



*OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN*

# **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**[HANSARD]**

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**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**SECOND SESSION -THIRD MEETING**

**THURSDAY, 19<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2020**

*SESSION – 2019/2020*



*OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL, FREETOWN*

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

Proceedings of the Sitting of the House  
Held Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2019.

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# **CONTENTS**

## **I. PRAYERS**

## **II. RECORD OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2020**

## **III. PAPERS LAID**

### **[A] THE MINISTER OF ENERGY/MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES**

[I] CERTIFICATION [PROFESSIONALS, CONSTRUCTOR, MANUFACTURES AND IMPORTERS IN THE WATER SUPPLY INDUSTRY] RULES 2019

THE SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.9 OF 2019;

[II] ELECTRICITY AND WATER LICENCING RULES, 2019

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION ACT, 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.10 OF 2019;

[III] ELECTRICITY AND WATER [COMPLAINT HANDLING] REGULATORY 2019

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION [ACT 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.11 OF 2019;

[IV] ELECTRICITY GENETATION PERMIT RULES 2019

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION ACT, 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.12 OF 2019;

[V] THE ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION AND SUPPLY [CONSUMER SERVICE] REGULATIONS, 2019

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION ACT 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.13 OF 2019;

[VI] ELECTRICITY QUALITY OF SUPPLY REGULATIONS, 2019

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION ACT, 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.14 OF 2019;

[VII] THE ELECTRICITY PREPAYMENT METER AGGREGATOR PERMIT RULES, 2019

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION ACT, 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.15 OF 2019;

[VIII] THE SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION [TARIFF] RULES 2019

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION ACT, 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.16 OF 2019;

[IX] CERTIFICATION OF ELECTRICITY METERING SERVICES PROVIDERS RULES, 2019

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION ACT, 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.17 OF 2019;

[X] THE BOTTLED AND SACHET WATER PRODUCTION REGULATIONS, 2019

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION  
ACT, 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.18 OF 2019;

[XI] CERTIFICATION [ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS, MANUFACTURERS  
AND IMPORTERS OF ELECTRICAL MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENTS] RULES  
2019]

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION  
ACT, 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.19 OF 2019; AND

[XII] WATER [QUALITY SUPPLY] REGULATIONS, 2019

SIERRA LEONE ELECTRICITY AND WATER REGULATORY COMMISSION  
ACT, 2011 [ACT NO.13 OF 2011]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO.20 OF 2019.

**IV. BRIEFING ON CORONAVIRUS [COVID-19] THREAT TO  
SIERRA LEONE AND THE STATUSF NATIONAL PREPARDNESS TO  
COMBAT THE VIRUS.**

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

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**SECOND SESSION – SECOND MEETING**



**OF THE FIFTH PARLIAMENT  
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

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**Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2020.**

**I. PRAYERS**

*[The Table Clerk, Mrs Bintu Weston, Read the Prayers]*

*[The House met at 12:00p.m. in Parliament Building, Tower Hill, Freetown]*

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

The House was called to Order

*Suspension of S.O 5[2]*

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

**THE SPEAKER:** For the edification of Honourable Members, at the last sitting we took an adjournment to start today's sitting at 11:00a.m and not at 10:00a.m. I just want to remind the House of that and indeed it is correct since it is about one [1] minute to 12 noon, she is now anticipating by moving the double barrel motion that we go on that basis.

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS [LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS]:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to make some amendments on the Order Paper. Under Laying of Papers, we will have [A] Chairman; Parliamentary Committee on Health and Sanitation – Report on the Closure of the Paediatric Unit of the Emergency Hospital in Sierra Leone. [B] The Minister of Energy; we shall now have Roman Numeral i as Electricity Generation Permit Rule, 2019 instead of Roman Numeral iv, Roman Numeral iv on the Order Paper will now become Roman Numeral i, Roman Numeral v as it is on the Order Paper becomes Roman Numeral ii, Roman Numeral vi on the Order Paper becomes Roman Numeral iii, Roman Numeral vii becomes Roman Numeral iv, Roman Numeral ix becomes Roman Numeral v and Roman Numeral xi becomes Roman Numeral vi [*Undertone*] what I have announced is what you should accept Honourable Member, but you are okay with [A] right? [A] is Laying of Paper by Honourable Chairman of the Committee on Health and Sanitation. We would now have [B] Minister of Energy and not Minister of Water Resources so please delete Minister of Water Resources. Under [B] Roman Numeral iv become Roman Numeral i. Is it okay now?

**HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH [LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION]:** Noted.

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** Thank you very much. Roman Numeral v as it is on the Order Paper becomes Roman Numeral ii, Roman Numeral vi on the Order Paper becomes Roman Numeral iii, Roman Numeral vii on the Order Paper becomes Roman Numeral iv, Roman Numeral ix becomes Roman Numeral v, Roman Numeral xi becomes Roman Numeral vi. Thank you very much Honourable Members [*Undertone*] we would submit

them later when the Honourable Minister of Water Resources is available *[Undertone]* I said we are amending the Order Paper to remove them.

**HON. CHERNOR R. M BAH:** Are we removing them, will you say that clearly?

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** Mr Leader, we are removing them sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I hope all of us slept on the right side of the bed before coming here this morning? Fine! Can I have a seconder please?

**HON. ALUSINE KANNEH:** I so second Mr Speaker.

*[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]*

*[Motion to amend the Order Paper is carried]*

## **II. CORRECTION OF VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY SITTING HELD ON TUESDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2020.**

**THE SPEAKER:** Okay Honourable Members, we shall now consider the Votes and Proceedings of the 38<sup>th</sup> Sitting held on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2020. Consistent with our usual practice, we shall skip Pages 1 through to 4 and start our consideration of the record from Page 5. May I now receive any comments, corrections or observations starting from Page 5?

**HON. ABDUL KARIM KAMARA:** I have a correction here Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** Yes Page 5? What is your correction? Sorry who has the Floor? That is the voice I have missed for quite some time. Welcome back Honourable Member.

**HON. ALUSINE O. KAMARA:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to ask that we knock off the second to last word in Dr Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella's contribution. The word t-h-e so that it can read Dr Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella of constituency 062, Kambia District moved that 'the' Parliament should have a special Session to discuss the Corona Virus preparedness.

**THE SPEAKER:** And you are moving that we delete the definitely article 'the'?

**HON. ALUSINE O. KAMARA:** Yes Sir.



**THE SPEAKER:** Very well. Thank you. Page 6? Page 7? Page 8? Page 9? Page 10?

**HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA [LEADER OF NGC]:** Page 10 Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** Yes.

**HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA:** I think the last line of my intervention here should be more precise. He also reminded the House about keeping with the spirit of the Bo declaration and expressed dissatisfaction about the changes to Membership of the International Delegations and the reassignment from committees.

**THE SPEAKER:** So your addition is 'and'?

**HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA:** Reassignment or distribution to Committee of Committee Chairs.

**THE SPEAKER:** Why not simply say and Committees [*Undertone*] very well. Page 11?

**HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH:** Mr Speaker,

**THE SPEAKER:** Yes.

**HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH:** Mr Speaker, I will be very much grateful if what I stated on Page 11 on S.O 23 be looked into and be rephrased. I do not want to go into the details, but just have a look at it and you will see that it needs a complete overhaul.

**THE SPEAKER:** And if I understand [*Undertone*] yes I know, but you did not present it as if it is something to be done in the future, my understanding was that it was already under construction [*Undertone*] thank you and I hope the necessary correction would be done 'not to be constructed, but was being constructed'. With that can somebody please move for the adoption of the record of Votes and Proceedings for the parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2020?

**HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH:** Mr Speaker,

**THE SPEAKER:** Same Page?

**HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH:** Yes Page 11. Adjournment is not at 10: 00a.m, it was at 11: 00a.m.

**THE SPEAKER:** What?

**HON. IBRAHIM T. CONTEH:** The House was adjourned to Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 at 11:00a.m.

**THE SPEAKER:** At 11:00a.m quite correct, thank you. And with that can someone please move?

**HON. JOSEPHINE MAKIEU:** I so move.

**THE SPEAKER:** Any seconder?

**HON. DR MARK M. KALOKOH:** I second the motion.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you.

*[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]*

*[Record of Votes and Proceedings for parliamentary sitting held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 has been adopted as amended]*

### **III. PAPERS LAID**

[A] THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND  
SANITATION

**HON. MOSES B. JORKIE:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, precisely on the 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2020, Honourable Daniel Brima Koroma of the All People's Congress [APC] Party raised an issue of the closure of the Paediatric Unit in the Emergency Hospital. Based on that, I was asked by Mr Speaker to visit or give a thorough Report on the details of what is happening in that particular hospital. I summoned the Ministry of Health and Sanitation to actually come and give us update on that particular issue and of course the Parliamentary Committee on Health and Sanitation also took an oversight visit to Emergency Hospital to ascertain *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I presume you are standing under S.O 18[7].

**HON. MOSES B. JORKIE:** That is good Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I now beg to lay on the Table of this House a Report on the closure of the Paediatric Unit of the Emergency Hospital in Sierra Leone.

[B] THE MINISTER OF ENERGY

**MR KANJA SESAY:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, with your leave, I beg to lay on the Table of this Honourable House the following Papers:

[i] The Electricity Generation Permit Rules, 2019. Sierra Leone Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission Act, 2011 [ACT NO.13 of 2011] Statutory Instrument No.12 of 2019;

[ii] The Electricity Distribution and Supply [Consumer Service] Regulations, 2019. Sierra Leone Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission Act, 2011 [ACT NO.13 of 2011] Statutory Instrument No.13 of 2019;

[iii] The Electricity Quality of Supply Regulations, 2019. Sierra Leone Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission Act, 2011 [ACT NO.13 of 2011] Statutory Instrument No.14 of 2019;

[iv] The Electricity Prepayment Meter Aggregator Permit Rules, 2019. Sierra Leone Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission Act, 2011 [ACT NO.13 of 2011] Statutory Instrument No.15 of 2019;

[v] Certification of Electricity Metering Services Providers Rules, 2019 Sierra Leone Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission Act, 2011 [ACT NO.13 of 2011] Statutory Instrument No.17 of 2019; and

[vi] Certification [Electrical Contractors, Manufacturers and Importers of Electrical Materials and Equipment Rules, 2019] Sierra Leone Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission Act, 2011 [ACT NO.13 of 2011] Statutory Instrument No.19 of 2019.

**HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH:** Mr Speaker, with your permission not being oblivious of Section 170[7], I want to again state here today as we have discussed before; myself with few of the leadership. As I said not being oblivious of Section 170[7], these are very important documents, they are urgently needed, they are relevant, but I want us to encourage the practices wherein these documents would be shared with the relevant Committees most likely in collaboration with the Committee on Legislative and Judicial responsibility before they are laid so that those things that could be corrected, we would address before they are laid because we should not forget that just after twenty-one [21] days, it becomes law and if there are errors or mistakes it would be a fetal complex. What he has done is following the law, but we are saying for expediency and for the benefit of society, this is something I have been raising over the years, I want us to look at these Statutory Instruments before they are laid. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** The Honourable Leader of the Opposition has made a very pertinent observation which I think we should take on board going forward, but to the best of my recollection, these Instruments had actually been with us for some time, an attempt was made to lay them on the Table of this House, but an objection was raised which I took note of and ruled upon and although what I directed on that occasion has not been carried out, I think I need to restate here very clearly for the guidance of the Executive and this House going forward, the following:

- That the relevant part of the Constitution to be respected when it comes to regulations in Section 170 Sub-Section 7 and I would like to draw the attention of Honourable Members to the provisions of that very important provision.

Now, Statutory Instruments are Instruments that mature into law after twenty-one [21] days after their laying on the Table of Parliament. I want to emphasise that because again it has come to the notice of this House that some Ministry Department and Agencies [MDAs] are in the habit of implementing provisions of regulations before they have matured into law. The mere act of laying them on the Table is the beginning of

their journey to becoming law. We need an expiration of twenty-one [21] days before they mature into law provided no motion is passed in this House by a vote of two-thirds [2/3] calling for the annulment of the Statutory Instrument. It has come to our notice that some MDAs are in the habit of implementing provisions of regulations before the expiration of 21 days. I hope we shall not have a repetition of that any more going forward.

Secondly, it has also come to our notice that Boards and similar statutory bodies have been authenticating Statutory Instrument and seeking to bring them before this House. The correct procedure that we will take note of is as follows: Based on the principle that it is the Executive or Members of the Executive alone that are answerable and accountable to Parliament. No Chairman of a Board will ever receive locus before this House to lay any Paper on the Table of this House *[Applause]*. Their accountability is indirect not direct, they are accountable to Parliament by way of the Ministers responsible for their Agencies, so it is simple, straight forward and easier for all concern that their functions should stop especially if a Statutory Instrument is one that contains technical considerations, it stop with the drafting of that Instrument and after drafting it the Instrument should be submitted to the responsible Minister for authentication and it is the responsibility of the Minister to authenticate, to publishing the Gazette and to lay before this House such Instrument. I hope with that explanation we will not keep repeating a mistake that I noticed have been repeating itself over and over again. I do hope the Clerks have dully recorded this ruling that I have made, and I will ask that the Clerks convey this ruling to all MDAs for their clear understand of the position of Parliament with regard to Statutory Instruments and their laying before this House.

#### **IV. BRIEFING ON CORONAVIRUS [COVID-19] THREAT TO SIERRA LEONE AND THE STATUSF NATIONAL PREPARDNESS TO COMBAT THE VIRUS.**

**HON. BASHIRU SILIKIE:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in our last meeting the Leader of Government Business highlighted the MDAs that should be represented here today. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, looking from the other side, I realise that the people who are supposed to be here are not here. Can we

do a roll call because this is Parliament and its Members should be treated seriously  
*[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Member for his observation. In that regard, I will like to draw the attention of Honourable Members to the top of Page 6 of the Votes and Proceedings that we have just adopted and the MDAs in question for this purpose that we have invited to come to this meeting are as follows:

- The Ministry of Health and Sanitation;
- The Ministry of Finance;
- The Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- The Ministry of Education;
- The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development;
- The Chief Medical Officer, but with the Chief Medical Officer we shall subsume him under the first rubric;
- The Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone; and
- The Director-Office of National Security.

Order! I have not quite finished. We now need to know that out of that list the MDAs that are represented and at what level? Having said that I also want to bring to the attention of the House that concurrently as we sit there is a Presidential Press Conference going on. I hope that the Ministers who are invited to the House for this particular briefing and who had also been summoned to appear at the Presidential Press Conference will endeavour to make their presence known at the conclusion into this House immediately following the conclusion of the Presidential Press Briefing. I will now invite the Leader of Government Business to kindly tell the House out of the number of MDAs listed on Page 6 those that are present in the House and ready to participate in this important briefing.

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I give an explanation, with the exception of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, all the other MDAs are present and they are ready to participate in this briefing. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this morning the Minister of Finance contacted me

and he explained that **“because of the reason why we are here, the entire financial team along with the Ministry of Internal Affairs; the security team, we are going to have a meeting with His Excellency the President on our behalf.”** The Governor of Bank of Sierra Leone and his Deputy are here and whatever issues that we have to discuss pertaining to the Ministry of Finance, the Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone will relay the message. Honourable Members, the respective Ministers of Finance and Internal Affairs have respect for this Honourable House, they support this Honourable House, and in fact the Minister of Internal Affairs is our former colleague *[Undertone]* S.O 2 ‘watin u wan tlk’? Mr Speaker, why are you looking at me like that? Mr Speaker, I am not happy *[Laughter]*.

