agreement is a straight-forward Agreement, and therefore it is considered as non-controversial.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we heard the Minister of Transport clearly stating some of the economic benefits that we would derive from this Agreement; the **10%** shares to the Government of Sierra Leone, it will serve as a hub for international trade, as well and the job creation. So Mr Speaker, with all of these goodies, we need not waste time on this. But let me hastily take you to Clause 3.3 [ii & iii] that speaks of the technical obligations of Gento Group. It is stated here, in tandem with Section 93[3 & 6] of the 1991 Constitution, and also Section 95 and 96 that, '*the Committee on Transport and Aviation, by the powers vested in itself will carry out full oversights on this project, ranging from the construction phase up to the implementation process*'.

Mr Speaker, we have the mandate from the people, and as Members of Parliament, we have that capacity to look into this Agreement to ensure that Gento Group of Companies and its partners, including the technical team, do exactly what is required of them or advised by the regulatory authority. Mr Speaker, like you stated in your announcement, I am asking that you give full power to the Committee to ensure that we look into this Agreement for the people of this country to benefit, I thank you all.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Chairman. Honourable Aaron Koroma, you have the Floor.

HON AARON A. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me in the first place congratulate the Minister of Transport on his election as the Chancellor of the West Africa Marine University in Ghana [Applause]. We want to congratulate you and we want to wish you a successful tenure; that is a victory for the country and we are very proud of that achievement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have an Agreement which I want to refer to as non-contentious because in my several years in this Well, you and I can agree that this is a very first time we are having a **100%** Sierra Leonean led-Agreement being Tabled in this House [Applause]. We thought it was not possible...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Aaron A. Koroma, hold it there. You know, I just wanted to see somebody that will debate against this Agreement [*laughter*]. Because as Sierra Leoneans, or as Members of Parliament, we have been used to having foreign companies coming to Parliament; we have been used to approving Agreements by foreign companies or foreign individuals. I just wanted to see one MP that would stand to say I am against this Agreement, and then probably as Speaker, I would have debated. Let me tell you my brothers and sisters Honourable Members of Parliament, I have gone through this Agreement and this Agreement is good for us as a nation [Applause]. The number one reason why this Agreement is good is because; it is coming from our own brother [Applause]. Whatever he has, whatever profit he makes would stay here. In fact, an Agreement of this nature is going to impact... [*Interruptions*] no, no, hold on, hold on! I have often told you Members of Parliament,

that I am also a Member of Parliament *[Laughter]*. Just imagine, the Minister said in the first three years, the profit alone is going up to **\$800mIn**; that is going to impact hugely on the exchange rate of the Dollar versus the Leones immediately *[undertone]*. You have to bear with me; I am used to being there. Apart from that Honourable Members, you know in Togo, the depth of their Port is 16.5 metres, in Ghana, it is 14 metres, in Morocco it is 16, I think in Nigeria it is 16 metres, and in this, it is 22.5 *[Applause]*. Just imagine, so I just wanted to see the MP that would say no. Proceed, Honourable Aaron Koroma.

HON. AARON A. KOROMA: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you have to bear with me; proceed. I will interject again.

HON. AARON A. KOROMA: This is the second time I am seeing my Speaker taking a debate on an Agreement to be very personal.

THE SPEAKER: Oh yes, oh yes!

HON. AARON A. KOROMA: And I am sure, this one again is personal to you.

THE SPEAKER: I am so happy today seeing a Sierra Leonean Agreement

HON AARON A. KOROMA: Sure, you should be happy

THE SPEAKER: I am so happy

HON. AARON KOROMA: Because we have seen many Financing Agreements

THE SPEAKER: Of course.

HON. AARON A. KOROMA: Ranging from the Agricultural Sector, to the Mining Sector and almost all other Sectors. This is the very first time we are seeing an Agreement of such magnitude to be led by a Sierra Leonean. And on that note, we want to thank the CEO of Gento Group of Companies for thinking beyond the board ensuring that we have an Agreement of such nature.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Agreement seeks to also right the historical wrongs in this country. Mr Speaker, in the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries, Banana Island, Kent Island and the other areas used to be historic in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, but we never explored or asked the question; why is it that Banana Island was selected as a Port for the transhipment of slaves across Africa?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the reason was very simple; because the Ships that carried these slaves were very large enough that they needed a Port with a deeper depth, and Banana Island offered that potential; that was why Banana Island was very historic. So, this Agreement also tends to '*right that wrong*' to ensure that we have a Port that can offer the opportunity to allow bigger cargo vessels to come into this country. The reason why we have very huge sea transportation cases is because the Ships that come into this country are very small, and the cost is always huge. But if we have bigger vessels that come into this country, automatically you would have a reduction in the freight cost, and for sure I think this Agreement tends to solve that particular problem.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, like you said, there are a lot of other Ports; you talked about the Morocco which has a Port of about 16 meters depth, and other sub-regional countries like Nigeria, Togo, Gambia and the like. Even when most of them have invested over **\$5bIn** in ensuring that they expand their Ports, they still could not get more than 16 meters depth of their Ports. But we have a Port that already has about 20 metres depth, and if work is done on it, it has the potential reaching over 24 metres depth which will give us comparative advantage to host bigger vessels, which in turn would be a clear justification for us to have a Transnational Hub that will service sub-regional countries.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me specifically talk on the Agreement. Mr Speaker, one of the advantages that this Agreement tends to offer is that Section 23 of the Finance Act of 2024 talks about the repatriation of foreign proceeds of mining companies or investors. This section is saying, when Mining Companies or investors do their exports or sales, they can retain up to **30%** of their proceeds in the country. Mr

Speaker, this Agreement tends to put that clause into moribund because we have a Sierra Leonean who is banking in our Banks; whoever pays, will pay into Sierra Leonean Banks. So, instead of retaining just **30%, 100%** of all his proceeds will be retained in this country [Applause]. That in its self will significantly affect our fiscal balance in terms of the foreign exchange market. Mr Speaker that has been a perennial challenge with most of the companies that we are having in this country; imagine, you are generating your money here, **70%** is being taken off the shores of Sierra Leone, and even the **30%** to retain here is not effectively monitored and we are not even sure of it. But here is a situation we are having a company that will retain **100%** of its foreign proceeds in the country, which I believe is going to significantly boost our foreign exchange reserves in the country [Applause].

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Agreement also showcases the generosity of the CEO. Mr Speaker, for someone to exclusively own a land; the Banana Island is owned by the CEO of Gento Group, and he chooses to offer **10%** free carriage interest to the Government of Sierra Leone [GoSL]; and that is not enough, there is even a clause that says: if the government so desires, if government still wants to buy more shares, and the CEO thinks he wants to sell, he can also offer more undiluted shares for government to own. This is where I think is an opportunity for government to invest into this Sector.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to applaud the government in Clause 5.1[b], which talks about providing the line of credit of up to a minimum of **\$20MIn** for the company. But Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, much as I applaud this particular Clause, it is good that an Agreement of this nature, where already government is a shareholder, for government to fully have a say into such an investment; people say, '*put your mouth where your money is*' [Applause]. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members are very interested in this debate. So I am pleading that you open the goalpost so that more Members would debate, thank God it is the only item we have on the Order Paper.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, having a credit line for a minimum of **\$20MIn** for the company with an interest rate, to me, it is not much. We all saw during the Covid crisis that there was a programme called '*the Quap Agreement*' which was almost an interest free loan that was given to Importers in order to ensure that there was price stability. Mr Speaker, we are about to have a company if given the necessary support by government would solve the perennial problems we have in our exchange rates. So for that reason, I do not think they should be given a line of credit based on interest.

THE SPEAKER: Is the Governor here?

HON. AARON A. KOROMA: Yes, he is here. The Governor is here.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I recognise the presence of the Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone; can you please stand? Mr Governor, have you listened to what the Honourable Member is saying relating to this Agreement? Honourable Member, continue.

HON. AARON A. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my point is, much as I applaud government for having this particular clause that seeks to provide **\$20MIn** line of credit with a minimum of **5%** interest, we must also look at what the Company tends to offer in return; which is something no foreign investor would do. Because of this reason, I would like to recommend that government considers giving a line of credit to the Gento Company at no charge because what it stands to bring after these monies have been given, far outweighs what government is giving. And mark you, the government is a shareholder; if the company makes profit, government would also enjoy from the dividend, apart from the indirect benefit in job creation, payment of taxes and other benefits across the implementation stage.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is an opportunity and I am happy that the Ministry of Finance and the Bank Governor are here. Other countries are exploring the possibility of the African Import and Exim Bank. When you go to Nigeria, Dancote has just constructed one of the biggest Oil Refineries in Africa, and most of the financing came from the African Import Exim Bank. Just in June Mr Speaker, Cameron also

sought for funding from this same Bank, and it has expanded its Port. The reason why the African Development Bank has that component is for the provision of such opportunity. We are a member of that particular Bank, and I want to implore the Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor to commence negotiation with the African Import and Exim Bank to see how they can support this initiative, because if this initiative succeeds, it will seek to stabilise our imbalances with our foreign exchange.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to talk on Article 3.3.2.1 [b], which talks about the environmental issues. It says, *'during construction and operation of the Port, a Fishing Monitoring Hub shall be established and compliance policy formulated to protect the marine life.* This is important because when once a structure of such nature is constructed in that area, the activities of most people would be affected in one way or another because most of the people in Banana Island are fishermen. That is why I want to applaud the Drafters for considering this particular clause. So it now behoves the Ministry of Fisheries and Environment to ensure that they formulate the implementation policy that would see that the marine lives in that area are protected without destroying the source of livelihood of the people living in that particular area.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, like the Minister said, to me, this Agreement even exposes or clearly tells us that Gento Group of Companies is paying far more than other similar companies. Mr Speaker, what I have seen in this Agreement as unprecedented is the fact that the Gento Group of Companies is going to pay something like: True-put Fee, Concession Fee, and other royalties as the case may be. As for the Agreement we ratified last week, they were only paying Concession Fee and not True-put Fee. I think if there should be a special concession, it has to be for Sierra Leoneans. So I want to implore the government to also reconsider that because almost all of what this company is doing would help Sierra Leone.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Company is also going to pay Stamp Duty of not below **\$10MIn** on a yearly basis. And when you look at the Agreement that we ratified in the last Sitting, no Stamp Charge was embedded in that Agreement. So I think that government should consider reviewing some of these provisions.

Lastly Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, what I also consider to be a little unfair is the fact that the Agreement fails to make provision for the recruitment of an Engineer. This Engineer is going to serve as the government representative; to ensure that government gets what it is supposed to get from the investment. Mr Speaker, in other Agreements, like the one we ratified last week, and even the Auto-speak Agreement where an Engineer was also recruited, the cost is borne by both the Government and the Concessionaire because that is how it should be. But in this case, the whole cost of recruitment and the expenses of this Engineer are borne by the company.

Mr Speaker, I think the person is going to represent government's interest; if the Engineer is going to be paid by Gento Group of Companies, there is a tendency that he or she could be compromised. So I think government should ensure that it takes over the cost of paying that Engineer so that he can be answerable to government and not Gento. Article 8.1.4 tells you exactly what I am talking about.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me now move on to Development Partners. I want to say that in as much as I drew the attention of the Minister and the Bank Governor to explore from the African Exim Bank, there are also other Donor Agencies like the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and other partners to be reached out to. There is no better way they could help us if they do not solve our fundamental problems. The issues we have with our exchange rate are a fundamental problem. If we can invest into a local company that would tend to reduce those imbalances that we are experiencing, I am sure it will go a long way in boosting our economy.

On that note Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to call on this House to speedily join the Speaker; because I can see that this Agreement is the Speaker's Agreement...

THE SPEAKER: Oh yes, oh yes.

HON. AARON A. KOROMA: I want to call on this House to speedily join the Speaker in ratifying this fine Agreement with alacrity. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker and Honourable Members.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Koroma. Honourable Chief Whip, do you want to debate?

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Just two minutes.

THE SPEAKER: Just two minutes, okay. Anyway before you do, Honourable Members I recognise the presence of the Minister of Finance *[Applause]*. I also recognise the presence of Mr Mohamed Gento Kamara, the CEO of Gento Group *[Applause]*. Yes, proceed, Chief Whip.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I am going to be very brief because I was thinking that after your intervention you were going to put this Agreement into votes.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, sure. Thank you very much, Chief Whip.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: But thank you, you have allowed us to say few things. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to first of all thank the Minister of Transport and Aviation; within a week, he has brought two Agreements to this Well which are very pivotal to the improvement of our economy.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for us to know the importance of this Agreement, and for us to know that this Agreement is owned by us Sierra Leoneans, that is why we see the presence of both the Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor. For a very long time I have not seen the Bank Governor and the Minister of Finance accompany an Agreement together in the Well. This morning they are here together, which shows that this Agreement is owned by all Sierra Leoneans. Mr Gento Kamara, I want to say a very big thank you for at least planning to improve the lives of the people of this country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, what interests me the most in this Agreement is the Tourism aspect. This is the very first time I am seeing an Agreement of this nature that has Tourism potentials. And when my colleague on the other side was talking, he spoke about the benefits of Banana Island and Kent. This Agreement is very pivotal to the preservation of our tourism infrastructure and facilities in those areas. The Agreement is

not only talking about the improvement of the Tourism Sector, but also the maintenance of the legacy that had been there on Tourism.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other aspect in this Agreement is the Community Development. The people of Kent and Banana Islands have been deserted for so long, and this Agreement is to inform the people of Kent and Banana Islands that they are Sierra Leoneans, and that this government is a responsible government that can think of them. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when you look at the Community Development aspect, you would find out that there is a provision that talks about the Company providing **\$50,000** annually for Community Development. It does not only stop there, the Company is also planning to create some small businesses for the people of Kent. And Mr Speaker, that is what we call '*Sustainable Development*'.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when you let the people feel to be part of the any developmental project, that project or programme will be sustained because they will guard it jealousy because they see themselves benefitting directly from it. That is exactly what this project is going to do; creating small businesses for the people of Kent.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in as much as there is going to be some inconveniences along the way, there are also going to be some benefits. And I am pretty sure that the benefits will outweigh the small inconveniences. Mr CEO for Gento Group of Companies, I want to say thank you for your patriotic stance. I am sure you have read our Manifesto, and these are parts of our Manifesto promises we made to improve the lives of the ordinary people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, without much ado, I told you I was going to be very brief; I want to once more extend my sincere gratitude to the Minister and the Gento Group of Companies. To the Mr Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor, you have listened to the debates of my colleagues on the other side, and their contributions are very important because we do not want the company to start operations and drops along the way. Let us do whatever we need to do as a government to protect this particular project. So please Mr Speaker, I want you to reiterate this point to the

Minister and the Governor; that this project must be maintained by all Sierra Leoneans. We have seen foreign investors come and go after making a lot of money. In fact, the more money they make the more they think that we are nobody. There is no way Mr Gento would turn his back against this nation.

On that note, I want to say a very big thank you, and I also want to urge my colleagues on both sides to join us and speedily ratify this particular Agreement, as we have agreed that it is non-contentious. We must not only ratify this Agreement, but also ensure that we monitor its implementation stage to the latter. If this project succeeds, we would be proud as Sierra Leoneans of what we own and what we are doing, thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Dickson M. Rogers, Chief Whip. Honourable AKK, you have the Floor.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Deputy Speaker, are you still going to proceed with your debate? After Honourable AKK, the Deputy Speaker, and we round off, please.

HON. ABDUL K. KAMARA: Mr Speaker, unlike other Agreements, when I saw the Minister of Finance from Kambia, even the Civil Society person I first saw is also from Kambia, the man that is now debating is from Kambia, and we proudly owned this Gento Group of Companies. But Mr Speaker, I was shocked this morning not just by your debate, but whilst we were debating, flyers were given to us. This is the first Agreement we are passing in this Well that even before the commencement of the project, we have seen schools being constructed, we have seen community centres and health centres constructed in the areas of concession.