**HON. HASSAN A. SESAY:** Mr Speaker,

**THE SPEAKER:** Before I say anything, I know the Chief Whip of the Opposition had asked for the Floor, I will give him the opportunity.

**HON. HASSAN A. SESAY:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, Point of Order on the Chief Whip *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** The man have not said anything, you want to raise a Point of Order?

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Mr Speaker, this is very important.

**THE SPEAKER:** Important as you think it is, I am giving the Floor to the Chief Whip.

**HON. HASSAN A. SESAY:** I have the Floor, respect Mr Speaker please. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we all agreed in this Well that the issue of the Coronavirus is one that we have to take very seriously. It is on the basis of that we summon members from the Ministry of Health and Sanitation. If you look on my right side of the aisle you will see key players in the Ministry including Deputy Minister. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I think they deserve a whole sum of applause for that *[Applause]*.

**HON. HASSAN A. SESAY:** Because we believe in the idea that where credit is due let us give them. Mr Speaker. Honourable Members, the Ministry of Finance have a Minister of Finance, Deputy one [1], Deputy two [2], a Financial Secretary etc. we also have the Governor and his Deputy, are they all supposed to be in one place at the same time? Mr Speaker, if you can remember there was a time when an issue came up about foreign exchange wherein the Minister of Finance said the issue of foreign exchange is not his but the Bank Governor. So this is about dispensing money from the Ministry of Finance to support this project. If the Bank Governor is here it has nothing to do with the Ministry of Finance, let them be present *[Applause]* and the Ministry of Internal Affairs has a representation here let us know at what level, if the Permanent Secretary is not here, the Minister and the Deputy are not here, I am afraid they are not taking us seriously and we are talking about trying to be proactive and not to be reactive on this issue of coronavirus because we have seen how it devastated countries with stronger health care infrastructures while we are here battling with our own and if they are not here then it means they are not taking us seriously. Mr Speaker, no amount of defence by the Leader of Government Business for those people who are absent from today's sitting can be tenable here Sir. Thank you very much Sir *[Applause]*.

**HON. CHERNOH R. M. BAH:** Mr Speaker,

**THE SPEAKER:** Yes.

**HON. CHERNOH R. M. BAH:** Mr Speaker, this issue under discuss and the reason for why we are here is non-political and nobody should politicise it *[Applause]*. I know that the Leader of Government Business has a duty to protect those that he represent in this House as Leader of Government Business not as Honourable Sidie Mohamed Tunis. As Leader of Government Business, he has a duty to protect the Executive because he represent them here, but as a Member of Parliament representing constituents in Pujehun District he also have a separate duty and that duty is what has brought us here this afternoon. We should have this discuss out of politics, called things by their names and support where support is needed and do the right things to ensure that we support His Excellency the President in achieving the effort he is putting in to this. If we



politicise it or attempt to politicise it we will be doing a disservice to not just the President, but to the people that we represent in this House *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, I am sure that all of us in this House treasure our constituents because it is as a result of their votes or support that we are in this House, so let us make sure that whatever we say will also reflect with what they have ask us to say on this particular issue. I thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition. Order! The importance of this special meeting of Parliament cannot be gainsaid. We agreed that considering the pandemic nature of the disease which recognises absolutely no boundaries or political status and in that context if I may just draw attention to the first causality in Burkuna Faso was a second speaker, a highly place official of Parliament. Disease is no respecter of territories or human-beings that is why we agreed to have this special meeting here today and I will again invite the Leader of Government Business to respond to the very pertinent observations made by the Leader of Opposition.

**HON. SIDI M. TUNIS:** Mr Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Finance *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Before you do let me help you, maybe you were not aware. Whiles I was in my Chamber before coming to the Well, I took the opportunity once I was showed the list of the Ministers who have been summoned to State House, I realise that the Minister of Finance name was on the list, I took the opportunity to called him myself to ascertain whether he would come to the House immediately following the closure of the press briefing in State House. I went further to admonished that in the event he was not able to come he could send one of his Deputies to which he agreed. A situation very similar to what we now observe from the Ministry of Health and Sanitation.

**HON. SIDI M. TUNIS:** Mr Speaker, I actually just called them now and both of them are still in the meeting with the President.

**THE SPEAKER:** We will take note of that. Can we also say that they will appear here immediately after that meeting with his Excellency the President?

**HON. SIDI M. TUNIS:** Yes Sir.

**HON. HASSAN A. SESAY:** Mr Speaker, Point of Order.

**THE SPEAKER:** You have additional information Mr Chief Whip?

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Mr Speaker, I want to make a comment.

**THE SPEAKER:** That will assist and progress this issue?

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Yes Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** You have the Floor.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, we have agreed that this debate is not going to be partisan and that we should put the interest of the nation first. I want to agree with the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament because the Minister of Health and Sanitation knew he was not going to come, he sent his two Deputies and if the Minister of Internal Affairs is going to speak in that Press Conference he should have sent his Deputy to this House because there is no way the two of them can speak in that Press Conference and also the Minister of Finance has two Deputies and I am not sure the three of them are in that Press Conference now *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, this is a testimony of how those Ministries are treating Parliament. Mr Speaker, in as much as the debate will continue, I am suggesting that if the Ministers are not coming let their Deputies be here **ASAP**. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to thank the previous speakers for their very pertinent observations and I want to underline the key point that they have made. We do not begrudge the substantive Ministers for their absence, if they had been summoned to State House it is their duty to make their presence known there to answer to the call of His Excellency the President, but the point needs to be under scored that each of those Ministers do have Deputies that could come here and deputise for them just as we have the Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation in the House. We take a very deem view knowing fully-well that we approved Deputies for those Ministries that whiles the

substantive Minister is attending to the call of His Excellency the President they did not see fit to follow the fine example of the Minister of Health and Sanitation by sending their Deputies to the Well to come and brief us *[Applause]*. With your indulgence, I will want to make the following proposal; we shall start the briefing with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and expect that before the conclusion of his own briefing that the relevant Ministers who are absent would have either may walked into the Well of this House themselves or at least send their Deputise to come and brief us with regard to the areas of responsibility that they cover *[Undertone]* we do not want to be anticipatory. So, with your indulgence I would ask that we proceed with the debate or the briefing in the expectation that at least the Deputy Ministers of the Ministries concern will join us. I keep emphases two points need to be underscored; this meeting is non-political and I will certainly not allow any partisan characteristics to rear their heads here on this particular debate. It is extremely important, the life of our nation is at stake, and the life of every person in this country is under threat. It is a pandemic; in fact, let me remind this House that we had daubed the disease a pandemic even before World Health Organisation [WHO] declared it as such when we invited the Chines Ambassador to come here. We have had that foresight, we have had that vision that the way the disease was crimping it was going to develop into a pandemic.

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** Mr Speaker,

**THE SPEAKER:** So, we have been proven right and all the more reason why this House is very profoundly personate and concerned about the health of everybody in this country. So, please let us not politicise this briefing. It is extremely important, we treat it as a threat to the life of our nation. Mercifully we have not yet had any recorded incident, God forbid that what is happening to our neighbours does not come here. We hope and pray it does not, but a lot is going to depend on how we handle our own situation. Yes Leader of Government Business.

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am very pleased to inform this Honourable House that the Deputy Minister 2 in the Ministry of Finance who is actually handling the COVID-19 affairs is on his way to Parliament. Thank you.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** Yes Mr Speaker,

**THE SPEAKER:** We take note of the good news. May we now start the briefing.

**HON. ABDUL KARGBO:** Mr Speaker, very short one Sir. Mr Speaker, I could remember that on several occasions we have been invited heads of MDAs and Ministers, they knew they were not coming and they did not get on to Mr Speaker to inform him, they had to wait until he called them before they could tell him that they were not coming. To me, I was even more sucked this morning when I realised that even when we have invited the Minister of Finance, he knew he was not going to come and he waited for Mr Speaker to call him before he told him that he was going to send a representative which he did not do. So, subsequently Mr Speaker, when an invitation is sent to them, the onus is on them to formally communicate with Parliament that they are not coming then you will advise them on what to do. For them to know that they are not coming and they did not get on to Mr Speaker, I am afraid that they do not have respect for this Parliament.

**THE SPEAKER:** We shall now start the briefing. Deputy Minister, you have the Floor.

**DR AUGUSTINE A. SANDI [DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SANITATION]:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, good afternoon. I am here and need not to reiterate once more why the Minister of Health and Sanitation is not here, but not withstanding I came along supported by my colleague Deputy Minister, Chief Medical Officer is also here, the Permanent Secretary and the Deputy Permanent Secretary are also here and we are here in full force and that is why with such a disease at our door steps we need all to be on board.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on Tuesday His Excellency the President called us into a meeting and tasked us all including those Ministries that are not here that we need to have an integrated plan for the respond to COVID-19 pandemic. We were given 48 hours and as of this morning we were able to present to His Excellency the President a unified plan which captures what exactly we as a nation want to do in order to

prevent this virus. All the relevant Ministries were present in coming up with the plan and many of the strategies that are being used right now emanate from Sierra Leone and we should be proud of ourselves as Sierra Leone as a nation and not Sierra Leone as divided *[Applause]*. We started quarantine, it was topical, it was hated but now it is being used by others and nobody is talking about Human Rights. "Stay at Home" is being done, we did it and these strategies are now being used. Sierra Leone happens to be the only country that has data or repository on a disease that has gone to an epidemic proportion such as the Ebola, we had it and we are the only country in the world. Now they are coping exactly what we did in other places, we should be proud of ourselves *[Applause]*. We came together, we have a plan and as of now it starts with surveillance and it ends with surveillance, we have one of the best contact tracing formula that Missoula effect of Ebola is with us but notwithstanding, everyone has been hearing through the social media about quarantine. Quarantine is a strategy, it is not palatable, it is not law, but it is there to defend for the greater good of the nation although we do have challenges, but as of now it is managed quarantine versus guarded quarantine. Many people will come and say 'let me go to my house and I will protect myself' we guide them on how to do it. In yesterday's incident, those that we quarantine were about forty-two [42] and we are releasing them because the cases that we thought were positive have proven in Kenya to be negative. The Ministry is good at case management, but case management is not our best weapon, we are going to emphasize on prevention that is why all of us should come on board to fight this deadly virus because if we get the first case wrong in terms of management it becomes a disincentive for people to come in further. Thus, we are going to emphasize on; contact tracing and the quarantining aspect because they are the laws we are going to work with. We have three laboratories that have the capacity to test; one in Kenema, the Chinese Laboratory at Jui, and the Lakah Government Hospital so, laboratory testing is up and moving. We have about 370 test kits which we can use even though they are not enough but we have in place together with WHO the minute we have a case we can step that up and we may have test kits. So, the laboratories are set for that and we have succeeded to do the case management at 34 Military Hospital *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Mr Minister, I do not wish to interrupt you, but the information that you are giving right now is extremely valuable. How many test kits did you mention?

**DR AUGUSTINE A. SANDI:** It is 370 test kits but we have the capacity to bring in more within 24 hours when we have our first case.

**THE SPEAKER:** Can you quantify the more? When you say more, do we depend on donation or we depend on purchase?

**DR AUGUSTINE A. SANDI:** Two ways; through Jack-ma and all of us who know and those who go about Facebook know Jack-ma, they are very rich and we can bring in about twenty thousand.

**THE SPEAKER:** twenty thousand?

**DR AUGUSTINE A. SANDI:** Yes Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** In the space of?

**DR AUGUSTINE A. SANDI:** We are talking about 24 hours Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** Excellent.

**DR AUGUSTINE A. SANDI:** Mr Speaker, for those of us who have been to the infectious disease department at the 34 Military Hospitals has the capacity to take about 30 patients and in case we have our first case, we will take the patient to the 34 Military Hospital, and the team at the hospital have come up with their budget proposal standby to receive the first case. During Ebola or before Ebola, Sierra Leone did not have what we called Epidemiologist in this country and as of now we have 176 people who chase disease. That is very resounding; I am not saying you should go to bed but when you have Human Resource it is a bit comfortable than where we are in the year 2014. Mr Speaker, I want the Honourable Minister of Finance to know that we have come up with a proposal in the area we do have a case of Corona and also if we do not have a record of COVID-19; if we do not have a case we need about **Le120bln** but if we have a case we might need about **Le600bln** or **Le116.7bln** for prevention and **Le597bln** for treatment etc. So, this is telling us that we cannot afford to go into that

regime, and we cannot afford to have cases. I did not mention about the Economic impact of what will happen and let me just say even in the **Le120bln** that is before quarantine will take about **Le63bln** and there is no way someone can move into an environment and expect to have everything in the manner he or she wants even if going into a 5-Star Hotels you will still be grumbling about something so let us be patient with ourselves. We have seen across social media people sending all sort of messages and I am pleading to all Sierra Leonean to be patient and accept the measures put in place because one strategy that is in place is to separate people in order to know those that have the disease and those that do not in a timely manner. We can chase the disease down if we are able to have a manage quarantine. It is not very good for anyone to be isolated but if that is the case let us please accept the rules.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, behavioural change is key. In the year 2014 there were projections saying if nothing happens you will have X number of Ebola and I said "No" if people come on board with a ready mind set to change the trajectory, the prediction will drop and if people are committed, and they are ready to change their behaviours any disease trajectory can change and that was why we came to Parliament, we involved Parliamentarian to go and sensitize their constituents to be doing the correct things. When we did our plan, we have one of the best expertise together with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation. Within the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, we still have about **90%** of the capacity which we had during the Ebola is still with us and we are still using it. We have brought on board the Ministry of Information and Communication, we are giving resources through the Ministry of Information and Communication and the Government is giving every week **Le1bln** to be used. We have used **Le1bln** already and the other **1bln** will come in today, but let me say this, it is not the amount of money; if you can spend **Le1bln** to save a life, what will that worth? The good will is there that is just telling you that the little things that will make things work can happen. As at now we have 183 people in quarantine, 80 in Port Loko, 60 at Lungi, 1 at Jendema from Dubai and 2 in Mbalamuya. So, we have people who fall into that category and they need to be quarantine and this is

exactly what we are applying. We have been given mandate, all of us are here because the plan that we have is an integrated plan, joint plan with the yesteryears, those that were hands on during the Ebola and within the Ministry. This is one way of passing knowledge to the next generation and this is what we are doing so Mr Speaker, my team and I are ready to answer questions in various form. Let me stop here because for us as a Ministry, we want many more people on board, it is not partisan, the person that will save my life is the person I will want nearest. We love this type of interaction and we want to thank you very much for setting the space. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Mr Deputy Minister, please be seated for the time being. We want to thank you for your introductory remarks, we take note of what your Ministry has done thus far and proposes to do the contingency plans that you have put in place and must commendable. Before I asked Members of Parliament to ask their questions I am concern about testing. Do you have plans to do a comprehensive testing of the entire nation because it all part of the preventive measures that you spoke about because it is cheaper to prevent than to cure. If I go by the figures alone that you mentioned, **Le167bln** is what you estimate to be the cost of prevention as compare to **Le597bln** for treatment. So, the best way to prevent is to subject the entire nation to testing, do you have that within your plans?

**DR AUGUSTINE A. SANDI:** Mr Speaker, retrospectively 2014 to 2016 we did 109,000 test during the Ebola and it was more complex, it was more costly than what we are have now but again, it was more localise thus, we had more test kits available, we had more willing partners that were coming to our aid, but now it is all about what we are doing on our own ground to protect ourselves. So, it will be a very good wish by protecting thyself and family. Mr Speaker, we will try to get a triage to determine the order in which people will be tested and be treated but if you were to test all of us here now, there is a chance for you to have the disease. So, for us it will be prudent to test only those who are in dare need and that is what we are trying to cater for Mr Speaker.