Mr Speaker, why is this important? Most times, as Members of Parliament, we complain that companies we have in our areas do not help our people at all. But with this one, before it even starts operation, there are already community involvement and community participation, and I want to say a big thank you to our brother, Gento.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, over the years, we have had local companies in Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, if you go to Kabala and look at the roads in Kabala, you would understand the importance of empowering local entrepreneurs. Mr Speaker, if you take a keen look at the Hill Cut Road, you would understand the importance of motivating and empowering local Sierra Leoneans *[Applause]*. If not for anything, these two Sierra Leoneans are better examples of why we need to empower Sierra Leonean Investors. Let me borrow the words of Honourable Sattie Kargbo who said, '*there are exceptional Sierra Leoneans in the field of entrepreneurship*'.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you look at the income needed for this project and the risk involved, every ordinary Sierra Leonean will keep his money in the Bank and not venture into taking this risk. But Gento is saying, as a Sierra Leonean, '*I want to take this risk to benefit Sierra Leoneans*'. The Honourable Aaron Koroma in his debate said, when you look at the income and the foreign exchange, these would not be going out of the shores of Sierra Leone. Just last December, we passed a Finance Act, asking for companies to bring in **30%**; now we have a company that is having **100%** on shores; what more do we want as Sierra Leoneans? For me, I see this Agreement as a Sierra Leonean Company; it is ours, and we should own it and ensure we do justice to it. If there is anything we can do better for our country, it is empowering the young people who are going into entrepreneurship. We have given enough information, we have given enough commendation, and we have brought the document to Members of Parliament. One thing I know is that we have the powers as Parliament to ratify Agreements, but we also believe the Executive has done justice to this. If there was anything not clear in this Agreement, I am sure the Minister of Finance would not have been here, and they are not just here at the lower cadre; it is the Bank Governor himself and the Minister of Finance that piloted this one. It shows how important it is to the economic growth of this nation. I am not passionate about this Agreement because it is my brother's own; I am passionate because I see economic growth based on this Agreement, thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for your contribution. Yes, Honourable Deputy Speaker. I would go back on my ruling to round off after the Deputy Speaker. Maybe I would allow one more on this side and one more on that side; Honourable Rugiatu Kamara, and Honourable Lamin.

HON. JOHN CHARLES: Mr Speaker, please, I want to be heard on this issue

THE SPEAKER: Don't worry, if you want to debate, do not worry; very soon, we would have the Presidential Speech to debate and all of you will debate.

HON. JOHN CHARLES: Mr Speaker, this is a serious business and it needs serious attention.

THE SPEAKER: No please, please sit down,

HON. JOHN CHARLES: Please, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Please sit down, Honourable John Charles; sit down please.

HON. JOHN CHARLES: Please, please

THE SPEAKER: Sit down. Sit down, please. You think that is going to convince me? Yes, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think so much has been said by the Honourable Aaron Aruna Koroma that little is left to be said by any one; he has exhaustively analysed and assessed the Agreement before us. Most of what we are going to say now after Honourable Aaron Aruna Koroma would be a repetition because he has exhaustively looked at the Agreement, and talked on critical areas that have to do with the empowerment of local content and local individuals that are pursuing entrepreneurship and taking the flag of this country at international level. Mr Speaker, what I would want to say in terms of adding my voice to this debate is for the Bank Governor and the Ministry of Finance to also consider that this is a very big Agreement; it is going to involve a lot of transactional activities, it is going to involve a lot of trade transactions. For the Commercial Banks, or whichever Bank the Gento Group of Companies is going to use, let them also receive waivers from the Central

Bank and the authorization of the Ministry of Finance so that we protect and retain the foreign currency end-to-end. In as much as the Agreement is speaking to Section **30** of the Local Content Agency Act of 2016, which says that '*the Bank of Sierra Leone should retain a fund and support local businesses*'; and they have been doing that. We must say that so that the people know that the Bank of Sierra Leone has been very responsive to the needs of Sierra Leone and to support Sierra Leonean Businesses.

Mr Speaker, the Honourable Aaron aptly put it that during the Covid, they provided **\$100MnI** to support businesses that were bringing in food stuff. Quite recently, they have put out another **\$20MIn** to support the Agricultural Sector. Now it is time to support the Sea Port and other trading activities. We know they can do it but they cannot do it alone; they would also need other international and foreign Banks because this is a big Agreement. The Honourable Aaron mentioned the Afri-Exim Bank which business is to support businesses in Africa that would take control of the end-to-end business exportation and business expansion in Africa. The idea is to ensure that we retain our foreign currency, improve on our employment capacity and stabilise our economy. We must also acknowledge the fact that when the Minister of Finance came here with the budget, he promised us that if we give the necessary support to him he would manage the economy and he has been managing the economy; we have seen inflation dropped by **18%**. Now it is time to manage the balance of trade. Mr Minister, it is important for us to manage the balance of trade, and that is why Agreements like this from local content and from local individuals is important. If you look at our balance of trade, you would realise that most of it comes from foreign currency export as a result of purchase. And if we are going to get Agreement like this where the contractor or the concessionaire, Gento Group of Companies would require support from other foreign Banks, we would also require the Central Bank to grant waivers to other Commercial Banks so that they can be able to issue out Guarantees, Bonds, to support this business and we can protect the financing locally. It is no gainsay that Gento has been an epitome in the business environment in Sierra Leone, Mr Speaker. When we say recruitment of local personnel to fulfil the local content, I am sure there is no need

for that clause in this Agreement because already, Gento has demonstrated that when he wants to recruit, he would recruit local Sierra Leoneans. That does not mean that he would not have to bring in foreign experts for this project; he has to because it is an engineering project of serious complexity, and they would also need additional hands to support our local hands.

But however Mr Speaker, I want to say to Gento, you have the support of this House. You can see that the House is supporting you not because you are Gento, but because you have shown that indeed Sierra Leoneans can do it. In fact, as far as I know, the best road in this country is the Hill Cot road. As far as I know, the best road well designed, and well-constructed was done by a Sierra Leonean, and we also see other Sierra Leoneans Companies like Pavifort doing extremely well.

Mr Minister, Mr Governor, this House is inclined to the fact that we must also support those locals. If there are other concessions and other areas that they need, the government must support them because when you support them, it is by default that nobody would lie to us; we would know that they are going to employ Sierra Leoneans, and they would not bring people from other countries. They would also not inflate the figures by saying we are going to employ two hundred thousand, one million, because they would naturally employ Sierra Leoneans and they have records of doing that. Gento, your activities and your works are speaking today for you in this Chamber. We hope that you go out there and do well, and we hope that the Bank of Sierra Leone would now prepare this provision in the Local Content Act, Section **30** to support this business.

Like the Honourable Aaron said, the government is also a shareholder and it has to put its money where its mouth is and its mouth where its money is, so that we can support its growth and also encourage other Sierra Leoneans that have the opportunity, the purse or portfolio big enough to take up other big projects like this.

On that note Mr Speaker, I want to encourage this House to approve this Agreement speedily.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I recognise the presence of Honourable Abdul Muniru Lansana [*Applause*]. Honourable Minuru Lansana was a very powerful Member of this House and he now works with the Gento Group; no wonder the Gento Group has so much support. Mohamed Onana Jalloh, is he here? Okay, he is not here. Ahmed Atata Mansaray, have they gone out? Okay. Paul Saffa Tapema, is he here? They have gone out. Now, let me recognise the presence of representatives of key CSOs in this nation: they are Ahmed M. Yillah, of the NCPA, David Hindolo M. Conteh of the NCPA, Alphonso Manley of the CRC, and William Sao Lamin; you are heartily welcome to the House of Parliament. Yes, Honourable Rugiatus Kamara.

HON. RUGIATUS KAMARA: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today I am happy that my maiden speech in the Sixth Parliament is on something important like this; ground-breaking and historic [*Applause*]. In seeing our own very brother, a Sierra Leonean intending to do this huge investment in the country is highly commendable. For the past years, we have seen successive governments investing hugely in our economy millions or billions of Dollars but still we are moving at a snail pace; which shows that something is missing. And what is it that is missing? A huge chunk of our economy is in the hands of foreigners [*Applause*], and we cannot develop in that kind of situation. So seeing our own brother making this kind of moves, it serves as clarion calls to encourage all Sierra Leoneans both home and abroad to invest in the country; that will enable us retain the proceeds we are having, instead of taking them out of the country. Mr Speaker, there is the saying, **S.O 2**, '*in Isreal, mony dae change hans eleven times befo e comot out of di country. Bot trust me, if we do research for Salon, we go notice say the mony nor dae change han pass two times*', and we cannot develop by that, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, presently Sierra Leone is a virgin investment space that guarantees high returns on investment. All sectors in this country need investments, for example, Agriculture. By the way, I am a farmer. For the past years, including this planting season, farmers are running up and down in search of Tractors to hire for their activities but unfortunately the available ones are not enough. When

you talk of packaging and branding, we like seeing attractive packaging but if you want to do that in Sierra Leone, you would have to go to Ghana or China.