**THE SPEAKER:** I want to guide this briefing. There are many issues that are interrelated; you have the health aspect, we have the financial aspect, we have the security aspect, all of these overlap in a way so there are two approaches we can take. Having heard the Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation, we can ask him to give way to the Minister of Internal Affairs or the Minister of Finance, and then when we would have finished getting all of those Ministers to give us their briefing we can then ask the questions. That would have the advantage of giving us a comprehensive profile of how our preparedness status is. The alternative is to compartmentalise, we can take the health aspect deal with it comprehensively first followed by the financial aspect, and followed by the security aspect. I really want to ask, which one do you think we should adopt? Let me start with the Leader of the Opposition, either we do it in that compartmentalised way or we do it in the comprehensive way it is up to you.

**HON. CHRENOR R. M. BAH:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker borrowing even from your own words since most of the issues are going to be cross-cutting for us not to be going on a to and fro, it is better for us to take the presentations first so that the questions will come after, but if we decide to do them we might be bringing them to and fro from each presentation so I will suggest if its suits you that we get all the presentations so that we formulate our questions holistically.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you. May I ask Leaders, we say this is not political, C4C what do you say?

**HON. SAA F. BHENDU [DEPUTY LEADER OF C4C]:** Mr Speaker, I believe if we take all the Ministers and then we can have a comprehensive question at the end of the day.

**THE SPEAKER:** So you support what the Leader of the Opposition says?

**HON. SAA F. BHENDU:** Very well Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Dr Kandeh Kolloh Yumkella, Leader of Government Business, you happy with that?

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** Yes Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** Very well in that case Mr Deputy Minister, you are excused but you are not allowed to go, take your seat. Now let us have the Minister of Finance to give us a briefing.

**DR PATRICIA N. LAVERLEY [DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE]:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before I get into the extent of support that the Ministry of Finance is providing to the general public in support of the Coronavirus, I thought I should preface our intervention by highlighting the macroeconomic effect of the Coronavirus. The first immediate impact that this virus has is the availability of goods that are imported to the country, importation of essential food items. As you are all aware, Sierra Leone has direct and indirect trade with China and Europe; rice, onions, cooking oil, flour, sugar, milk some of them do come from China. These supply side disruptions could lead to a dramatic decrease in the supply of essential commodities that I just mentioned, so what we envisage is a decrease, shortage of rice, onions, cooking oil all coming from China. Internally not just from China, but also from Europe and other countries affected by the virus with which we import these goods. Domestically in Sierra Leone our vegetables, fruit, palm oil coming from the provinces could also be affected given the restriction of movement. We have recently experienced a decline in the price of oil, it dropped to below **\$50** per barrel, you are all aware of the cancellation of flights which of course because of the fuel situation and the coronavirus cancellation of flights, lower use of vehicles and so on would indeed have an impact on the transportation cost.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, of course Tourism would also be impacted by this, and at least the foreign exchange impact to Governor to share with the Honourable House, and to allow Governor to share with you what the Bank of Sierra is doing to introduce measures to mitigate against the risk of Coronavirus but let me just tell you some of the measures that we have introduced at the Ministry of Finance to help with cushioning the effect of coronavirus. The first as you heard from the Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation is the **Le1bln** a week that the Ministry of Finance is making available to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation to support both the preventive and

treatment measures if the need arise to address the situation. Giving a fiscal situation we have to pay salaries, we have other expenditures and so on, we are privately experiencing a very tight fiscal situation and we are now working on fringe up additional resources domestically to increase the **Le1bln** that we are making available to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation. With our development partners in particular the World Bank, we have restructured one of our health project so as to free up World Bank resources within the health sector. You are all aware of the funds that were announced by the World Bank through their global pandemic facility, and for us Sierra Leone we would collectively base on the totality of World Bank resources that have been identified to support corona Sierra Leone would benefit from about **\$12.5mln** directly, and we are currently processing the documentation at the Ministry of Finance so we can draw on these resources, so it is **\$12.5mln** from the World Bank. You are obviously aware of the budget support that we have been processing it is about a one hundred Million that is coming directly into the CRF in mid-May. We are also expecting about **\$30mln** from the African Development Bank in June.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, these are just to highlight some of the measures that the Ministry of Finance have been working on to respond to the financial need that we would experience to address the Corona situation that we would endure if at all we are affected by it. So with permission Mr Speaker, I would like to invite Governor to highlight for this Honourable House where the Bank of Sierra Leone and with the other Commercial Banks are undertaken to demonstrate the sort of credit sensitivity that our businesses would experience giving the slowdown of economic activity, essentially what we are doing is working in collaboration with Commercial Banks, working on specific products instruments that the business community would tap into that way they have the cash liquidity in the event that there is a deteriorating economic situation in Sierra Leone. Thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to thank the Honourable Deputy Minister of Finance. We will certainly grant your accede to your request to also hear the briefing of the Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone, actually he is an officer who has been long awaited by this

House. Let us hope that this is the beginning of a journey that will bring the Governor to this part more regularly, but his coming here has been long awaited. Mr Governor, welcome.

**DR KELFALA M. KALLON [GOVERNOR OF THE BANK OF SIERRA LEONE]:** The press and citizens I guess we are making history here, this is the first time the Bank of Sierra Leone is going to give you first hand its decisions, the decision of the Monetary Policy Committee *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Mr Governor, let me step in. Order! Mr Governor, I am sure you are not surprised by the excitement that you have aroused because you have been long awaited here, so your coming today has excited a good number of Members and we are very pleased to see you. Let me just give you a word of advice maybe as you give us your briefing you will be inundated by what we call undertones coming from your left and your right, just stay to your brief, and try not to respond to those undertones until you have completed, otherwise you will get distracted. I know what I am talking about *[Laughter]* so over to you.

**DR KELFALA M. KALLON:** Thank you Honourable Speaker. Yesterday the Monetary Policy Committee met realising the uncertain nature of the economic impact that we are likely to face or even the whole world, it is uncertain but we know that the magnitude is going to be huge on every country. Just now we were told to come here at 10:00a.m, and while I was here I got an E-book that just came out, what to do as a result of the COVID-19 'the message is act quickly and act big'. Yesterday when we met as if that advice was given to us in advance, the NPC decided that first and foremost we will lower the monetary policy rate by 150 bases points which will lower the monetary policy interest rate from **16.5%** to **15%** when you do that it gives the Banks room also to reduce interest rate in order to get people to have access to credit. We know that as the economic impact hits, some Banks are going to have problems getting access to liquidity. So, the Monetary Policy Committee decided that we will create a special credit facility to finance production, procurement, and distribution of essential goods and services, and we created for five hundred Billion special facility. That facility will be

administered through the Commercial Banks, the people or businesses that are going to be eligible for these things will be determined in due course when we meet with the Sierra Leone Association of Commercial Banks [SLACB] tomorrow and we will make that information known to the public. We are also going to commit ourselves to make sure that we will prioritize and provide foreign exchange resources to ensure the importation of essential items. The list of the commodities that will qualify for this support will also be published. We have to talk to the Ministry of Trade and other areas to tell us what exactly essential commodities are, and we will make sure that we will act big and not worry so much about our reserves at this point because the House might be likely on fire and we want to take care of that. The most important thing the Central Bank does is to provide liquidity in this kind of situation. So what we intend to do *[Interruption]*.

**HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH:** Mr Governor one moment sir. Mr Speaker, he just spoke something touching and concerning the reserve, it is better for him to elaborate on it a bit because the laymen needs to understand the angle towards which he is going from *[Undertone]* Mr Speaker, am I protected? I just made one statement and everybody has started running up and down.

**THE SPEAKER:** No! The reason why everybody is running up and down is because we all recognise that this is a collective obligation *[Laughter]* everybody is under a collective duty to ensure that this Coronavirus remains outside of the territorial boundaries of this country *[Applause]*. That is our primary objective; we must contain it, it must never come here it is an unwanted visitor. So Mr Governor, take your time, go over the figures slowly, but deliver them clearly and soundly for us to understand.

**DR KELFALA M. KALLON:** We will create a **Le5bln** special credit facility to finance the production, procurement and distribution of essential goods and services. As the Deputy Minister of Finance said earlier, our trade root, our trade relationships are going to be disrupted as a result of this whether we get Corona or we do not the economy is going to be impacted, and when the economy get impacted that is where the Central Bank has to come in to make sure that it eases, it provides liquidity to the financial system so that we do not have a collapse of the banking system, so that we do not

have a reduction in consumption at least to an even greater recession even though we expect that there will be recession. So this facility will be at a concessionary interest rate. The Banks will decide based on their criteria for lending, we will give them the activities that we want to be supported, and they will decide based on the credit rating on whatever they do to their customers to access this fund at low interest rate from us, and that they can charge only **1%** interest in order to give to customers. We are essentially thinking that we may have an interest rate below **10%** for this special facility. We want to support as I said the private sector to import essential commodities. To do this we have to provide foreign exchange resources to ensure that the importation of these commodities are done and in this we will use our reserves to do this for our greatest duty is to provide liquidity to the banking system because when and if the economy goes into a deep recession, Banks realise that customers are not depositing and so forth, there may be a liquidity problem. For us, the Bank has decided that rather than having the reserve requirement maintenance period, the time at which the two weeks that we use to measure their reserves, we are going to extend it to twenty eight days so that it gives them enough time to come back and borrow from us if necessary, but the main thing that we have to say at the Bank of Sierra Leone, one of our important mandate being is to support the economic policies of the Government, we will continue to closely monitor the domestic and external developments, and we stand ready to take appropriate monetary policy measures in order to promote economic stability and maintain the financial system stability. Thank you *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** We thank the Governor of the Central Bank for his briefing, he is excused temporarily, but for now you should confine his movement within the Well of the House, in other words, what we are saying until the end of this briefing, until we rise, all the invited officials please I urge all of you not to leave the Well so that when questions are been asked you will be available to respond. We now move on to the security component.

**HON. PAUL SAA SAM:** Mr Speaker, I think the issue of Coronavirus has to be treated seriously. When you look at the Government seats they are empty, they do not want to

take this issue very seriously, so please inform the Chief Whip to call Members of the Government bench to take their seats on this issue because it is very serious. We are compelling MDAs to be present whilst Members from the Government bench are not here *[Applause]*.

**HON. HINDOLO M. GAVAO:** Mr Speaker, Point of Order. Mr Speaker, the statement made by my colleague is an indictment on the entire House.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Hindolo Moiwo Gavao, I have not given you the Floor. You know there are certain observations that are so trite that frankly when they are made they should be responsibly accepted. Just look at the empty seats. Chief Whip, where are your Members?

**HON ALUSINE KANNEH:** Mr Speaker, on a very serious note, Honourable Paul Saa Sam is correct. Mr Speaker, sometimes you go out to make sure that Members adhered to the rules but they sometimes put up resistance.

**THE SPEAKER:** Convey to them the importance.

**HON ALUSINE KANNEH:** They sometimes resist.

**THE SPEAKER:** Listen, this is a very important briefing, and I want the import of this briefing to be captured by every Member of Parliament because I envisage that at the end of this briefing we might very well decide to take a longish adjournment to enable Members of Parliament in solidarity with the efforts of the Government to go to your constituencies and sensitize your constituents. How would you do that if you are not present during the debate? Leader of Government Business.

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I agree very much with the Honourable Member of C4C, and I believe that as Members of Parliament, as representatives of the people of this country, we do not have to be reminded about the importance of a briefing of this nature. So if Members decide to keep themselves away I will consider it a clear manifestation of being irresponsible and as such, I am saying it, and I will say it again that all of those Members who are not in this Well will be name and shame because I do not see any reason why we would have a pandemic, we have

a serious situation like this in our country, and Members of Parliament who are supposed to be representing the people of this country will not take it seriously  
*[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Hold on! Honourable Member who have just seated will you rise? The Honourable Member in blue, you are not properly attired please walk out of this Chamber. I will not entertain anything from you until you are properly attired.

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** If we have a situation like this facing our country, I believe it is our responsibilities as Members of Parliament to set the brightest example, so to see the benches empty in Parliament for me it is a disgrace to all Members of Parliament, and to this Parliament. Mr Speaker, I believe Honourable Members who are not in this Well must be named and shamed. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I would be very pleased if you start that process and I will help you.

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** I will Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you. Do you have anything to add Mr Chief Whip?

**HON ALUSINE KANNEH:** Yes Sir! Mr Speaker, I am just from the cafeteria to look for Members of Parliament on my side but I saw few Members, one is on his way coming Sir *[Undertone]* no, I have to report.

**THE SPEAKER:** We shall now move on to the security aspect, and I welcome the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs to give us his briefing. Before he does, I will allow five minutes for the empty seats to my right to be filled otherwise we shall begin to name and shame, people must take their responsibilities very seriously. I will not allow Honourable Members to go and boast to their constituents when they go there to say I am representing you when a serious debate is in progress they are nowhere to be found. Honourable Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs you have the Floor.

**MR LAHAI L. LEEMA [DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS]:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, I am pleased to be here this afternoon to give a brief on how we have been preparing with regards security in containment of the



Coronavirus so that we prevent its entering into the borders or across the borders of Sierra Leone. As you all would aware, firstly, let me established that the general security situation in the country remain calm and quite with nothing significant to worried about such as the threat of Coronavirus around our borders, and at this particular time I am standing here to the best of my knowledge, information and belief there is nothing regarding the breakdown of Law and Order that we should be worried about. As you would also aware that we have not got to a point where Section 29 of the Constitution would be invoked so we still maintain the normal security posture, and that the Sierra Leone Police is still in the lead even in circumstance where his Excellency the President has proclaimed the support of the Military at Freetown international borders, the Sierra Leone Police still take the lead in maintaining internal peace and security. As I have established that what is also of concern is the fact that the threat of the Coronavirus threatening countries that are neighbouring to us, but our effort collectively in putting preparedness in place to ensure that we prevent the entering of this dreadful pandemic in Sierra Leone, we have been able to put procedures or structures in place for our security forces along the borders to ensure that precautionary measures announced by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation are properly enforced in terms of isolation and quarantine. The police are ensuring that we maintain the vigilant necessary in the normal security duty to ensure that we prevent the Corona outbreak in Sierra Leone. Also the immigration also at the border points are ensuring that they remain vigilant in screening people who enter Sierra Leone. Also in terms of preparedness, we should also be concern that much as the disease is prevalent in neighbouring countries we should be mindful of the fact that we pray that it does not get to that point where citizens in neighbouring countries would perhaps may want to flee to Sierra Leone to escape the pandemic, and on that note we would also collaborate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to see how best we screen people whom may want to come to Sierra Leone as refugees and at the same time we see that we screen them properly so that we continue to prevent the pandemic entering Sierra Leone. What we should be mindful of at the moment is what I learnt from the Institute of Defence and International Legal Studies in the United States of America that is

known as the concept of Social Media and Influence Operation. From what the President pronounced yesterday in terms of measures for preparedness, I made a follow up on Social Media, I learnt that some People tried to extract certain views in order to misconstrue what the President intended as a preparedness, and this is something we should also be concern about in terms of security preparedness because those thoughts are extracted from the President's message and may tend to undermined the collective measures or approach we are using to ensure that we create the necessary effect of the threat of the disease itself that we get the consciousness or the awareness of our citizens to follow procedures we are putting in place collectively as a nation, this isolated extract of individual citizens using the social media to influence opinion contrary to what we are putting together collectively is of concern. On that note, I do not know the current status of our cyber Laws, we will collaborate also with the Ministry of Information to put a team together to be able to monitor some of those misinformation so that they put a counter measures in place to inform citizens accordingly and to keep them in track to what we are doing collectively to create that awareness, and collectively prepared as a nation to ensure that we contain *[Undertone]* thank you very much.