Mr Speaker, in the area of medical, if you are in the provinces, I do not know for the South-East, but for the North, if you need CT Scan you have to come all the way to Freetown. These are all potential investments areas that would guarantee high returns and also create job facilities for our youths. Mr Speaker, let me thank both former president Ernest Bai Koroma and current President Dr Julius Maada Bio for creating the enabling environment in supporting our brothers; Mr Mohamed Kamara of Gento Construction and Mr Alimu Barrie of Pavifort. Mr Speaker, with the opportunities given to them, these two brands are not only local, but they are now in other West Africa countries. So like I said earlier, we need to encourage our brothers and sisters to invest in Sierra Leone. We cannot move forward if huge chunk of our economy is in the hands of foreigners.

Mr Speaker, even though I was waiting for my maiden speech to be on agriculture, I would not conclude without thanking His Excellency the President, Dr Julius Maada Bio for his strides in promoting Agriculture in the country. In one of his travelling overseas, he met with his counterpart, the President of Vietnam and appealed for Agricultural support, especially in rice development. As we all know, Vietnam is one of the leading countries in rice production. Mr Speaker, because of that encounter with his colleague President of Vietnam, now we have the South/South Corporation project that will be implemented in Makali; Tonkolili District and Lambayama; Kenema Districts. The project was launched in February and the Vietnamese and SLARI would be developing the breeding seed, whiles Makali and Lambayama will be multiplying the foundation seed before distributing to the farmers.

So I want to thank the President for that because it is very important for my people in Makali. Once again, Mr Speaker, we would continue to praise Mr Gento because we know him and we know what he is capable of doing. On that note, I am calling on both sides of the aisle to speedily ratify this Agreement, thank you, Mr Speaker [*Applause*].

THE SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Member for her contribution. Yes, Honourable

Lamin, you have the Floor.

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Colleagues Honourable Members of Parliament, today is a special day in the Sierra Leone Parliament because we have great visitors here with us; it is an exceptional day owing to the fact that we have big players in the House who are controlling the economy of the country.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, Point of Order. We do not know what our colleagues on the other side are sharing; perhaps, we would like to benefit from what they are sharing because there is so much discussion going on out there on the other side, and we do not know what the discussion is all about.

THE SPEAKER: They are just happy seeing the Minister of Finance here *[laughter]*.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: So can we put this debate aside and just talk about the Minister of Finance at the moment *[laughter]*? Anyway, I will not move **S.O 26**, thank you very much. Honourable SOS, we are talking about Local Content and Facilitation Content, we want to have decorum please, Mr Speaker. The Minister of Finance is here together with his counterpart, the Bank Governor; maybe we would have to discuss **S.O [26]** in the future *[laughter]*. Mr Speaker, I hope you have not been obstructed by any movement?

HON. JOHN CHARLES: Mr Speaker, I am still standing; I want to contribute please, Mr Speaker.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Honourable Member, sit down. Why are you doing that?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, no please, hold on, hold on. You know we should have order in this House...

HON. JOHN CHARLES: I know of course, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: You stood and I said no; please.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Apart from that, I am talking about something that is going to...

THE SPEAKER: I said no.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Yes, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Proceed, Leader.

HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA: Mr Speaker, I was talking about something very beneficial and the Honourable Member is obstructing, why are you obstructing something that has to do with the life blood of this Parliament? Anyway, Mr Speaker, I rest my case. There is no way we can move **S.O 26**, but we can deliberate it in private, thank you and God bless you, Sir *[laughter]*.

THE SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Lamin.

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: Mr Speaker, Colleagues Honourable Members of Parliament, the atmosphere in the Sierra Leone Parliament today is a unique one and something we would have to celebrate hereafter.

Honourable Speaker, Colleagues Members of Parliament, I said today is a special day because we have both the Bank Governor and the Minister of Finance here to see us debate this important Agreement. If we look at the 2024 Finance Budget, we are talking about less than a Billion Dollars **[\$958Mln]** Budget for the whole population of Sierra Leone. But today, Mr Gento Kamara with his group are talking about **\$2Bln**, meaning that the game has changed; we are no longer talking about less than a Billion Dollar, but we have a Sierra Leonean in our midst that is investing **\$2Bln**. Today we are proud of several Sierra Leonean investors like Mr Barrie of Pavifort, Mr Babadi Kamara of Bo Rangers , to name but a few. These are Sierra Leoneans that we have to be proud of because they are Sierra Leoneans who have their monies in Sierra Leone and have decided to change the game. The fact that we are moving from 11.3 Meters depth of a Sea Port to 23 Meters, this is something we all should be happy about.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, according to what we have heard, at the completion of this particular venture by the Gento Group of Companies, Sierra Leoneans might have benefited a lot. We have been informed that they are already carrying out their Corporate Social Responsibility in their communities of operation. We are proud of such

development, and we are happy that we can now go to bed in a very comfortable manner.

So on behalf of the people I represent from Gbongor Jiamama and Wonde, I want to say thank you to the Gento Group of Companies. Last month I saw a very unassuming gentleman from Pavifort, and today again I have seen another gentleman very of the same character. This is what we should be talking about, and we should be proud of hearing about Sierra Leoneans who are doing their very best towards the development of the country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Agreement is a win-win situation; if you look at Clause 4.11[3], we are talking about the taxes that would be collected from this Company; the Pay As You Earn [PAYE] to the NRA, the Stamp Duty, all of which will be coming into our Coffers. I want to thank His Excellency the President for his vision in taking the right direction towards this particular venture.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we talk about larger vessels that will be coming to Sierra Leone; thereby providing job opportunities and warehouses where things will be stored. Remember, we promised this nation 500,000 jobs and here are we today talking about this Agreement. By completing the construction of this particular Port, we are going to be talking about the creation of thousands of job directly and indirectly. For any employment you create, you have hundreds of people who survive through that person. So for this particular company to employ thousands of Sierra Leoneans is a very good venture.

Mr Speaker, Colleague Members of Parliament, on that note, I want to end by saying we are very proud of these Sierra Leoneans: Mr Barrie of Pavifort, Mr Gento Kamara or Gento Group of Companies and Mr Babadi Kamara of Bo Rangers.

HON. AMADU ALPHA BAH: Mr Speaker, I notice that so much praises have been levied on our indigenous entrepreneurs without mentioning Papa Chendayca. So please, let Papa Chendayca be recognised as well.

THE SPEAKER: No please, Honourable please, we have nothing before us dealing with that individual. Yes, proceed.

HON. JOSEPH WILLIAMS-LAMIN: Thank you very much Mr Speaker. It is as a result of the significance of this particular Agreement that these two important gentlemen would be supported. I am sure Mr Gento Kamara would be given the requisite professional guide so that he succeeds. As a government, our agenda is to succeed, and we have never promised a quick-fix to Sierra Leone's problems; all we did was to ask that you exercise patience and judge us at the end of the day. We know that things are going to be done in the best interest of Sierra Leone, thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Lamin. Now, I have become curious; it seems Honourable John Charles has something to tell us because he has been ranting all over the place. So I think I am going to allow him; let me hear you.

HON. JOHN CHARLES: Mr Speaker for now, I am okay.

THE SPEAKER: You are okay now?

HON. JOHN CHARLES: Yes, I am okay.

THE SPEAKER: You have been cautioned now?

HON. JOHN CHARLES: Just to lessen your curiosity, I am okay now.

THE SPEAKER: You do not want to debate again?

HON. JOHN CHARLES: No, no, I am okay now.

THE SPEAKER: *[In Laughter]* thank you very much. Now before we round off, let me talk to the Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor; you were invited today deliberately because I wanted you to listen to Members of Parliament. You know, we now have, of course, we need to talk after here but we now have an Agreement before this House that has to do with a citizen of this Republic. And as far as we know as a Parliament, we want government to help this particular company to become credible in the world *[Applause]*. And no company can be considered **100%** credible without the

involvement of government. And it is good that government has already made a commitment of about **\$20MIn**; please see this one through. Because the moment government invests in this particular investment, other investors are going to come. Now, they will be confident that yes, this is a credible company, this is a credible investment because government has invested; then you can attract other investors to come and invest. So I urge you, Mr Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor, to see how you can support this particular project. And we know as well as you do, that this particular investment is going to help Sierra Leone in several ways. So please, it is my plea to you Mr Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor, to see how you can help this investment. I am sure this investment would work magic for this nation in various respects. So that is all the more reason I said that you should come and listen to the support this Parliament has for this particular investment, so that you would see what to do, thank you very much for coming. Yes, Leader of the Opposition.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I start my intervention, I want to use this opportunity to encourage you Sir, that as you invite the Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor to your special meeting today, you add an AOB to your Agenda regarding the very road you use on a daily basis from Model to Parliament, on to the Vice President's Office [*Applause*]. And for the attention of Gento Group; a credible construction company Mr Speaker, that road is one of the most bumpy roads in this city.

THE SPEAKER: I agree.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, no sooner you choose to come to Parliament, your next experience is hell. And for God's sake, this is State Avenue.

THE SPEAKER: And thank God we have the Gento Group here.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: And they are all here; the man who can do the work is here, the man who has the money is here, the man who instructs disbursement is here. So they are all here.

THE SPEAKER: You are right, Honourable Koroma.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: It is very serious, Mr Speaker; please add it to your AOB. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in your opening remarks, you did say that you just wanted to see an MP who would say '*we do not want this Agreement*', or the Agreement is not good for this country'. Mr Speaker, I promise you that for the rest of your term in office, you will never get such response in respect of such Agreement; no MP will say we do not want this. My only issue is the law that governs Parliament in respect of supporting or critiquing Agreements before this House. For instance, we all know that as opposed to most other Agreements, this particular Agreement is an indigenous Agreement; it is one of our kind in the person of Gento Kamara. In the events we as Parliament identify certain areas that we think are disadvantageous to our brother, and we want to get rid of those disadvantages and make it better for him, or we identify certain areas that would be disadvantageous to His Excellency the President in providing better lives for the people of this country which is his real agenda, and then it is our wish to ensure that those irregularities are corrected, do you think we can do anything in respect of this Agreement based on the law governing us? Of course, annulling this Agreement is out of question; nobody can say this Agreement should be annulled, we cannot, and it should stand. But if I had my way, it would have been modified to make it better. I would give you an instance, and when I give you the instance, you would just regret. And that is why I want to encourage you that the earlier ruling you made was to ensure that we remove this virus...

THE SPEAKER: Have you seen that law?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: I have not still seen it, so I wonder where this thing comes from.

THE SPEAKER: I think it is just a preconceived opinion

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: I wonder

THE SPEAKER: That law does not exist.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: It does not exist, so I wonder.

THE SPEAKER: That law does not exist.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, let me refer you to one clause; Clause 4.5.2, on Page 32. If you read that clause, it says nothing, in fact, the clause stops half way; the sentence did not end and the intention of that clause is not known. Mr Speaker, with your permission I can read it. Check the phraseology and see what it says; it says nothing. The Clause says: '*Gento Group shall be entitled to carry forward indefinitely without restriction the **15%** disallowed losses based on this rule made*', and then nothing else.

So, if we have had the power without this virus law, we could have hung heads for them to tell us what they intend to do here, and we would have used our powers under Section **105** to complete this sentence. Maybe the unknown write-up is the one that is really beneficial to this country, but we do not know because it is incomplete. And as it is now, it has to remain this way because we cannot change it.

THE SPEAKER: No, I do not accept that; it is my ruling that that sentence be completed. Clerk, put that in the note; what is that particular Clause?

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Clause 4.5.2, Page 32

THE SPEAKER: Please hold on. Mr Minister, can I hear you on this?

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION [Mr Mr Fanday Turay Esq.]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think this very Clause should not be read in isolation of Clause 4.5.1. The heading itself is: **Treatment of losses for Income tax**. Clause 4.5.1 deals with the **85%**, and the **15%** is the one that the Honourable Leader has just talked about. So I think it is just a matter of paragraphing; but the content flows from 4.5.1 and then 4.5.2.

HON. TAMBA KELLIE: Mr Speaker,

THE SPEAKER: Yes,

HON. TAMBA KELLIE: If I may be heard. I think we just have to delete the word 'May'.

THE SPEAKER: Yes

HON. TAMBA KELLIE: And then also Mr Speaker, let me speak to some Parliamentary and Constitutional Law issues. Mr Speaker, we as MPs have the power to make corrections because we have been asked to ratify the Agreement. If we believe that it is defective, we cannot on our own change it because it is the people's Agreement; we can tell them to take it back and bring it to us in the form of letter

THE SPEAKER: No, no, no, we do not want to tell...

HON. TAMBA KELLIE: I am just saying... no, no, Mr Speaker, what I am saying...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Kellie, let me just think aloud on what the position of Honourable Daniel Koroma is: Some of these Agreements we cannot reject, and we can even not send them back; we just need to do relevant amendments to them. And I do not think there is any law preventing Parliament from doing so.

HON. AAROM A. KOROMA: Mr Speaker Sir,

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON. AAROM A. KOROMA: In the Fourth Parliament where you and I shared; when the Agreement for the Toll Gate was brought into this Well, we debated that with some amendments which we did in this Well...

THE SPEAKER: Of course.

HON. AAROM A. KOROMA: The Fees that were initially in the Agreement were different from the Fees they implemented; and those ones were brought in as an amendment *[Undertone]*. That is what I am saying; so our amendment could be like an addendum wherein the initial players could also have a say into whatever would be identified.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, I believe we should discuss this out of this Plenary, please, thank you.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker,

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I am not... yes Chief Whip, let me hear you.

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Mr Speaker, we have been passing Agreements here with amendments; we can still pass this with amendments, and tell the Minister to make sure that they do the amendments instead of sending it out.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, it is alright.

HON. OSMAN ABDAL TIMBO: Mr Speaker,

THE SPEAKER: Yes,

HON. OSMAN ABDAL TIMBO: Mr Speaker, I am bit worried about this argument. Mr Speaker, a bit of my background is in Investment Law, and I think I have done a few investment Agreements, and we all know as Lawyers that there is something called '*Consent of Agreement*'; it is called '*the meeting of minds*'. And the responsibility of Parliament is to ratify what the parties have agreed. When Agreements are done by Private Business people and Government or whoever, they cannot be tampered with. If we do not agree to a particular clause which is different from construction in terms of like what he is raising now: incomplete sentences, typographical errors, those can be amended. But Mr Speaker, when it comes to the provisions itself, they cannot be amended; you will send it back to them to go and negotiate. We are here,...
[*Interruption*]

THE SPEAKER: No, no, Honourable Timbo, I do not agree with you. Let me tell you what the principle is [*Interruption*].

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Mr Speaker, can we please discuss this in your Chambers?

THE SPEAKER: You see, Honourable Leader, stop interfering with my duty here. When I sit here, I want whatever we end up concluding on is in the interest of all of us and the State. So I am curious to listen to every argument [*Undertone*], do not tell me about procedure, I understand Parliamentary Procedure very well. So if I give anybody leave to listen to that person, I have a reason; so leave that to me, please.

Now, Honourable Timbo, I do not agree with you, and let me tell you why. Anything we pass in this House is Law. All what we are here for is to pass the Laws of the Land; these Agreements are also laws. Whatever we pass here becomes Law, and there is no law that tells you we cannot amend. We have the duty, we have the authority to amend laws and besides, we represent the State; whatever government is doing there, whatever they bring here is just a proposal. No, hold on; Honourable Timbo, what I am saying; this Agreement, even if they go and sign Agreements and they bring those to Parliament, whatever they bring to Parliament is in the form of a proposal. It is what we agree on as a people, or what we endorse that becomes the law. So if the investor accepts, fine, if he or she does not accept, then he should forget about the investment.

HON. OSMAN A. TIMBO: Mr Speaker, let me ask a question.

THE SPEAKER: Hold on, that is the ruling, Honourable Timbo, you do not need to respond to that.

HON. OSMAN A. TIMBO: I just wish to ask a question, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: No, no, you do not need to ask any question

HON. OSMAN A. TIMBO: For example, Treaties brought from International organisations, you said these are all proposals; can this Parliament, out of its ultimate supreme powers amend International Treaties?