**HON. MATHEW S. NYUMA:** Do not listen to them. You may continue.

**MR LAHAI L. LEEMA** On that note, we are ensuring that we collaborate with the Ministry of Information to see how best we can put a team together to counter some of those misinformation on the social media so that collectively we keep track of our collective effort to prevent the pandemic from entering Sierra Leone. So far, that is how we have put ourselves together as a Ministry in charge of internal peace and security, and we would also continue to put plans together in an event because I listened to the Minister of Health and Sanitation this morning, I am also sending a note of caution to African State that much as Sierra Leone have been very fortunate regarding the effort we have put together to prevent the pandemic entering Sierra Leone, we should also not be oblivious of the fact that it posed serious threat to African nations. So on that note, we are also preparing adequately to ensure that we put rules and procedures in

place that will help us discharge our functions properly, we are not praying to get to that situation, but even if we are to get to that level where Section 29 will be invoked by this House, then the preparedness would also be there by the necessary security body to ensure that we try our best to guaranty the peace, and the security of Sierra Leone. So far Mr Speaker, this is what the Ministry have as an update to this House. I will pose myself for any question to come and reply. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs for his briefing. I now want to invite the Leader of Government Business and the Leader of the Opposition to come forward. Honourable Members, I think we have reached a very convenient point at which we can take a break for lunch, it should not last more than half an hour. Again to underscore the importance of the matter under discussion, we would be back here by 2:30p.m to continue with the briefing. So we stand adjourn till 2:30p.m when we shall resume in this House. And let me re-emphasize the point that all the Ministers and Government Officials who are here to take part in this briefing are allowed to take their break and to be here at 2:30p.m, actually they do not have to leave the precinct, we have a well stock restaurant in this building, and we hope that they will avail themselves of the facilities in our restaurant so that we can recommence our meeting here at 2:30 prompt. We also have one more briefing before we start the discussion and that will come from the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development because as you know his Ministry has an important role to play as well. So we stand adjourn to 2:30p.m

*[The House adjourned to 2:30p.m]*

*[The House resumed at 3: 00p.m]*

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, good afternoon. With great pleasure I welcome and recognise the Honourable Member. Now I can correctly address you as Honourable Member *[Laughter]*.

**HON. ABU KEMOKAI:** Can you also give me an opportunity to comment?

**THE SPEAKER:** Do not worry, the time will come. To comment on my ruling?

**HON. ABU KEMOKAI:** To comment generally Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** On the subject matter on the Floor? Okay! We shall now invite the Honourable Minister of Local Government and Rural Development to take the Floor and give us a briefing. I think he would be the last before we start the debate.

**MR TAMBA LAMIN [MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT]:** Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament  
*[Interruption].*

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Sorry Mr Minister.

*[Suspension of S.O 5[2] being 3:00 noon]*

**THE SPEAKER:** Mr Minister before you commence, Leader of Government Business, if I were to view it as a contest between the Leader of Government Business and the Leader of the Opposition, I will say here and now that the Leader of the Opposition has triumphed *[Applause]*. Look at your seats.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Mr Speaker, on that note, I want to stand on S.O 35[1]

**THE SPEAKER:** Good! 35 [1].

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** That is behaviour of Members not speaking.

**THE SPEAKER:** 35 [1].

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Mr Speaker, do you want me to read?

**THE SPEAKER:** I can read, do not worry.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** So can I take my seat now?

**THE SPEAKER:** You have cited the wrong S.O.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Mr Speaker, it is not the wrong S.O

**THE SPEAKER:** It is the wrong. A Member rises to speak when he or she catches my eye.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** That is not what 35[1] is saying Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** What does it say?

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** With your leave I read S.O 35[1] **“during a sitting, all Member shall enter or leave the House with decorum”**

**THE SPEAKER:** That is not what we are talking about.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** That is what I was talking about Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** No! It is inapplicable. I am talking about the empty seats that I see in front of me, they are not entering or leaving.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** But Mr Speaker, they were all in the Well Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** They are not entering or leaving. Honourable Minister, you have the Floor.

**MR TAMBA LAMIN:** Thank you Honourable Speaker. Mr Speaker, Members of Parliament, it is indeed a honour to be here to provide you an update on the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development preparedness for the COVID-19 Pandemic. I want to firstly inform you that the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has been collaborating with all other MDAs with regards decision making, and informing local governance sectors or matters relating to COVID-19. I also want to inform Parliament that opportunistically on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March, the Ministry of Local Government in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourisms held a two days conference at the Bintumani Conference Centre. Although it was a Conference on Tourisms, we use the opportunity because we had all local structures within the Conference Centre that is the 190 Paramount Chiefs in the country together with their representative, all Provincials Secretaries, District Officers, Tribal Head men of the Freetown municipality and also Village heads around the Western Rural Peninsular area [*Undertone*] thank you very much. I must say that it was a Local Governance Tourisms Collaboration, that

opportunity was used to invite the Ministry of Health and Sanitation to provide an update on COVID-19 to all local sector leaders. Questions were asked relating to preparedness and those questions were answered by the Ministry, and it is raised awareness about the issues of COVID-19 to all our local leaders. Additionally, as a proactive measure on the part of the Ministry knowing fully well the important and pivotal role that was played by Chiefs during the Ebola, and the indelible imprint that left on the minds on Sierra Leonean with regards to eliminating Ebola, we have as a Ministry dip into our archives and identified the bylaws that were used during that time by local leaders, and my Ministry is now working on those bylaws with the intention of spreading those bylaws or cascading to all local communities. Recently, a two days preparedness meeting was held by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in collaboration with other sectors, and the Ministry played an active role in developing strategies towards prevention of COVID-19 in Sierra Leone. Amongst other things, a budget has been drafted subject to be approved in order for that to assist in cascading and rolling out the bylaws that have been identified as positive for prevention of COVID-19. We are aware as a Ministry that we touch on all areas nationally and therefore, we believe Parliamentarians have a critical role considering that they have got their communities that they go to, and stakeholders of these communities to disseminate information relating to preventing measures of COVID-19. I have to say that the Ministry is positive with regards to information that has been disseminated to critical leaders in our local communities and raising awareness. We work collaboratively with the Ministry of Information and Communication to disseminate information nationally to all local leaders. On that note, I want to reassure Parliament that we would work heavily with all other sectors to ensure that preventive measures are in place. So we are not a strangulate Ministry, we are a central Ministry for implementation of activities of Governance. I thank you very much *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Minister for his briefing, you may now take a seat within the Well of the House, and make yourself available as and when required. Honourable Members, I am going to introduce a new procedure here, the practice

normally is for us to debate important issues like this and to restrain the various leaderships here until we wind up the debate. I am reversing that today, I am going to reverse that trend today, and the procedure we are going to adopt is to allow the Leaders to lead. So Leaders be ready you are going to lead, and you get your membership to follow. This is a national issue, it is not a partisan issue. I repeat, disease is no respecter of persons or territory, we are all potentially vulnerable; higher or lower, urban or rural, man or woman, old and young and particularly the old *[Laughter]*. Where is P.C Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III? You and I are the most vulnerable *[Undertone]* oh I forget my school mate from all indications *[Laughter]* so Honourable Members, if you see your Speaker speaking with this kind of passion it is because my interest is directly involved *[Laughter]* there is no hiding that fact, we are all worried, we are all scared, though not panicky because together we know we can conquer. So let me start with the Leader of the Opposition, followed by the Leader of the NGC. Let me start with the smaller Leaders before I come to the bigger ones *[Laughter]*. The Honourable Dr Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella have the Floor.

**HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA:** S.O 2 'King na king, leda na leda.' Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. On behalf of my colleagues, we want to express our gratitude to the members of the Executive branch who made time to be with us, we moved the motion to invite you here for good reason. We are worried, we have a reason to be worried, we are not expert in epidemiology, we watch Television every day, British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC] vote **80%** of their time to Corona, Cable News Network [CNN] in fact much more and we see what is happening around, we have a reason to be concern, we want to thank the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the Ministry of Interior because this is the second time they are coming here, they have briefed us before but since then many things changed. Yesterday there was an Article in the New Yoke times that several individuals are also reading around the world because it is done by a very reputable commentator by the name of Thomas F. Freeman. His article was the world before Corona and the world after Corona. He talked to some scientists and some other public policy people, he is a very sober minded man,

he won the policy surprise three times and he says after the whole world have dealt with Corona, we will not be the same anymore because we have never seen something like this and he took time to explain what exponential growth means. That is what worries many people that when you have one case of Corona by the time you think about it, it is gone to ten thousand and once it reaches that point there is nothing to stop it from going even further, so it is legitimate that we the Parliament of Sierra Leone are concern, we are among the most vulnerable, we have had a bad experience with Ebola, when Ebola came in we saw the fragility of our medical infrastructure that it was not ready. This morning I took a chance, I stopped by 34 Military Hospital for two reasons; I travelled two weeks ago and yesterday I was having a sour throat and I had *[laughter]*, so I went to the Doctor yesterday *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** No, but that is good.

**HON. DR KANDEH K. YUMKELLA:** Yes let me finish my story Sir, I do not want them to be worried because I am not of the age of Honourable Speaker, Ibrahim Ben Kargbo and P.C Bai Kurr Kansgbaro Sanka III but I am holding the lower end; 60 and above *[Laughter]*. So, I went to the doctor yesterday for good reason to check, and he told me that I am fine, no coughing, no sneezing, so with the usual. I came home and I was reading a message on social media and somebody else was talking about their symptoms, so I just thought about two things to go to 34 Military Hospital to say well what if I feel that maybe I have Corona, what do you do as a citizen? I say so let me test the system and walk in S.O2 'ar feel say ar get Corona watin ar for do?' The second reason I knew we were having this debate, and I said that we have been assured by the Government that things are in place so let me test the system. I walked in there as a patient and to be very honest 34 Military Hospital is ready, the Military personnel are ready *[Applause]* very ready to the extent that right at the gate I told the guy to record, I put the glass down I said to the lady at the gate S.O 2 'Ar don cam, ar fel say ar get Corona, ar wnt mek den test me,' she said 'pa cam don fus, cam was u hnd' she did the first protocol immediately, get out of the vehicle and wash your hands, I washed my hands and I said 'so watin fo do' she said 'go wait na da place' and to cut the long story



short, they were ready. They called in Doctor Sly Valley; Sly Valley is your point man Honourable Minister. He and his team interviewed me which country I went to, they checked how many incidents, there was just one case in that country, they said well what are the other symptoms, I said S.O2 'Na mi aes nor mre n ar get soir throat', they said well you are not critical. If you were from a country with fifty [50], we will quarantine you right now and we start tracing. So he and his team went through all the protocols with me but of course I took the advantage to ask some questions so Honourable Minister, it is based on what I learnt from there that I wish to ask. You said we have a total of 370 kits, I know 34 Military Hospital have about 150 of those and then there is at Jui and a little bit at Connaught. So my question for you is how many of those kits are in the different Districts? Or how many are in the Regional hospitals? Secondly, I asked the Officer there; what if God forbid we have a case and we needed to wrap up quickly, how soon can you get more kits in and of course if America is struggling to get testing, we also have to be worried whether you have the speed, they gave a conscious answer but that is a question to you as well, what if? The second issue they raised which you have confirmed, they said doctor it is less expensive to do prevention than to quarantine, they said when we quarantine, we are spending money we should be using maybe for treatment, so our best bet is prevention which begs the question for you sir. Should we not ask people not to visit us for the next three weeks? Stop the flights because we are so vulnerable and we do not feel well already. So I think part of that has been done by the President, will that be enforced, would flights be allowed to come or we just stop? The third one is yes; our neighbours have already had cases, the Minister of Interior the last time tried to answer that for us, how are the on-going discussions with Guinea and Liberia? Do we have an understanding that we will all close our borders now? I do not think we have gone that far, do you think it makes sense collectively; the three countries or four including Cote' d'Ivoire to say as a country to close our boarders both ways for three weeks. Last question for you which maybe the Interior Minister will also help; what is the trigger, when do you advice Mr President to invoke Section 29? I noticed yesterday he did very well but at the last paragraph he did not invoke that, and I asked the Military personnel today and they

said that 'it is because we are weighing the cost of quarantine, it is very expensive, it will short the economy down, so they will not advice Mr President on that' but I ask you now sir; is it ten cases, is it fifty cases or is it one hundred? What is the trigger for you that you will say Mr President invoke that because we as Parliament discussed yesterday with the Honourable Speaker, we are willing to do that; do we need to give him the powers for 90days to have that freedom if he needed to invoke that?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, for the economist in the room especially Madam Minister of Finance thank you very much for your briefing, you gave us an idea that we should brace ourselves, the impact we are experiencing, you have indicated to us how much you are giving a Billion. So we ask you a question in your scenario because I see everybody developing scenarios, immediate impact, medium term and worse case, you said you are putting plans together, what is the total budget like? What are you anticipating the budget could be like giving some of those scenarios you have, what are some of those economy scenarios that you have built up? What is your worst case scenario? How much money do we need recognizing that those who should help us as they did in Ebola are also struggling, so what do we do?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the other thing is procedural. I need to be guided what if Finance says to Mr President for instance that they need **150bln** or **200bln**, does he just approve or do we have authority to do that appropriation because that is a huge extra budgetary expenditure and of course given what happened in Ebola ghost workers and so on, we feel our Finance Committee should do some oversight when that plan is put together that Parliamentarians are also looking at that, we do not want six months down the road they said S.O 2 'd moni bin disappear', we also learnt and know Honourable Chernor Maju Raman Bah chaired some of those Committees of Parliament trying to find out. So I guess I am saying, to what extent they are including our Finance Committee if they are doing some of those scenarios because we do not also want to be giving a blank check.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, to the central Bank Governor. I do not want to embarrass him but I was reading, your colleague in the Nigeria central Bank gave out

**\$160mln** to support the Commercial Banks and the businesses. I guess my colleagues were all wondering how deep is your pocket, how much stimulus can we gain? To give reprieves to the Banks, you mentioned that you will be meeting with the Commercial Bankers, how often will those meetings continue because this is still an involving issue and again we do not want to take your job from you but how soon will Parliament be briefed if more money is needed because we do not want to come after the fact with audit, we want to be in a pre-emptive mood to say if monies are allocated and in fact, they are used properly.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my last comment is the following and why scenario building is important now. We do not want to be caught unaware and I know WHO is the first point of contact to get assistance from, but what are the other donors saying? The Minister of Finance mentioned that the World Bank is releasing **\$12.5mln** to help with some of the initial processes. Giving what I am hearing from other Economies that may just be a drop in the bucket, are there others willing to help as they anticipate to pre-empt?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, finally, is that we just saw a statement from the head of WHO, he is warning African Leaders and African countries to test properly and not to play with the numbers and here again he goes back to health, he warn also on borrowing; be careful how much you are borrowing to deal with this. It seems Mr Minister of Health and Sanitation, the one entity that is prepared for rapid deployment, I think you call it R-D-I-T-F that is what I learnt from the military personnel, it seems we have the Rapidly Deployable Isolation and Treatment Facility [RDITF] that we have only one in the country with 30 beds, 4 ambulances, so I asked them ideally, what else do you want and they said at least 2. What if we have incident in the South and one in the North how do we deploy? We have only one set. What is being done to have more RDITF? They also talked about training, you mentioned that you have over 130 individuals you have trained that can trace the disease, but they said there is another level above that which is the laboratory technicians. They said to me that they do not have enough lab technicians that can really deal with what they called biological

security. They talked about trainings and leaving things in place when this crisis is done. I asked them about the experience of Ebola and they said most of the facilities in Kerry Town and in Lunsar are gone, maybe Kenema and Freetown are functioning. So my last question is; in this crisis, what infrastructure will be built in Sierra Leone so that the next time we have a crisis like this we will not be panicking? Those are my initial interventions Sir *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I notice the Honourable Leader of C4C is not here but his Deputy is here.