THE SPEAKER: You are talking about International Treaties

HON. OSMAN A. TIMBO: It is the same; these Agreements are also International Agreements. Mr Speaker, for example...

THE SPEAKER: No, no, no, now listen; you have now ventured into a different domain

HON. OSMAN A. TIMBO: No, no, you said Parliament has ultimate powers.

THE SPEAKER: Because this is among States

HON. OSMAN A. TIMBO: Equally Mr Speaker, these Agreements are also International Agreements.

THE SPEAKER: No, no, no.

HON. OSMAN A. TIMBO: They are International Agreements enforceable

THE SPEAKER: No, no, no, I do not agree. Hold on, Honourable Timbo, hold on.

HON. ALPHA BAH: Mr Speaker, may I be heard?

THE SPEAKER: No, sit down Honourable Timbo, sit down. Yes, let me hear you.

HON. ALPHA BAH: Mr Speaker, with respect, I beg to differ with my colleague.

THE SPEAKER: Of course.

HON. ALPHA BAH: Clearly, when it comes to International Treaties,

THE SPEAKER: Yes

HON. ALPHA BAH: The layer of Agreement has been different from when it comes from two different parties.

THE SPEAKER: It is something completely different

HON. ALPHA BAH: Reason being Mr Speaker, the State Parties are representing the interest of their people

THE SPEAKER: Of course.

HON. ALPHA BAH: So no sooner they decide to enter into an agreement, it reflects the will of the people.

THE SPEAKER: Of course.

HON. ALPHA BAH: But when it comes to Parliament Mr Speaker, we are here representing the people.

THE SPEAKER: He is saying something different.

HON. ALPHA BAH: I agree with him to say if it has to do with the substance we agree, but we have the power to amend...

THE SPEAKER: To amend

HON. ALPHA BAH: Agreements brought before us between private parties...

THE SPEAKER: Of course

HON. ALPHA BAH: We are here seeking the interest of the people.

THE SPEAKER: Of the people

HON. ALPHA BAH: That is my point, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: In fact, that is what I am saying; the position, Honourable Members, order. Now let me tell you; whatever we make here is law. So there is no Agreement that can come to this Well that we do not have the authority to amend; and I so rule. Proceed.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker

THE SPEAKER: Yes

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: I thank God for this particular Parliament under you. I know by the time the Sixth Parliament concludes, Sierra Leone will be a better place. In the interest of progress, I would continue my debate but I encourage you that we have a special session on this issue so that Members' minds would be prepared that henceforth, when Agreements come they can be amended to make it better.

THE SPEAKER: Of course

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Some people just use political lens to look at Agreements, or think that the Agreement was drafted in bad fate, no; there is no bad fate in this Agreement. For instance, there may be areas like 3.3.1, which talks about '*Principal Obligations of Gento Group*'. If I had the power, and our minds were prepared, some of those obligations will be removed from the Company because in our opinion, maybe some obligations are unreasonable to the Company. Other areas like 4.11.2, Page 36, presents a situation wherein for the first time I am seeing an Agreement here that is totally against our Labour Laws. It is stated in this Agreement that foreign workers who reside, work and earn salary in this country should not pay their PAYE Tax here; it should be paid back home where they come from. That is an

insult, Mr Speaker. You cannot go to India and do such a thing because they would not allow that, and they do not even know about Dollar, seriously. When I went to India, I made one of my Physiotherapists as my best friend. My first son and his son shared the same birthday and we decided to take them out as pairs on their birthday. When we went, I gave his son **\$100** as his birthday gift. I had to reclaim the money after an hour because I sensed that they did not even value what I gave them. I reclaimed it technically and changed it to Rupees and it amounted to **8,300** Rupees. It was only when I handed him the Rupees that they went celebrating all over the place.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is stated in this Agreement that when contractors work for you, you should not pay them in Leones; you should pay them in other currency. For such payments, I think the Bank Governor should keep the foreign currency and pay the contractors in Leones because the work is being done here. Mr Speaker, that has nothing to do with Gento; it is protecting somebody else. How can you work here and refuse to be paid in our own currency? Instead, you prefer to be paid in any other currency like the Pounds Sterling, the Euros or the Dollar. Under the normal circumstances, you have to pay in hard currency through the Bank Governor who keeps the hard currency and pay you the equivalent in Leones because the job is being done here. You can then choose to exchange the Leones to any currency through the Banks. But as we came here, our minds were not even prepared because we never had the precedent indicating that a Motion can be moved to make amendment. But thankfully, I know you are well persuaded; so you need to have a special session with us to prepare the minds of all Members, in addition to your earlier ruling. It would have been better if by the time you made that first ruling the Legislative Committee Chairman and his team had taken care of all the issues in the Agreements before presenting it to the Well. I do not doubt the Chairman of Legislative Committee because he is very effective. But if we start ensuring that before Agreements come to this Well and included in the Order Paper, let them go through the Committee for scrutiny. Having gone through that process, the need for amendment will be reduced, and the work load on Members will be easier.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, some of these amendments are done to ensure that we generate more revenue for government because His Excellency cannot run this government without money. Now look at some of the provisions included that say, PAYE Tax of foreign workers in this country should be paid at home and not here, where they will be working. That is an insult, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, on that note, I know we are moving towards what I am suggesting because I have sensed it in my spirit that under your watch as Speaker of this Sixth Parliament, we will reach there. From the last time we approved the Sierra Leone Industrial Zone which is really good for this country; I really commended the Minister of Transport for all those very big initiatives.

THE SPEAKER: And he is bringing very big Investment Agreements here.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: In fact, he is lion heart; whiles others are Chicken heart, he is lion heart.

THE SPEAKER: He thinks big, not so? *[Laughter]*

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: He thinks big, and that is very good. So I urge my colleagues MPs to prepare ourselves based on the instinct of Mr Speaker, his agreement and his ruling. Let us prepare our minds that subsequent Agreements can be amended.

THE SPEAKER: Of course

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: So as we move little by little until we reach there, I encourage my colleagues MPs to ratify this Agreement.

THE SPEAKER: And I spoke to the Chairman of the Legislative Committee, I think yesterday. I insist that every Agreement that comes to this House should go through him; he should take a look at them and advise *[Laughter]*.

Suspension of S.O 5[2]

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, 4.9.1 of the Agreement says, for the first five years, no room for Import Duty. Mr Speaker, I am not too averse to this for the Gento Group. The problem with this is that if there are no

safeguards, people will come under the name of Gento Group of Companies and benefit from it illegally. And as the Agreement is currently, we have no power to provide safeguards to ensure that this Duty Free Concession is given only for Gento Group, and that any illegal connection to that concession is made punishable. These are some of the reasons why we should have powers to amend Agreements. So on that note, I encourage my colleagues and I beg you Mr Speaker, let us start this thing someday, very soon as we ratify this Agreement.

THE SPEAKER: We have already started.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Thank you very much. So on that note,...*[Interrupted]*

HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS: Sorry, Mr Speaker, can I ask my colleague to go to 4.9.2?

THE SPEAKER: No, no, please, Chief Whip, leave that, leave that, please. Yes, proceed.

HON. DANIEL B. KOROMA: Mr Speaker on that note, I encourage my colleagues to ratify this Agreement. We are all aware of some of the issues that are neither good for Gento, or for the Ministry of Finance. But based on your Leadership, I know it will not repeat this way; there will come a day, very soon, that Agreements will not come hook line and sinker and return the same way; we would have to modify them for the good of this country. So thank you very much, and God bless you *[Applause]*.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Leader of the Opposition. In line with what the Leader of the Opposition has just said, Mr Minister of Finance, I made a ruling here about couple of days ago that please, when you go to sign these Agreements, make sure that a Member of Parliament of the Legislative Committee particularly, be part of your delegation. This is because, we have come to realise that most of the time some of these technical issues may be there in the Agreement and people do not see them. Sometimes the Lawyers just print out of their templates and they just give it to you and you sign, and they give it to other Ministers and they sign; even though you read it, but sometimes you do not see some of these technical issues. So please, whenever there is

an Agreement to sign even out of this country, please make sure at least, you include as part of your delegation, a Member of the Legislative Committee – the Chairman, Deputy Chairman or any strategic Member, to just look at some of these little areas and have them corrected before they are brought to Parliament, Please. This is a passionate plea, thank you very much. The Leader of Government Business, the Floor is yours.

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to begin by thanking the Members of Parliament for contributing to this debate. It has been shown clearly that this Agreement is not controversial, having listened to their positions. Mr Minister, you have seen the temperature of this Parliament, unlike the last Agreement that was brought to this House; it means we want to see more Agreements that involve Sierra Leoneans. Today, you see that the Opposition and the Ruling, including the Paramount Chiefs are all coming together in support of this Agreement; is because we are seeing one of our kinds. For the first time you are bringing an Agreement that involves a Sierra Leonean whose benefits, profit or whatever he is going to get will be retained and be developed in Sierra Leone. So, we want to see more of these Agreements because one of what we promised was that we are going to create more Millionaires in Sierra Leone, thank you very much.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have noticed from this Agreement that a lot of due diligence has been done unlike the other Agreements; paying of taxes, and less concession given. Mr Speaker, I noticed that the issues we raised during the last Agreement we passed have been amended in this Agreement. We hope due diligence will continue to be done in other Agreements that involve other investors just like it has been done for this one.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the first paragraph of the preamble pleases me the most. And Mr Speaker, with your leave I will read: '*The Government of Sierra Leone, having been dependent on minerals export for so long is now desirous to diversify the economy, and obviously sees Port development and expansion as one of the key ways to attract Foreign Direct Investment*'.

Mr Speaker, we have promised that we want to diversify the economy, but we have spent all of our time as a government concentrating on minerals. I am happy today; the government has considered expanding the Port Sector, thereby diversifying the economy through the Port Sector. We are looking for more Agreements in diversifying the economy in the area of Agriculture, the blue economy, and the Fishing Industry; we should not just be totally dependent on the Mining Sector.

Today Mr Speaker, it is only the rich that can venture into the Mining Sector. For some of us coming from Mining areas, we know that before now, even the artisanal mining used to benefit our people. But today, it is only when you go into mechanised mining that you can realise something tangible.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am very pleased with Gento Group of Companies because they brought the idea to government, and that is what we are expecting from our Entrepreneurs; do not just sit and wait for government, bring on board initiatives to government. It is the Gento Group that designed and approached the government with this project, and the government has shown true willingness to support.

Mr Speaker, if you read preamble [b], it says: '*Gento Group has approached government with a proposal to design, engineer, finance, construct, own and manage a multi-functional Seaport facility*' – this is an initiative of Gento Group, and thank you very much, Mr Gento. This is what is expected from Sierra Leoneans; we need to have initiatives to bring to government and we expect government to support those initiatives.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this Agreement is **\$2BIn** and it runs for **25** years for a start, with a possible extension for another **25** years. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the whole of 4 talks about payment of Taxes, PAYE Tax, NASSIT. Mr Speaker, we have approved Agreements in this Parliament wherein taxes were suspended for a certain period; the initial implementation of those Agreements. As for this Agreement, it has been agreed by government and Gento Group from the onset that taxes should be paid, thank you very much for that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it has been said that withholding taxes and NASSIT should be paid. One thing that pleases me the more about this Agreement is the fact that expatriates will be handing over their skills to Sierra Leoneans at the end of the day. Mr Speaker, we have had contracts that have been signed, and the expatriates come, they leave here forever, and they even refused to train our Sierra Leoneans counterparts who should take after them. But in this Agreement, it has been clearly said that because of the nature of the business, it is definite that we need experts; but at the end of the day, these experts should be in the capacity to handover their expertise to Sierra Leoneans. With such arrangement, maybe the whole process will be completed within the shortest period, and Sierra Leoneans would have been adequately trained to handle or Mann the Port. Mr Speaker, which means job creation, education, and a lot of other supports, thank you very much Mr Gento.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as His Excellency said, we are going to create jobs and from the start of this project - from the construction stage of the project to its full operations, jobs will be created for Sierra Leoneans.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when once we pass this into law and is implemented, we are encouraging Sierra Leoneans to prepare their minds to be going to Dublin and Kent to secure jobs.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let us look at 5.1 [d]. A lot of Sierra Leoneans have been seeing the process of establishing their own businesses extremely challenging because securing Loans from Banks bears a very high interest rate. Mr Speaker, you have an interest loan rate that ranges from **18, 19, 20, to 27%**. And when you take such a loan with such a huge interest, it means you may be working just for the Banks. Mr Speaker I am pleased that the Ministry of Finance and the Minister of Transport who are part of this Agreement have considered given Gento Group a credit line. Mr Speaker, it should not just end with Gento Group; they should also consider other entrepreneurs. If we encourage our Sierra Leonean brothers and give them these credit lines we would have more Sierra Leoneans doing business in Sierra Leone. But today, if we do not give Sierra Leoneans these credit lines and they take loans bearing interest

rates of **27%, 28%, 30%**, at the end of the day these businesses will not succeed. And only foreigners with huge cash or resources will continue to operate businesses in the country.

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased with this issue of credit line, and thankfully, we have the Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor who took part in this Agreement with us here today. So we expect the Minister of Finance to exactly do what he has agreed to do in this Agreement. When once this Agreement is passed into Law, we expect the Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor to do everything possible for us to have these credit lines. Please make sure you support other serious-minded entrepreneurs through this facility. With that, we would minimise the rate of other people coming to do businesses with our monies, and take the profits back to their countries. Whatever profit the Gento Group is going to make will definitely remain in this country, Mr Speaker. So Mr Speaker, I am happy that this credit line has been created, and we hope the Line Minister and the Bank of Sierra Leone will definitely implement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I also want to challenge this Parliament. We have an oversight responsibility on this project, and that is why we are the ones that are going to approve this project. I would encourage the Committees responsible for Transport, Environment and Labour to pay keen attention to this project. For instance, we have lots of labour issues; issues around health and safety, and these are things Members of the Parliamentary Committees should be looking at because when once construction begins, these issues may be coming up. Let these Committees be visiting the site to ensure that what was approved is what is being implemented. It is not just for us to ratify, it is for us to also continue working with the Gento Group to enhance full compliance.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is evident that we have ratified Agreements in this Well and at the end of the day nothing happens. For instance, we have ratified Agreements for the construction of Iron Ore and manufacturing of Cement but up till now nothing has been done. Mr Minister, this should not be part of the Agreements that have been signed and approved and nothing happened.

So I want to thank Mr Speaker and colleagues Honourable Members for their contribution. I noticed the passion you have demonstrated for this project, especially when it is locally owned. Because it is an Agreement that involves a Sierra Leonean and the Government of Sierra Leone, this is clearly a Sierra Leonean Business. Whether or not the Sierra Leone Government has **10%**, and Gento as a Sierra Leonean has **80%, 90% or 100%**, it is a Sierra Leonean business. Thank you very much.

Mr Minister, these are the types of Agreements we want to be seeing; not the Agreements that you negotiate with other people and give them a lot of concessions, and at the end of the day they leave us with reservations. Once more, thank you for bringing this one. I know that more Entrepreneurs will be meeting you the Minister of Finance and the Bank of Sierra Leone for credit lines. Please make sure you open credit line for them, thank you very much, Honourable Members.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Acting Leader of Government Business. Ministers of Transport and Aviation and Finance, and of course the Bank Governor, we urge you to make this project succeed; let this investment succeed, and we would be proud of you. Yes, Mr Ministers for Transport.

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION [MR. Fanday Turay Esq.]: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, I think this is my second time of being here for the past one week, and I must confess that I am really very happy today. Firstly, the jubilant and ecstatic mood that I have seen within this Parliament today gives some of us hope, and we are very pleased that both aisles are discussing such matters of national importance under a very good atmosphere and in jubilant mood. I want to use this opportunity to thank Honourable Members for their contributions during this debate, and I want to assure Honourable Members that your points are well noted. I have been taking copious notes to ensure that I do not miss any important issues raised here.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, once we return, we are going to sit down and go through some of these issues and see how we can try to improve on them in the Agreement. But I want to assure the Honourable House that this Agreement, like we

have all alluded to, is one of the best Agreements that I have ever done personally, and I am sure is one of the best Agreements that have been brought to this Honourable House. The reason being, since we started the discussions around this Agreement, I must be very frank to say that Gento has been really cooperative. Before we started, he discussed the issue with me, and then the matter was also discussed with His Excellency the President who gave his strategic direction. But even with the strategic direction given by His Excellency, Gento did not only stop there; we had to call all key parties, including the Ministries which were all represented and we started discussing the paper. We discussed it and all the Ministries gave their views which were taken on board by Gento. We then had to prepare the Cabinet Paper, and I wanted to take it directly to Cabinet but His Excellency the President in his wisdom said no, this paper should go to Cabinet Sub-Committee. The Cabinet Sub- Committee had so many other members; Ministers, Deputy Ministers and some other persons specialised in this area of discussion. During the discussion, key points were taken by Gento, and then we went into the Agreement.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, even with the Agreement, I can assure the Honourable House that we discussed it together with Gento, Law-Officers and other key stakeholders, including Finance Ministry as well. We did not also stop there, I called Gento aside just after the discussions, and pointed out the personal issues that I thought we needed to look into, and Gento agreed. After which, Gento went ahead and had bilateral meetings with Ministers and Agency heads as well. It is as a result of all these consultations that we were able to get this Agreement to where we are today.