**HON. SAA F. BENDU:** Thank you very Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, earlier I heard you referring to us as smaller parties, I actually do not know from which parameters you are coming from.

**THE SPEAKER:** It is a relative term, big or small are all relative term.

**HON. SAA F. BENDU:** Yes Sir because if you are referring to political parties, we are all going through the same process of registration. Thank you very much. I want to thank all the participants that are here today for us go through this all important issue that affect all of us. We take it very seriously because we know what the Ebola caused to this nation that is why we are doing all we could to make sure that we are here.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, apart from all the speakers, I have few comments or questions to make; one of this could be directed to the Minister of Internal Affairs. When we talk about this crisis, we are focusing mainly on the International airport, the Balamuyah checkpoint; if you go down to Kono District, we have 44 porous entering points and in the presentation of the Minister, he did not mention anything about how they are planning to set up a system within Kono porous borders that is the 44 entering points that are within Guinea and Kailahun. So, I would want the Minister of Internal Affairs to tell us the plans that they have put in place in terms of prevention. I think few days from now, the National Civil Registration Authority [NCRA] will start a very important activity that has to do with the assembly of more than one hundred people *[Undertone]* of course there will be a queue to come and register and the Minister of

Internal Affairs did not also mention of any plans that they have put in place. This is a very sensitive issue that he need also to tell us whether they will continue or they will put things on hold based on the present situation in the country.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we are very much concerned about the representative from the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, he did say they have three laboratories ready to carry out testing should there be need for that, and I know there is one already in preparation that is in Lakah, he needs to tell us what is the status of it because we do not know whether it is complete, in used or not because if you can recall during the Ebola Era, it was challenging, people were running helter-skelter from the infected people. We pray and we believe that it will not happen, but should that happen this centre will not be enough, so you should be able to tell us at least the preparedness plan towards that direction. He also said they have 370 test kits available with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, but he also said they have the capacity to bring more. They have the capacity to bring more but he did not tell us the strategies that they will be using; whether they will be purchasing them or donors will donate them because we do not want to see a reverse of what happened during the Ebola Era. So processes has to be followed, that is more the reason why planning is important in such a situation.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister of Finance also said that they are giving **Le1bln** every week to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation to help them prepare or to keep them on standby. According to the representative from the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, he said they have received for one week already, they are to receive another one today for the second week, so how are they retiring those monies? Because it is also very important in as much as we are preparing to prevent this terrible disease, we should also not forget the fact that accountability counts *[Applause]* so he should also be able to tell us how they are spending those moneys particularly the first week that was given has gone and I think there has been an update here as to how many people have been quarantined and then they should be able to tell us what has been done towards that direction. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister also

said there will be some kind of decrease or shortage in essential commodities such as rice, oil, food stuff which is also a very big threat and the Bank Governor promised that he will speak with the Minister of Trade to list down the essential commodities so that they will remove tax on them, I think that should have been done by now because as we speak currently there is fuel crisis and we all know when there is a crisis that has to do with fuel, it tells on the commodities as well. So now that we are having this problem with some of these countries that do supply us with those commodities that is going to be an added problem to the layman. These are things that should be done in haste because all of us know what the essential commodities are and we don't need to wait for the Minister of Trade to bring you list of essential commodities that we should remove tax from otherwise, it is going to be very much challenging.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I was also of the opinion that a representation from the Ministry of Defence should have been here because during the speech of the President yesterday, he did say the military will be deployed, they would work alongside so in preparedness, there should be a representation from the Ministry of Defence as well to tell us their strategies and preparedness plans. So far Mr Speaker, I want to rest my case and I want to believe that another opportunity would be given to me as we go along *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. I know the Independents have hurriedly taken the opportunity to catch my eyes *[Undertone]* do not worry. Honourable Leader, let me assure the Independent that you tried it once to form yourself into a group, and to come up with a leadership that leadership is yet to be recognized *[Laughter]* you are a long way from that recognition. I want to give the Floor to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. On that note except the Independent Members of Parliament are trying to say that they are part of Government, if that is not the case then I will represent them as well as Leader of the Opposition *[Laughter]* so they have a choice. Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, like my colleagues before, I want thank those who made themselves available

to this House for this all important topic on the discuss, but I must also particularly thank you for making sure that in and within your wisdom on Tuesday when the Honourable Dr Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella of Ketchum even though this morning he was fighting for Yeliboya, he stood in an attempt for the Order Paper to be amended, you were quick enough to summon the two of us; myself and the Leader of Government Business and you suggested that it will be better for us to have a special Session. Today we are enjoying that special Session and the motion was moved by Dr Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella and it was approved by this House. So we want to thank you for that and I hope you will continue on that step. Mr Speaker *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** You will always drink from the spring of wisdom.

**HON. CHERNOR R. M. BAH:** Thank you Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** Not too worry, it is available in abundance.

**HON. CHERNOR R .M. BAH:** Mr Speaker, all the points that were made by Dr Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella are all relevant in assisting us address or halt this menace. I also want to thank him for making an attempt even though I do not know what his reason was, he had tried to go around it but maybe he was convinced that there is a problem somewhere, but be that as it may we are happy that he is free.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Acting Leader of C4C, I wonder where the Leader of the C4C is because the Honourable Member from Kono was also attacking colleagues on that side and their Leader is not here, we do not know why he is not here, we hope that he is not here because he might not be well or something else but if he has decided to engage in something else other than this for today it will be a disappointment because this is a very serious issue. As Mr Speaker rightly put it, the life of our nation and of every person is at stake, so this is something all of us should treat with all the seriousness it deserves.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I carefully listened to the Bank Governor, I insisted and I hope that if the time comes for him to respond again, he will convince us on what they plan to do in maintaining our reserve, because we talking about taking Loans,

going for grants, counterpart funding if the reserve is not properly manage and in tacked, those loans will not accessed, those grants will not be accessed. And I am sure he knows that very well because he is more of a professional when it comes to the banking industry and economist than myself here, I am not a layman but I am not up to his task.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance tried her best, but I am sure she has more to tell us, I do not know whether the timing she got for her to prepare is not enough, there is a lot more she is supposed to tell us about. We have heard the Governor telling us about their plan or proposal of raising and making available **Le500bln** for the purpose that will help to cushion the Economy, but where are we going to get the funds from we are yet to know as well, these are things we need to know *[Undertone]* by faith, well I will not say anything as far as that is concern, but it is good for us to know Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Acting Leader of the C4C talked about the NCRAs proposed registration and verification exercise which the Deputy Minister did not talk about but Mr Speaker, you are aware few days ago I wrote a letter to His Excellency the President, you were copied and so were the Leaders of other parties in this House. These are genuine concerns, we cannot be two faced. Mr Speaker, we know that the registration of nationals and non-nationals is relevant, but is the timing appropriate? The funds that are going to be used in that exercise, can't we use that same fund and divert it to what is now on ground? These are relevant questions we have to answer because registration is going to continue even after our lives, it is going to be an on-going process for perpetuity *[Applause]*. We have to be honest with ourselves. People are still being born in this country today without Birth certificate, fortunately the two Deputies in the Ministry of Health and Sanitation are here and they know it is a challenging issue. We have stopped Members of Parliament from using the Biometric register, we have stopped ourselves, so how can we stop ourselves and endanger the citizens, and we cannot do that *[Applause]*. His Excellency the President in his wisdom and in his statement yesterday, as President, he will not be talking like



us, if you look at paragraph seven [7] of his statement, he warned against social spacing; those in sport, those going to clubs, wherever you go. We have to lay premium in ensuring that we address this virus with all the might we have as a nation and we should not pretend as if we would achieve the desired objective, any attempt to embark on the NCRA will be a waste of resources because already people are worried, they are saying they will not attempt to attempt so are we going to allow Government to waste money when we would be spending money again to do the same thing, I am sure we do not want that as a Parliament, our duty is to assist Government in maximizing the best in anything that the Government embarks upon. I would not want to waste time on that but I am sure definitely this House will not allow himself as representatives of the people to allow that very exercise to continue when we are facing danger. Our neighbours are closing schools, they are stopping many things and the President has been very proactive. As the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs said, he was very professional in making his statement but I am not praising him *[Laughter]*, but he said professionally that people should use the social media professionally, they should use it to benefit this country and we should not use it to bring it down *[Undertone]* well I do not know because I am not a member of the social media, but I only exchange Whats-App with Honourable Dickson Momoh Rogers once in a while *[Laughter]*. Mr Speaker, on a more serious note, we should not be misrepresenting or misconstruing certain things just to suit our convenience or our own purposes. The President said in page 3 paragraph 3 in the last line; let me don't miss quote him, he said it is a question of 'when', he was not praying for Corona to come here, he was not saying that Corona is here, but he is calling on all of us to be very conscious to do all we can in making sure the 'when' is not possible, so there is no way some of us will support the NCRA proceeding in what they want to do when we are talking about 'when'. I hope when the Minister of Health and Sanitation is responding he will also tell us what his take is because you are the front liners, all others are assisting, be the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Finance all of them are assisting the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in ensuring that you accomplish your mission, you are the front liners so I expect the Minister of Health and Sanitation to tell us what their take is

because it is very important. As I said even two people using the same machine more so with our illiterate population out of the western area is in itself dangerous lets us even forget about the queuing, the risks that are involve. And as I said why the rush? We need those resources now to assist us in combating not just the Coronavirus but what we are worried about coming forward eventually the spill over, shortage of food as the Minister of Finance said, high cost and several other issues so Mr Speaker, that is one thing I will expect the Minister of Health and Sanitation to be talking about. And I want to remind you as I have said earlier again that already a lot of our constituents have said they will not participate and nobody can force them to participate because we have to protect their health.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, again to the Minister of Internal Affairs. Mr Speaker, the Minister spoke about other borders that are not the traditional borders we are used to; the Gbalamuya, the Ngendema, the Lungi airport and many others. We are happy that the Minister himself has confirms that even though the Military has been brought in to assist but the Police are still providing the lead. So Mr Minister, we also want to know what other plans you have for those areas that we normally refer to as porous borders that are not the usually known crossing points.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the impact listed by the Minister of Finance have been highlighted by Dr Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella and so also are the cushions, but Madam Minister said a Billion Leones is been provided a week, how many of those Billion Leones have you provided so far? *[Undertone]* two [2], I am sure they will need more money. We have just been told by the Minister that prevention is better than cure, so whatever resources we gather for now it is better to use them to combat this menace before they are diverted elsewhere. I read few minutes ago I don't know whether it is credible, a statement purportedly coming from the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation *[Undertone]* it is credible, you know I do not rely on social media so much, but if you tell me, I will take your word, that is a good news *[Undertone]* we are not banning, but we are suspending because we are very friendly and the language has been friendly, we are not banning them, but suspending flights as the President said

yesterday other mentions will follow. I said on Tuesday in the morning that while we wait for Section 29 to be implemented or apply by His Excellency the President, we should encourage all of us to respect and abide by regulations that are on floor. We should not say because Section 29 has not been revoked we are not going to comply, it will be to our own detriment. We cannot be pretending that we want to protect people but at the same time calling for what we want to protect our rights. There are instances when there are exceptions, this is one; the lives of our people is very important but be that as it may if it becomes necessary, the earlier it is done the better so that we avoid those who will be saying things that might insight others to do the opposite because while we will be preaching for people to follow, others will be doing the opposite and you know we always have; I do not want to use the language I will not want to in society. So Mr Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs please make sure in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation to tell us when the time is right and you hang heads and make sure that you get the required advice as soon as possible. Dr Kandeh Kolley Yumkella also mentioned the precaution from the Boss of WHO Officer, these are things he had seen, we will be going for loans, we will be going for aids, let us make sure we go for what is right, for those things that we will be able to justify and address at the end of the day.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I now move to the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development. The Members of Parliament were asking where we stand, but we know the Ministry of Health and Sanitation will always work with the Members of Parliament. We have made ourselves available, we have to make ourselves ready to assist in whatever way we can make ourselves available because this is a non-political, do not hesitate to engage us. Few days ago there was a meeting at the Youyi Building where the President was, myself the Leader of Government Business and the Leader of the NGC were confused, we never knew if we were needed there or not, but when we looked at those that were copied and invited we were not. He invited Leaders of political parties and we are Leaders of parties in Parliament so if you want to engage us, you engage us directly, but even without engaging us as Parliamentarian, we have

taken steps but with your expertise it will make our work better and easier. So do not leave us behind its no contact no touching, we do not want to start drawing your cloths we cannot because we do not want to contact you. The Minister of Local Government and Rural Development whiles you are dealing with local authorities, when you meet with Members of Parliament engage them, they are also locals, most of them are TAs except for us, but those outside the Western Area are all TAs so engage them because they are Members of the local authorities. So Mr Speaker, whiles thanking you and those who made themselves available, we will be waiting to hear from what they have to say eventually then we will come back. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his contribution to this debate. It is now the turn of the Leader of Government Business.

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the last few weeks, His Excellency the President Dr Julius Maada Bio has been travelling across Sierra Leone to sensitise people about the Coronavirus pandemic. As a Government, I believe we are committed to fight this disease, as a Government and I am convinced that we are committed to safeguard the citizens of this country. Today, His Excellency the President had a Press Conference to explain to the people of this country his plans and messages for the protection of every citizens. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, unlike the Ebola Era, today we have a committed staff in the Ministry of Health and Sanitation with about one hundred and seventy six [176] Epidemiologists ready to fight this battle. When Ebola struck Sierra Leone, we were not prepared for it, so probably that is why today as a country *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Let me caution, no politics please.

**HON. SIDIE M.TUNIS:** There is no politics in this, it is just a mere fact. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, when we talk about 176 Epidemiologists, we are not talking about a party Epidemiologist. When Ebola struck this country we did not have any, those are the lessons we learnt from Ebola. Today, we have them because we did not have them when Ebola struck. So Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we have a committed staff comprising of 176 Epidemiologists, we have three laboratories, and as

the Minister have just said we have more than 300 test kits with the possibility of getting another 20,000 test kits. Like the Honourable Speaker said, this is no longer about politics. Today the Government has suspended all flights for three months which means Sierra Leone is closed to the outside world for the time being. So what should we do as a country? I think that is what we should be focusing ourselves on. What should we do as Members of Parliament to help the situation? During the Ebola Era, Government engage Members of Parliament and all Honourable Members were sent to their respective constituencies to ensure that they sensitize their people. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as we are today, Government based on everything we have heard from our Ministers I believe as citizens only behavioural change can help us as a nation. We must observe behavioural change which is basically social distancing, let Honourable Members of Parliament who are representing the seven million people in this country to make sure we sensitise them so that they will not get infected. Like the President said it is a matter of 'when' today we do not have Coronavirus in our country, we do not wish to have it but there is a possibility that we will have it, we must prepare for it. I am very thankful to Honourable Dr Kandeh Kolley Yumkella, he briefed us this afternoon before even coming into the Well that he has been to 34 Military Hospital. As Leaders, we have agreed that under the leadership of the Honourable Speaker, we will plan a trip to also go around to check the preparedness. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I believe as a Government we are **100%** committed to fight this disease but we need everybody on board.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me just make a quick comment on the NCRA issue that the Honourable Leader of Opposition brought up. Mr Leader, the fight against coronavirus is an on-going process. His Excellency the President like I said for the past two weeks he has been touring the nation to sensitise the people, today we have our flights suspended, last night he addressed the nation, today he can decide if the NCRA registration issue is an impediment to the fight against Coronavirus we would stop it *[Undertone]* no it is not just about that we would stop it. So for me the door is open for anything, everything is on the table. As I am speaking to you the President is still on

the issue, so let us work together, let us leave suspicion aside, let us ensure that we work as a team, as a family, and as Sierra Leoneans. We know there have been lot of talks about the NCRA registration, but let us put that aside, trust me if it is going to be against the fight of Coronavirus it will be stopped. If of course is it not going to have any effect they will carry on with their duties.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my Ministers will be responding to almost everything that you have said, but as you have heard from the Minister of Finance, we are not only fighting Coronavirus, but we are also fighting the effects of Coronavirus especially our economy, our businesses; the small medium enterprises. The Governor has already indicated that even before going further they have already made plans for whatever that is going to happen in the future, and as Ministry also I am personally very impressed with the plans they have already. Credit to business is imperative. In a situation like this Government must ensure that foreign exchange is available for businesses that is the only way we are going to survive as citizens. So I must say thank you to the Government, to His Excellency the President, to our Ministers of Finance, the Governor of Bank of Sierra Leone for the great effort that they have made in ensuring that our small business survive in the midst of all of these struggles. Like the Honourable Dr Kandeh Kolloh Yumkella said if America is struggling, if they are in a crisis situation that is so chaotic right now what about us here? I believed we must say kudos to the President and his Government.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the fight against Ebola succeeded principally because of the bylaws that the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development came with. The Minister has just indicated to us that they now have or they intend to have bylaws that will guide our Paramount Chiefs in the fight against Coronavirus. I will encourage my Honourable Minister to ensure that he involves Honourable Members of Parliament in all of those constituencies that they would be visiting because in the fight against Ebola, it was a collaborative effort between the local communities and the Members of Parliament. In most cases, Members of Parliament provided leadership in their respective constituencies.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I would leave it as it is for now while my Ministers will respond to some of the issues that you brought up, but I want to assure this nation that as a Government, we are ready and for the past two weeks His Excellency the President has been travelling all over the country to ensure that we win the fight against Coronavirus. I thank you very much *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I want to thank the Honourable Leader of Government Business for his contribution. Honourable Members, may I have your attention? Honourable Members, the debate is now open, but before I open the debate, I would like to pose a teaser as a citizen of this country who is as worried as anyone of you in this Well particularly since this disease seems to be targeting people in my own age bracket, my teaser is this; you all have cited one particular part of the President's statement where he said; **'the question is not whether this country is under threat, but the question is 'when' not whether we have been threaten by the Corona pandemic.'** That word 'when' connote an element of eminence and when you look at Section 29 of the Constitution which vest power in the discretion of the President to declare a State of Emergency and only he alone can do it. My concern is where is the threshold for triggering the application of Section 29 of our Constitution? I remember the controversy we had during Ebola, we should try and avoid that controversy coming into the picture. We are all concern here. I listen very carefully to the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, he seems to suggest to the House that we have not yet reached the threshold, the question is when? I throw that question as a teaser. I recognise the Honourable Paramount Chief Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III.

**HON. P.C. BAI KURR KANAGBARO SANKA III:** Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, this issue is not only a national issue, but it is an international issue. When we had Ebola, it was only in three countries in Africa, today there are movement of epic centres from China Wuhan or Wubay province to Europe. After Europe where next? Is it Africa? And if it is in Africa, do we have the human and financial resources? These are some of the critical issues that we have to address as people. Mr Speaker, please allow me in person to thank the Ministers or the Deputy Ministers and the Bank Governor who are

here to brief us on the issue that is affecting us as a people, they have done extremely well and I want to congratulate and thank my Minister of Local Government and Rural Development for the briefing he gave, it showed that he is a proactive person who thinks in advance, who had invited all the 190 Paramount Chiefs, the different local administration centres from the provincial secretary, the District officers and the tribal authorities. They have done it and they took good care of the Paramount Chiefs, gave us good transportation and gave us good food to eat, so it shows that when we come to Freetown they would be looking after us and when they go to our provinces we would be looking after them. Mr Speaker, you said of age and it is good but I know there are young people whose life styles will not go well with what is going on, but our life styles will go on well with what is happening [*Applause*]. Life styles has a lot to do with the existence of some young people, so take note, learn, listen and live.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to bring another issue quickly about the Members of Parliament. When we passed the Local Government Act here in 2009, every Member of Parliament in his constituency is a Member of the Chieftdom Committee and they should participate fully, but some of them do not even look at it. I think Africa is going backward because we do not agree to do the first things first. When they want to become Members of Parliament, they go to the Paramount Chiefs, they go to the Villages, they go to the every person, but when it comes to matters of addressing those issues they are not attending. As a Member of the Chieftdom Committee, it is the highest Committee in the Chieftdom. So therefore, if you are not invited it is because you do not care to be invited because even if you invite you, you will not attend [*Laughter*]. You should learn what is right for you and I am insisting on this because the Chieftdom Committee are the people who are appointing members of the local court, it is our duty as a Chieftdom committee to appoint so many people who are addressing those issues. So today, I am telling you that all those who came from the provinces are Members of the Chieftdom Committees by law.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have heard what they have said, but Mr Speaker, those who spoke before me had done a great job, it shows that they are clever and we



are having meeting of the minds. We think alike because they care for the nation, but Mr Speaker, from what we have heard from our people, from the Government aspect in terms of the Ministers and the Bank Governor, it shows a great concern for the welfare and wellbeing of Sierra Leone. I salute you and I doff my hat to you all. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, we should not allow individual Ministries when we do not have the funds for them to make individual budget. It is high time the Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Finance could come up with another appropriation budget to address the Corona issue in Sierra Leone *[Applause]*. If they are spending **Le1bln** to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation where do they get the money from? On which line are they getting that money to support? Is it from the Budget? Do we Budget for that? No! The Ministers are here with all the good senses they have given us today, I think there should be a tick tank, a coordinated committee that will be form by the Government headed by either the President, Vice President or any other expert brought in together who will address the Coronavirus issue because I listened to my Minister of Local Government and Rural Development who did an extremely good job to address the issue by inviting all the 190 Paramount Chiefs, the tribal heads of the Western Area and all the administrative staff from the provinces to sensitize us about the Coronavirus. He has done it and he said they have drawn a budget, if the drawn a budget what about the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, do they have a budget also? What about the Ministry of Transportation and Aviation? I looked here earlier Mr Speaker, if you allow me we have to consider the Ministries of Government, they are all important, we need the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the Ministry of Education, Transport Aviation, Local Government and Rural Development, Defence, Internal Affairs, Tourism, etc because it has to be a coordinated effort by the Government to come up with a tick tank expert so that they can come together and have a single Budget that would address the issue of the virus affecting us in the world and when I listen to His Excellency the President Yesterday, he said '**it is not a matter of what but when**', it is eminent so we have to think. I am appealing to this Parliament through Mr Speaker and to the Government of Sierra Leone for us to have a coordinated effort, a coordinated tick tank, and a coordinated committee that would

address the issue of the Coronavirus in Sierra Leone. I also think even this Parliament with all the interest they have showed should also have a Committee to monitor the issues affecting us and I am very happy that the Minister of Finance is here. When we talk of the Ministry of Local Government, you put a very big word at the back of it; Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, where are the funds? It is one of the poorest Ministries, maybe if you ask for the Chiefs to come up with goats and fowls we could do that, but where is the money? So therefore, you have to empower the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, it is carrying more than **70%** of the country's population.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have so many questions I would have ask the Bank Governor for the layman in the street to understand. When you come to address us here, what is the role of the Bank of Sierra Leone as the Bank of the Banks of Sierra Leone? You are the Bank of the last resort, what is your role in terms of economic development, monitoring implementation and where do you get your resources as a Bank?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am also asking my able young Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, do we have the spaces to quarantine people right now? What we saw the other day on social media in Lungi was not good enough, when the lady was talking, she said they came in 4-5 hours ago and they have nobody to look after them, nobody to talk to them about what is happening, the rooms are not good enough for them to sleep etc. Have you put in place all mechanisms and equipment that the people are supposed to be using in the quarantine environment? Do we have a space that can quarantine people coming from Italy and other places? I want you also to address the issue of the Japanese yesterday if it is true that they came in, but you did a very good job by returning them back to where they came from *[Laughter]*. These are the key issues and according to the Leader of Government Business, he said Sierra Leone had blocked all air travelling in and out of Sierra Leone for the next three month, if that is the true, what are the financial implications? I heard on BBC that Alibaba and his company are saying they will donate twenty thousand test kits to all the fifty-four [54]

African countries, are we aware of that? Is that a fact? I heard it on BBC and I saw it. As an old man, I have to express some of the opinion that I had with Ebola, so I will call it off, but these are the issues and when you talk of free **Le500bln** for the Banks, your open window that you have created, is the interest rate not too high? When other international countries are saying zero interest rate, some **0.25%** and when you talk of **Le500bln**, what is the exchange rate? Is it **\$50mln** or **\$54mln**? Based on the exchange rate, what is the official Bank exchange rate for us to know? So Mr Speaker, he said is there to provide liquidity, are you going to borrow us money right now for us to form the coordinating committee? Mr Speaker, I am recommending that the Government of Sierra Leone should come up with a plan together with WHO by having a committee, we should work with WHO to see that we are a very serious nation and asking WHO to support us because they know that definitely that we do not have the money, but if we have the resources in terms of man power, the willingness and the national will to fight Coronavirus, let us do it. When Honourable Members who spoke before me, I did not heard any of them mentioning WHO. Mr Minister, former Chief Medical Officer, I know you work with WHO, what is their role now? What are they doing for us? And I am begging you to go and plead to the world including China to say you fought it, but you have to come and help us again *[Laughter]* we have to do it to breath. I want to thank you very much and I know that you will go and think better. I thank my Minister of Local Government and Rural Development for the good job he is doing and we are asking the Government to take it into consideration. I thank you Mr Speaker *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Paramount Chief. I think if there is a conscientious that is evolving it is to the effect that these are extraordinary times requiring extraordinary measures to combat the Corona pandemic. So please because times are extraordinary we have to think out of the box, this is one opportunity we have to see what we can recommend to the Executive to do that which they had not thought about. If their thinking is already comprehensive, let us demonstrate a desire of solidarity with them and I am very pleased to hear the Leader of Government Business

and speakers before him stressed the fact that you all represent constituencies and you have responsibilities to you your constituents. All of you have said it and indeed I am thinking seriously that maybe we too need a break to give you an opportunity to go to your constituents to sensitize them about Coronavirus because this is a very serious business. Now I am going to open the debate with the following: I will start with you in your capacity as Chairman of the Health Committee, Honourable Moses Baimba Jorkie, Chief Whip; Honourable Diskson Momoh Rogers, Honourable Dr Abdulai Daniel Sesay, Honourable Alusine Osaio Kamara, Honourable Abdul Latif Sesay, and Honourable Veronica Kadie Sesay. By the way you are going to take the Floor in the order in which I called the names, three [3] minutes each.

**HON. MOSES B. JORKIE:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. In the first place my name is Honourable Moses Baimba Jorkie; J-O-R-K-I-E and not Yorkie.

**THE SPEAKER:** I beg your pardon.

**HON. MOSES B. JORKIE:** Thank you very much Sir. I want to join my colleagues in thanking the MDAs for coming here to brief Parliamentarians and the country at large about the Corona situation. To start with my intervention while the Ministry made mention about the preparedness in terms of the laboratories, he mentioned three which are in Kenema, Chinese hospital at Jui and at Lakah if my memory can serve me well, but when Honourable Dr Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella was actually doing his own intervention, I heard him referring to the 34 Military Hospital, so I want to actually have a clear understanding about that so that we may not be misled if we are asked. When you go out to sensitise somebody about a disease, you need to come out clearly to tell that person for instance in the case of the Ebola outbreak, a person can contact it through touching etc, but this particular disease called Coronavirus, majority of us are in doubt about the transmission root. I will like the Minister to actually tell us the root of transmission of this particular disease so that as we are educating our people in both towns and villages we will be clear in telling them the ways that the disease is spread. If my memory can also serve me well, when you were trying to actually elaborate on the Ebola Virus outbreak, you actually praise sing the Honourable Members for their

interventions during the outbreak. I strongly believe that Members of Parliament are very much active in the sensitization of this outbreak because all of us are the people's representatives and they listen to us. We thank God that the disease is not yet in Sierra Leone, but we need to actually sensitise our people about this disease. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am pleading to the Minister to capacitate us as Members of Parliament to go out and sensitise our people *[Applause]*. I also want to join my Leader to say thank you for what you have done in terms of the one hundred and seventy six Epidemiologists all over the country and we know that they will be monitoring in case of any outbreak. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the only advice I will give to all of us is to please encourage them because they are going to be the front runners of this particular fight *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, as I said earlier that not only Members of Parliament are important in this fight, I also want to call on the attention of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to the Paramount Chiefs because when you want to actually undertake this fight, you have to do it with conjunction with them because you will find out that when they called their chieftom people for a meeting at a particular time, majority of them will attend and on time. So in that light, they need to be capacitated in order to actually explain the danger of this disease to their people.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want the Ministry and the security agency to actually put good mechanism in place in terms of the suspension of flights coming into Sierra Leone because we have porous borders and I am made to understand that some people are coming from other countries, they land at either Liberia or Guinea and board a vehicle to Sierra Leone. So in that vein, you have to really take note of that or otherwise somebody will come into our country with the disease which will lead to destruction of lives; may the Lord forbid. I also want to know the root or the procedures which we have to follow to break the chain of the virus; you may know it, but it has not yet come to the notice of everybody. In the area of the self-quarantine for instance, I was called that a Member is coming from outside he wants to be under self-quarantine. So in that light, you need to educate the public on how to undertake

such adventure and what are the procedures you have to follow. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in that light, I want to say thank you *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you. Honourable Dickson Momoh Rogers, you have the Floor.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, let me start my intervention by thanking the Opposition parties particularly the All People's Congress party because they usually said in this Well that when it is national issue they will support the Government in collaborating it and today is a clear manifestation of what they have been saying. I want to say thank you for that and I also want to say thank you to Mr Speaker because today's sitting is a special sitting, we could have done this on Tuesday, but in your wisdom you said let us do it today and I think today's debate is a very big eye opener to the nation. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is no doubt that this virus is very dangerous and it is very serious all over the world. Therefore, the nation as well as Members of Parliament are taking drastic measures to make sure that we do not have a single case in Sierra Leone. I think posterity will judge us today in Sierra Leone that Parliamentarians are part of the history making and that the whole world will say Sierra Leoneans put mechanisms in place against Coronavirus and it did not get to Sierra Leone. I want to say thank you also to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the Ministry of Finance, the Bank Governor and all those that made their presentations.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am particularly delighted when the Deputy Minister said it is better to prevent than to cure; it is important for all of us to put hands on deck to make sure that instead of spending Billions of Leones to cure, let us spend half of that money to make sure we prevent the virus from reaching us.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, few speakers have mentioned the fact that some people are coming to this country not by air, but by land and sea. Mr Speaker, let me hasten to say that it is more dangerous in the South, part of East and the North. We have over five hundred porous borders between Zimie, Sorogbma, Gelidness Pirie to enter Sierra Leone and Mr Speaker, fortunately for us the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs is here, let us ensure that we stop all the motorcycle riders from taking

passengers from any crossing borders to Sierra Leone [*Applause*]. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let me give you a case at hand; there is a Nigerian who was tested positive in Malaysia, he travelled a day before yesterday to Nigerian, he is on the run and they are now looking for him and who knows how many people he has infected? Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am asking all of us including the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs to make sure that we stop all motorcycle riders from taking passengers in any of our neighbouring countries to Sierra Leone and that should be our first standing point to fight Coronavirus.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I have a radio station in Pujehun call voice of one jammer; after the speech of His Excellency, I called them to open the phone line so that callers can call and **90%** of the callers asked Members of Parliament to take veronica bucket to them with hand washing soap so that they can wash their hands. Our constituents have started calling on Members of Parliament, in fact, yesterday I told the listeners that by Friday myself and my colleagues Members of Parliament will be in Pujehun to engage them on the radio station about what they should be doing in order for them not to contact the Coronavirus. Mr Speaker, as I speak, some of my constituents are now sensitizing the others and I have also ask them to give the Ministry of Health and Sanitation an hour on the radio station every day on the issue of Coronavirus. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it is important that our President and all of us to come together to fighting this virus so that we stop it from entering into Sierra Leone. Let us engage the Paramount chives as well Members of Parliament, it will not cost you much Madam Minister of Finance and Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation. During Ebola Era, we were used adequately to make sure we help our people, in fact Pujehun District was the first District to record zero Ebola case throughout the country. Therefore, as a Parliamentarian, we are all ready to pledge ourselves in the fight, we are with the Government, we are with the Ministry and like I said I want to say a very big thank you to the Opposition parties for their support in the fight against Coronavirus. Like Mr Speaker advise us earlier, this debate is not basis on partisan and I hope and pray that [*Interruption*].