So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to assure this Honourable House that we will continue to do our best to ensure we bring very good Agreements to this Honourable House for ratifications. I also want to thank the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Daniel Brima Koroma and Honourable Aaron A. Koroma as well for their kind comments. I always give thanks to God and also to His Excellency, President Julius Maada Bio. When His Excellency the President, Julius Maada Bio first appointed me three years ago as Permanent Representative for Sierra Leone to the United Nations,

what he told me at that time was that: '*Fanday, look, Sierra Leoneans have so much capabilities; we can punch above our weight, so I urge you to look at bigger things*'. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, since that day, that has always been my dream. As we all know, come the 1st August to the end of August, Sierra Leone will be chairing the Security Council of the United Nations, and that is a big achievement for Sierra Leone as a country. So we will continue to look into some of these bigger Agreements, and I cannot agree more with this Honourable House, especially about Gento; he is our own, he is a Sierra Leonean and I am really personally proud to associate myself with this Agreement. As a Sierra Leonean, I am very pleased to have facilitated such an Agreement for a Sierra Leonean who has been doing extremely well. We all know the track record of Gento, so I do not need to say a lot about him. So once more, I want to thank all the Honourable Members for their contributions.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members with that said, be it resolved that this Honourable House hereby ratifies the following Agreement which was laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday 9th July 2024:

'An Agreement for the design, financing, construction and operations of a Sea Port at Ricketts, Banana Island and Logistics Hub at Kent by the Gento Group of Companies'.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Mr Minister.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[The Government Motion by the Minister of Transport and Aviation has been ratified]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Mr Minister, you may leave.

Honourable Members, have you seen what I am seeing now? So all of these people in the Gallery came because of this Agreement; they were going to skin us alive. Yes, proceed Honourable Member.

HON. ALUSINE BASH KAMARA: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to bring to the attention of this House the situation the people of Karene and Bombali Districts are currently undergoing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one of the most important bridges that link Karene and Bombali District collapsed last night. Mr Speaker, this is urgent because we have no short alternative route. If you want to use another route, you must be prepared to cover something like 78 miles.

THE SPEAKER: The Chairman Works, are you paying attention? Chairman, do not just note, can you do a Letter immediately to SLRA?

HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE: Can you meet me in my office please?

THE SPEAKER: Okay, meet the Chairman of Works in his office immediately after here.

HON. ALUSINE BASH KAMARA: Alright, thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Please, please, please.

HON. ALUSINE BASH KAMARA: God bless you.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Unpha.

HON. UNPHA SORIE GBASSAY KOROMA: Mr Speaker, I am rising on **S.O 23** to draw the attention of this House, and by extension the Mission in Nigeria about the Sierra Leoneans that are stocked between the Nigeria and Niger borders. Of course these Sierra Leoneans have left the shores of this country on their own volition but we all understand the impetus of why some of them go to seek greener pastures. We have about 758 Sierra Leoneans waiting for identification by the Mission in Nigeria to confirm them as Sierra Leoneans. As we speak, there are six children that are unaccompanied and we have about two that are with their parents. We have another pregnant woman also among them.

THE SPEAKER: Who is the Chairman of Foreign Affairs?

HON. DR. UNPHA SORIE G. KOROMA: Honourable Mohamed Bangura is the Chair.

THE SPEAKER: Who is the Deputy?

HON. DR. UNPHA SORIE G. KOROMA: Honourable John Charles is the deputy.

THE SPEAKER: Okay

HON. DR. UNPHA SORIE G. KOROMA: Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue at hand is that IOM is ready to repatriate them but they are calling on the Mission to identify them as Sierra Leoneans so that they could be brought back home.

THE SPEAKER: Please, Honourable Unpha, approach the Clerk after sitting. Mr Clerk, you can do a Letter to the DG Foreign Affairs, bringing this particular matter to her attention.

HON. DR. UNPHA SORIE G. KOROMA: I am a Member of the Committee by the way, Sir.

THE SPEAKER: So approach the Clerk to do a Letter to the DG, Please. Yes Honourable Tamba Kellie.

HON. TAMBA KELLIE: Mr Speaker, if you recall, about three or four years ago, the road from Matotoka to Koidu Town was done by two Companies; Chinese Company and an Italian Company. Now the stretch of the road from Jaima Sewafeh to Mambudu Checkpoint where the Police Station is, there are lots of potholes emanating in that area even though so much money was spent on that road. If nothing is done about those potholes, let us not be surprised if incidents begin to occur along that area. This issue has been raised before in this Parliament but no attention appears to have been paid to it.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, see the Chairman of Works after sitting.

HON. TAMBA KELLIE: Mr Speaker, if he does not respond positively to me, I would be coming back to the Well and make the report.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, yes, certainly. Honourable Abdul Latiff Sesay, let me hear you.

HON. ABDUL LATIFF SESAY: Mr Speaker, thank you very much. Mr Speaker, this is a very important issue that is making waves in the Social Media, and it has to do with Lungi. Mr Speaker, for the very first time I have heard of someone dying in Sierra Leone five years ago and resurrect again. Mr Speaker, we need to find out about this.

THE SPEAKER: Was that person actually buried?

HON. ABDUL LATIFF SESAY: Mr Speaker, I think Honourable Kellie needs to help us with that.

HON. AZIZ BANGURA: Yes, yes, she was buried. She was buried, and she is back.

THE SPEAKER: I think that is witchcraft *[Laughter]*.

HON. ABDUL LATIFF SESAY: This is very important, we need to know what actually happened; we can set up a Committee and go there and find out what happened, Mr Speaker *[Laughter]*.

THE SPEAKER: I know my MPs; no MP is in a hurry to interact *[Laughter]*. Yes, okay, are we done? Yes, Chief.

HON. PC KAWALEH KANDEH PARIA II: Mr Speaker, just to buttress what Honourable Bash said in connection with that bridge *[Undertone]* Yes, but I should buttress it publicly. Mr Speaker, please, please, please, bear with us so that this issue is amended immediately, Sir.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Members, I am supposed to travel on the 14th but for very strategic reasons, I think I would have to wait till the 16th. So this sitting is going to be adjourned to the 16th, just after the sitting, then I can travel and leave you in the hands of the Deputy Speaker. The Deputy Speaker is going to ably wheel the affairs of this great branch of government, and you can rely on the Deputy Speaker *[Undertone Laughter]* oh, you want me to give you part of the DSA? Okay I will think about that.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE SPEAKER: It is very important for Members of Parliament to see the DSPK in his office, it is extremely important; all MPs for very strategic reasons.

Honourable Members, on Monday we have a meeting of the Legislative Committee on the two Bills we referred to that Committee. If you have issues with any clause in those Bills, please attend the meeting so that those issues can be sorted out before we come

to the Plenary; do not come to the Plenary and start arguing. Please go to the meeting on Monday, and let us have all of these issues sorted out. Even though I heard somebody saying over social media that Mr Speaker invited people to Committee Room One so that at the end of the day the public did not know what they discussed there and all of that. It is our right; if we want you to be part of our meeting we can invite you. If we think that your presence would not be required, we would say so. Or if you want to insist to be there, then go and get yourself a Constituency or a District; it is not easy to be a Member of Parliament. Already, we are representing you, why do you want to be there *[In Laughter]*

ADJOURNMENT

The House rose at 12:40pm and was adjourned to Tuesday 16th July, 2024 at 10:00am Prompt.