**THE SPEAKER:** Before you take your seat, I have a question for you.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Yes Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** I heard you say and you advice the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs to take measures to ensure that motorcycle riders do not take passengers across the porous borders, did you say that?

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Yes Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Under what law? If he does that and if he is not careful he is going to be accused of abusing human right. Under what law? You can only do that under Section 29.

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Mr Speaker,

**THE SPEAKER:** Under what law?

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has called the Paramount chiefs to formulate bylaws. Mr Speaker, haven't said that I refer you to Section 18 of *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Bylaw is a subordinate law. What is the primary law?

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Mr Speaker, the same law that we used to banned all flight coming into Sierra Leone.

**THE SPEAKER:** Really?

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Mr Speaker, to suspend all flight that are coming to Sierra Leone. Mr Speaker, you advise us that we should all come together to fight this disease so that our people will be safe from all dangers. Mr Speaker, let me tell you *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Within the confines of the law?

**HON. DICKSON M. ROGERS:** Mr Speaker, I will now take you to Section 18 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone and I am sure that you are one of the authors' of this Constitution, you know what is written on each and every page of it therefore I do not



have to refer you to any page. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, if you go through some of those Sections you will find out that the President has the right to promulgate laws in order to prevent any disease from entering into Sierra Leone and that should be one of the basis in making sure that we talk to the motorcycle riders about the dangers of this disease so that they can stop taking passengers from other countries to Sierra Leone because when once they are tested positive in other country they would decide to run to Sierra Leone. I thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** But remember, that power is not in Section 18, it is in Section 29. Honourable Dr Abdulai Daniel Sesay, you have the Floor.

**HON. DR ABDULAI D. SESAY:** Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I stand with a heavy heart as I reflect on what happened when we loss thousands of people during the ravage of Ebola in the whole country. I strongly believe as we sit here today we have learnt from the past. There is a saying which says; 'digging up the past will not help us burial it,' but I strongly believe that digging the past will help us a lot to deal with the present pandemic. As we look back in to history, there are a lot of pandemics that have occurred throughout history wherein thousands and millions of people died and what where the basic principles that were applied to deal with those pandemics? Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the first most crucial approach was to quarantine people and I want to thank the Government for taking the initiative of suspending all flights to Sierra Leone. We all know that the pandemic started in Chain and because Chinese failed to restrict the movement of people, it has spread all over the world. Had they restrict movement immediately it started, it would not have ended where we are today. Therefore, it is mandatory on all of us to respect what we have learnt from the past, we are very lucky because few years back we had the Ebola outbreak in this country and during that time we did not have enough knowledge on how to deal with outbreaks, but today we have enough staff, we have a lot of people and we must make use of these opportunities.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, there are few things I will like to put across is that to have only three centres within the country is limited and I want to appeal to the

Ministry that they think of a way to expand the testing facilities to other part of the country so that immediately there are suspected cases, test could be done, result will be available, contact tracing etc could be done within a very short time instead of waiting for days to get results which was the major reason why the Ebola destroy this country at the early stage. Quarantine is crucial in this old fight against the Coronavirus and the present facilities we have are not sufficient. I really like to encourage the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the Government to ensure that they expand the quarantine facilities country wide and to also provide appropriate staff. It is not just having a quarantine place, you must have the staff to ensure that people are checked, people are monitored and the necessary measures taking when a case is confirmed or is suspected. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one of the thing which is left out and I think it is very crucial to deal with is the issue of the preparation for case management. We are hopeful and we are anticipating that we do not want the virus to enter our country. If it happens, we are very lucky, but from what has happened around the world the possibility of Coronavirus coming into Sierra Leone is very likely and if it happens, how prepared are we to treat those cases. Therefore, I will like to elaborate a little bit on the preparedness for the case management. As we all know, the Coronavirus affect respiratory system wherein it paralyzes your capacity to take in oxygen, thereby you have difficulties to breath freely and if you do not have enough oxygen supply into your brain and the rest of your system then you will collapse and to prevent this usually you need to treat people in an intensive care unit; you need ventilators to help people breath properly and you need oxygen supply. As we all know at the moment oxygen supply in our country is very challenging, we have very limited intensive care unit. What is the Ministry doing to look at the possibilities of setting up intensive care unit in the event we have a case and how to manage that case properly? Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one of the sad thing I want to say is that sustainability is such a big challenge. During the Ebola crisis we had a lot of treatment centres; we had a lot of facilities to do testing and treatment centres. It is unfortunate that must of those centres where dismantle and today if we have to isolate people it is going be a big challenge and let the Ministry of Health and Sanitation know that from

this time onwards whatever facilities we are setting up let us have permanent structures that we will have in the country so that we will not repeatedly waste money to build structures whenever there is crisis. If I look at how many Millions of Dollars we have spent in building those treatment centres that were dismantle, all those moneys we have spent are gone. Had we retained treatment centres in each District in the country, kept them functional, a day like today you can easily go there and keep them running again and get prepared for any other pandemic. So therefore, it is very important that the Ministry looks into these issues and work on sustainability and continuity of facilities *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, one important thing also I want to highlight on is that people are saying that the Coronavirus is much friendly to elderly people; I want to say it is not a respecter of anybody. It has no respect for age but we must also bear in mind that in our country we have a lot of cases of tuberculosis, we have a lot of people with HIV, we have a lot of people with malnutrition and if these people with already compromised humidity, may the Lord forbid it the virus hits, it is going to cause a lot of fertilities so therefore it is very important that we work very hard to prevent this disease because it is not a respecter of person, it is not a respecter of age. So therefore, we must work very hard to ensure that we improve on some of these things and see that whatever happens we have places wherein people could be isolated and treated so that we do not have a spill over of the disease.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, my colleague made mentioned about the teaching aids, I just want to say something about this because it is very important that we have a unified message to deliver to the people of this country. During the Ebola crisis, messages were drafted and we ensured that whoever goes out carried the same message. It is important that the Ministry comes up with a well define messages that should be broadcast on radios, on televisions and when people go out they will use it to teach people about the Coronavirus. As we look into all this, I think social gathering should be put a stop to. I really respect what the President has decided and I think we need to work on that, that social gathering should be avoided. Mr Speaker, when you

asked us to go for lunch I did not go to the canteen, I stayed here because I do not want to associate any longer with too many people because you do not know who is carrying the virus *[Applause]*. Mr Speaker, it is high time we look into this issue very seriously that whatever type of social gathering, we need to stop that for now because the pandemic that we have it is so serious that apart from the health implication it has, the economic effect it has globally as a struggle nation is very difficult. Let me share this with all of us here that when we look at diseases and how they spread for example when one person is infected with measles, he or she has the potential to infect sixteen other people. When one person is infected with Mumps, he or she has the chance to infect **4.5** people and it is the same as Ebola; they all have a different parentages or when one person is infected, it has the potential of infecting other people. As of now, we do not know exactly how many people one infected patient with Coronavirus can infect. Therefore, it is very important that we take all the necessary measures to ensure that it does not enter this land and in the event it enters this land, we must be ready to nip it there. Mr Speaker, I want to thank you very much for this opportunity and I am more than concern than anybody else because I saw people died during the Ebola crisis, I lost friends and loved ones during the Ebola epidemic. I would not like to see a repetition of that therefore, to all the Ministries that are concerned, we are ambassadors, we are ready to go back to our people to work and to do the dirty job to ensure that we educate people properly, but you need to empower us to do that. I thank you very much *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Member, you have made a very fine observation. The first causality in Burkina Faso was a Member of Parliament and that incident is excising in my mind a great deal and I am in consultation with the Leader of Government Business and the Leader of Opposition, we are also thinking along the lines of releasing all of us to go and do the needful with our people because it is very important. I do not know about the resources, but the Ministers of Health are here and they are receiving such *[Undertone]* I do not know how to describe it; a Billion a week

is not small by any measure. Honourable Alusine Osaio Kamara, you may take your seat as you speak for reasons we shall all understand.

**HON. ALUSINE O. KAMARA:** Thank you Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, I am Alusine Osaio Kamara, representing constitution 058, Tonko Limba Chiefdom which borders the Republic of Guinea. I think this is a concern to me because we are very close to Guinea than any other District. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it always aggrieves me when porous borders are mentioned, but yet the Port and the Sea landing points are not mentioned at all. We have the Sierra Leone Port Authority and a lot of other landing spaces; one is very close to this building which is the Susan's Bay, but nobody talks about the landing points. So I think it is high time we started talking about those landing points otherwise, if we just cover the landing points and other places leaving the Ports, it is like doing nothing at all. So I would like to advise that we involve the Ministry of Defence; that is by bringing in the Navy to police all local vessels coming from Guinea into Sierra Leone [*Applause*]. And again in the Port, most of the Captains of vessels are either from Asia, Africa or the Philippines because they produce cheap labour. So the amount you used to pay a European Sailor can be used to pay twenty Africans or Philippines senior Officers. So the Maritime always goes in for Indians, Africans or Philippians because of a cheap labour and when these captains and other seafarers come to Port, they socialise themselves by going to town and to clubs where they mingle with people. So if we forget about the Port and just concentrate on the Landing sites, I think we have done nothing at all. I think it is high time we concentrated on the Port and the Landing sites. We have the Susan's Bay, the King Jimmy Wharf, the Murray Town point, etc.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a concern to all of us and I think we need to involve our Radio Stations like I am doing; though I am sick, but I am always in contact with my Radio Director in my constituency to sensitize the public about the dangers of this epidemic. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I think we should go back to our people and tell them the dangers of Coronavirus because most of them do not know the dangers we are facing as a country, but if we talk to them either through the Radio

or going there like Mr Speaker said; we need to let them know that we are hanging on a time bomb and if nothing is done, I think it would be very catastrophic for this nation. Thank you very much *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Member, I think he deserves an acknowledgment greater than that *[Applause]*. I am sure you will all agree with me that I want to extend to him few words of sentiment to wish him well as he struggles with his present predicament. I know what he is going through; I was also a victim of what he is going through in the year 2013, how I came out of it to be as healthy as I am again I can only say thanks to Allah. Next on my list is Honourable Abdul Latif Sesay.

**HON. ABDUL L. SESAY:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today's debate is a very crucial one. I believe all of us here are aware of how this disease called Corona is actually ravaging the Universe. When you see your elder brothers suffering, you start wondering about what is going to happen to the younger ones? I think this debate is basically necessary because it is for us to discuss the way forward.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, but I am as well want to give him a very big advice because when you look at what happened during Ebola regime *[Undertone]* no I will not say scorch because it took over thousands and thousands of people from our citizenry so it is a regime. Basically, I am advising the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to focus on the traditional healers, put a ban if necessary to their activities *[Applause]*. These are people that are always in search of money even if they cannot cure somebody, they will tell you 'I will cure you, come with the money'. I am asking the Ministry to please check on their activities more so those that are along our border lines. We have to ensure that they do a proper job; we have to tell them the does and doesn't.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Minister of Health and Sanitation stated that there are 370 test kits available, but from the presentation of the Honourable Member from Kambia; the Leader, Dr Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella, we already have about hundred

plus at 34 Military Hospital. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to know how much Hospitals or Health Centres are in the provinces currently? Mind you, we have about 16 Districts, I want to know how much they are having because you cannot tell me that somebody suffering or having a symptoms of Corona from Kailahun should travel to Freetown for test. I am not expecting that; I am expecting that at least each and every District Hospital should have some amount [500 or more] test kits rather than having twelve or less *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the press release from Government stated that gathering amount to one hundred and above is prohibited but we are more than one hundred here. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, we should not underrate Coronavirus, it is very important and it has the propensity to derail our progress as a nation *[Applause]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I am suggesting that the President should evoke Section 29[1], schools and colleges should be shut down. The reason being that Mr Speaker, already there is a press release from the Ministry of Transport and Aviation to stop flights from coming to Sierra Leone. Why should the President not evoke Section 29 now? It is important, we should not wait until we have a case; we should be proactive, we should be even teaching our constituents to reduce or stop this thing called sex *[Laughter]* it is not good for now; you know it is important, we should called things by their names. I know Members are laughing because they know that it is very difficult for them not to engage in such, but I am asking all Members of Parliament whether male or female to desist from such activity for now please and after six months you can continue *[Laughter]*.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the Deputy Minister of Finance stated that they are disbursing **Le1bn** a week to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation to fight or prevent the scourge. It is very good and also it does have the propensity to increase as things progress, but I just want to advice the Ministry to see how best they can do trade-off; meaning, money that is already there that they do not have anything to do with for now can be spent to combat this menace because it is very key. Mr Speaker,

Honourable Members, why I mentioned the trade-off is because I want to prevent Government from further borrowing. We are already borrowing but I do not want Government to continue borrowing just to end up saying we fought Corona with those monies. So that is why I am pleading with the Ministry of Finance to ensure that we focus on the trade-offs rather than going out for more loans. Thank you very much Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Abdul Latif Sesay. Honourable Veronica Kadie Sesay, you have the Floor.

**HON. VERONICA K. SESAY:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to say thank you to Honourable Dr Kandeh Kolloh Yumkella for bringing this particular discussion to this point. I do not want to call this a debate because when we talk about debate here in this Well, it is for and against. But we are all in the same page and this is one of the best discussions that I have ever had with my long serving in this Parliament. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to say thank you to Honourable Dr Kandeh Kolloh Yumkella because, S.O 2 *'if den nor sabi u, den nor see u, u sef make leh den see u'* that is what you have done because in the statements that were made or the presentations especially from the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development saying that Members of Parliament are very much critical and pivotal in this fight; meaning, we are very much important. I want to say thank you for bringing this up and also I want to thank His Excellency for being so proactive in inviting the then Response Team; that is to show that it is non-political. From all what we are saying here, everybody is just saying the same thing. Those people did very well the last time in the fight against Ebola so why can't we make use of them? Why because of politics we should say let us find other people? They are there and they are our brothers. Although some people were taking it in the other way, but knowing my President; he is focused, he knows what he is doing, so he invited them and I was very much pleased when I saw Paolo Conteh and his team. This is what we should be seen doing in this country; politics aside when there is problem. When we come to this Well, if there are issues that we should debate for the



betterment of this country, for God sake, let us all say the truth; let us work together to make sure things work. So in the presentations, I want to thank everybody because we are just saying the same thing.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, to the Local Government; yes indeed we are very much important here, we are representing the seven million people in this country. So if you are doing anything and you leave Parliamentarians out, I do not think how you will succeed in that. I am also talking about the Paramount Chiefs; they did very well in the fight against Ebola during the epidemic. Leave the bylaws with the Paramount Chiefs because they know their people, they know how to talk and they know their laws. Let us encourage the Paramount Chiefs. I am so happy when the Paramount Chief stated that they were called and they were given words, but the rest is a story, but that is very good. This is a fight that we have to start from the last village. Joe Vambio should pay a great attention to this fight. Most of our people out there do not know; we are their representatives. When Ebola started the last time, I went to my people and told them not to eat Monkeys and Bats, they said everything is okay with me that was why I told them not to eat food of their choice. Mr Speaker, you cannot tell an infected person by looks so that is why we should not trivialise things like how the issue of Ebola was initially trivialised. Thank God we are all in this together. Let us work together, let us make sure we do the right thing especially for the Honourable Members.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, to the Minister of Finance; I have heard all your disbursements. We are here and we are ready to go to our various constituencies because the people hear our voices and we speak the same languages. When I go to my constituency, I will talk to them in Temne, I will tell them in Shabro, I will talk to them in Mende and all the languages so that they can understand. We can go to the Radio Stations and make use of the Radios. We have to be very much proactive in this fight.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, to the Minister of Internal Affairs; I admired your presentation, you are on track but beware; the porous borders especially the Sea Routes. Go to Tombo; you can use Tombo to go to Guinea as quick as possible. Go to

Plantain Island; you can use that link to go to Guinea. Go to Shange and Kata Wharfs; everyday these people are loaded in their boats to come here, what have we done?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, talking about washing of hands; yes, I am preparing that with my meagre salary, I want to make sure I buy some veronica buckets to take to my people out there. So we should make sure that the Minister of Finance disburse to the Minister of Health and Sanitation so that we can fight together because pretty soon, we will be going on recess in order to go and sensitize our people and we are **100%** more than ready to make sure we stand by you. Also, make sure you monitor the borders because the plantain people are sometimes stubborn. We are saying hundred people should not converge but if you check the last sea disaster there were more than 280 people that perished. So make sure you engage the Maritime Administration. They have stopped the, but people are very much stubborn especially the business people. They would not mind to use boats, they do not mind to go to Senegal, board those large trucks, come to Guinea and eventually take the boats to come here. We should be very much happy because we have not got it yet and by the grace of God it will not enter here.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, let us please do not forget the Pastors and the Imams; let us back this up with prayers, God is annoyed. Let us pray! There is no sense in that we just have to pray [*Applause*]. Let us pray in our own little ways; whatever the denomination; whether you are a freethinker or whatever religions, just pray because there is no sense in that.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, talking about the Holding Centres. We have to make sure we go back to the Holding Centres. The last time Moyamba was the first place to have a Holding Centre. So let us make sure we revisit some of these Holding Centres and the properties that we are having there, although some of them would not be there again but we have to make sure that we manage those things that are there. Mr Minister, make sure you go again and start the Holding Centres because as you heard from the Honourable Members, it is difficult to come from Moyamba or Shainge to

Freetown if there is somebody infected there. So you have to make sure all Districts have the precautions.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, please do not touch, wash your hands. A word to a wise is sufficient. You have heard from that Honourable Member, but I do not know whether Mr Leader will attest to that. Honourable Members, on a more serious note, Members of Parliament are very much important in this fight. We are representing our people, they are waiting on us to go and tell them about Coronavirus; they do not know. During the recess, let us go and sensitize our people. It is only sensitization that can help and Mr Minister of Local Government and Rural Development please make use of our Paramount Chiefs, they are very much important in this fight. Thank you very much *[Applause]*

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Member for her contribution to the debate. Honourable Members, I know so many of you are trying to catch my eyes, I have good news for you. The debate will not end today, we will continue tomorrow morning and it is the only way I can accommodate as many of you as possible *[Undertone]* no one is allow to speak twice except for the Leaders. I will take the following and then at the end of this set, we shall close for the day and recommence tomorrow at 10:00a.m. Honourable Paul Sam, Honourable Musa Fofanah, Honourable Alpha Amadu Bah, Honourable Lahai Marah, Honourable Francis Amara Kaisamba and Honourable Alpha Fode Madie Jabbie in that order. I will stand Parliament down for five minutes for reasons you will all understand. Honourable Members, three minutes each and this time I am going to be very strict with the time. We are starting with Honourable Paul SAM *[Undertone]* if he is not here I cancel him. Honourable Musa Fofanah, is he here?

**HON. MUSA FOFANAH:** Yes Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** Start.

**HON. MUSA FOFANAH:** Thank you very much Mr speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Ministers that are present here for all the submissions they have made, but I want to confirm to this noble House that the Ministry of Local

Government and Rural Development is very much critical as well as Parliament. The reason is because this Ministry has 190 Chiefdoms, 22 Councils, Ward Councillors, and Section Chiefs etc. this is just to demonstrate that this Ministry is in the heart of development in this country, but also this Ministry is very much challenged. I hope the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, and the Ministry of Finance will pay some attention to this Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to focus also in the area of the borders. Mr Speaker, the reason being is if you go to Pujehun for instance, it does not only have one border because we have the vehicle plying the Gendema road; from Zimi-Makpe to Fairror, you have the Gbeyei that somebody can take three or four minute to cross the river to Liberia. I am from Kono District and the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs is my constituent from Mortema Town so I want the Minister of Internal Affairs to know that if you leave Pujehun to Kailiahun; if you leave the Makona that is on the West to the North of Koidu going to Liberia, you do not need to cross river, you can walk through the bushes; that is Foya District. Kono District is the worse because from Tholly chiefdom to Sowa chiefdom is closer to the Melly River that you can spend five to ten minutes on a boat to Guinea, it is also the same for Kerena District. If you are in Karena District at Kambaka, you take the Tomparay ferry or the Kaba ferry within five to ten minute you are in Guinea. So we want the Minister of Internal Affairs to know that we really want to see the issue of security being taken seriously because we cannot have Coronavirus in Liberia and also in Guinea and we just depend or maybe saying the Ministry of Health and Sanitation has three testing centres, what are the methodologies we have put together for this prevention? We want our porous borders to be manned and it is the same for the Pamalap area. You can only see Officers along the main road to Guinea, but they are not on the crossing point and we have a lot of crossing points. I appreciate a colleague that was asking that we advise motorcycle riders. We really need to enforce the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to work with the Paramount Chiefs to institute bylaws. Mr Speaker, in all the borders that we have in Sierra Leone, motorcycle riders can use them to go to either Guinea or Liberia in less

than ten or fifteen minute to and fro. Mr Speaker, if we want to take this issue very seriously, we really need as the President said to involve the Arm force to manned our boarders. I thank you very much for the opportunity given to me *[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** Indeed I thank him especially for recognising that brevity is the soul of wit. Honourable Alpha Amadu Bah has the Floor followed by Honourable Lahai Marah.

**HON. ALPHA A. BAH:** Thank you very much Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, I must first of all convey my utmost commendation behind the spirit to this all important national discuss. I would not want to refer to this as a debate just as the Honourable from Moyamba stated. The spirit behind this discuss clearly demonstrate that Sierra Leone, Africa and the world is currently on the panic. Critically, the manner in which the Coronavirus started, had it not been a situation in which the country that is first occurred had a very strong health care system it would have been more calamitous than it is now.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, before making further comment, I have three or four major concerns; firstly, haven been listening to the speeches of the Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation, the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs as well as the Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, I clearly understand that there are certain safety protocols emanating from the statement of His Excellency the President not only limited to just this three Ministries, but right across the country. My concern is that I fail to see the mechanisms to ensure effective enforceability of these safety protocols right across the country; from the national to the district to the chiefdoms to the sections and to the villages. Therefore, I consider these safety protocols so far as nominal safety protocols merely on paper and we need to beyond that stage of preparedness because if we say we are prepare that will not be adequate, we need to ensure that it reflected right across various starchier.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, secondly, we heard the Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation talking about localized strategies. Indeed, we have had the experience of Ebola previously so we always know that experience is the best teacher. Yes, it would not have been difficult to get local strategies emanating from our pass experiences but

to what extent have we sought to localize these ideals, this suggestions right across. So, getting the ideas being a local idea to what extent have they been localised?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, thirdly, I will like to invite the attention of the Honourable Speaker to chapter 2 under the rubric, the fundamental principles of State Policy specifically Section 5 Sub-Section 2 paragraph 5, the first line. One of the basic principles of state policy is to ensure that the security and the welfare of the citizens are being taken care of Mr Speaker and on that note, it is no gainsaying that whatever the Government as an instrument of the State is doing must be geared towards that objectivity. The Government and their actors; that is to say the Legislature, the Judiciary, the Executive, the Police and the various MDAs; all that they have been doing must be gear towards ensuring that the security, the welfare of the citizens are taking care of. So on that notes Mr Speaker, as we speak the welfare of the citizens of Sierra Leone, the welfare of the citizens of the regions, the welfare of world citizens is under attack. Clearly, if that was not the case we would not have been here to discuss this topic. We are all aware of the crippling nature of this Coronavirus across the sub-region. Recently, we heard about a case in Guinea and a case in Liberia; these are our two primary neighbours meaning we are being sandwich by two neighbouring countries. Naturally or inevitably as His Excellency the President is saying it is not a question of 'what' but 'when'. So if that is the case Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, it beholds us to consecrate all resources in this country in terms of personnel, time, money, and energy towards fighting this deadly Coronavirus. Whatever money, whatever expertise, and whatever idea must be consecrated towards this fight and if that is so Mr Speaker, I want to reiterate the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, why are we in a rush to proceed with the NCRA registration? We are all aware that monies are been put aside for that process, but to what end? You registered your citizens if they are alive, you conduct elections for your citizens if they are alive, and you paid their school fees if they are alive and as we speak the lives of Sierra Leoneans are under threat.

Mr speaker, Honourable Members, speaking from my conscience we are all know this debate goes beyond party lines as you rightly stated initially, this particular pandemic knows no boundary, it knows no political colour, and it knows no age so we are all under one particular threat be you an aged, be you a woman, be you a man, be you a Liberian, and be you a sierra Leonean we must think nationalistically. As you rightly stated, the registration process will always be on going, but no sooner you are under the attack of Coronavirus may the Lord forbid and you happen to fall to be a victim eventually you are laid to rest. To what end is the Government seeking to proceed with the NCRA registration?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, on that note, I will want to appeal to the conscience of His Excellency the President, we say kudos to him, we respect the position he is taking. I will want to appeal to his conscience that as he has started putting the interest of the people of Sierra Leone above all other interest that he considers, harnessing all the resources within his reach both internally and externally towards fighting this Coronavirus. Mr Speaker, I need not to say much. I thank you and God bless you all  
*[Applause]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. The Honourable Lahai Marah has the Floor.

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, today is a very important day discussing a very important subject. Corona is bad and some are saying it is not yet in Sierra Leone. To me, Corona is everywhere presently either directly, indirectly or physically. The economic effect of Corona is very much dangerous than the attack of Corona itself. Mr Speaker, Corona being in Sierra Leone or not it is far dangerous than Ebola virus. Mr Speaker, in the case of Ebola, it was only in three countries at that time; Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia and we have the developing nation concentrating on us, they were helping us, they came in this country strategizing with us, but in the case of Corona, the entire world is affected so it is very much serious.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, in the area of tourism we all know how our tourism industry of late is kicking on. The Minister of Tourism has been doing very much well,

but the effect of this particular pandemic on tourism is something that will affect us for a very long time. Transport of course if you read messages on social media right now you will see a post from the Ministry of Transport and Aviation of what is happening. Mr Speaker, we need to take swift measures in protecting our local markets, our local industries. When I listen to the Bank Governor providing credit facilities if possible at a single digit interest rate that is a laudable one, but my question is, do we actually have date of these individuals that will have access to those credits? Do we know how many Sierra Leoneans that do have a capital below or have **Le150mln** that are going to China to buy products and bring them to Sierra Leone? They depend on those markets to feed themselves and their families? When you listen to what is happening in America injecting Billions of Dollars into their economy, they are sending moneys directly into their citizens, if you look what is happening around Europe the amount of monies that is injected into their economy gear towards helping the local market, helping business people in order for them to be able to stabilized the economy. How are we going to mark sure that Sierra Leone will be able to stand the test of time at this period? I am seeing Corona beyond what you are seeing. Now we are talking on touching our reserves, we are talking about giving monies, we do not know whether we will be able to get in return, how is our revenue being affected? The Minister in her presentation was not able to tell us much, she was not able to tell us which areas in terms of development, in terms of project implementation would be affected. She was not able to tell us the percentage rate of our revenue mobilization that would be affected, all what we heard from them; the Minister of Finance and the Bank Governor is how they are going to inject five hundred Billion into the economy. Who are those people that would be benefiting from those monies directly?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, another concern that is very much serious is, will the Government be able to sustain the payment of salaries, thinking of the delays in the payment of salaries? Mr Speaker, how can the Minster ensure within certain period that they would be able to maintain the payment of salaries? It is very much important. If we are going to do so, certain project areas, certain development must suffer, if we are



planning to construct roads in whatever area then definitely we must suffer because we want to maintain our populace that are depending on salaries. The moment this Government will be unable to pay salaries then we will know the effect and seriousness of Coronavirus beyond the way we are seeing it right now. What also are the measures being put in place immediately after Corona, how do we come back to stabilize our economy? We should not forget that we are dependent on those people out there and they are seriously affect and they are battling with their stock exchange issues and other economy implication and therefore, they will be forgetting about us. What do we have to do at stage?

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, now to the Minister of Health and Sanitation. The availability and affordability of protective equipment is also very much important. We know the shock maybe temporal, but the effect maybe long lasting, we need temporal measures and also long lasting measures. My colleague representing the Wellington people said that the issue of Ebola is international *[Undertone]* my Leader, if you want me to sit down I can still sit down, it is not political and I am not making any political debate here, we are just suggesting ideas on how to tackle this menace, if you want me to keep my ideas to myself, I can do it Mr Leader.

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS:** Please try and roundup your debate.

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** Do not be afraid please. Mr Speaker, in the issue of crossing borders, I am suggesting for us to have a Mano-river Union approach *[Undertone]* Mr Leader,

**HON. SIDIE M. TUNIS** Yes.

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** I do not mind to continue this debate tomorrow sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Lahai Marah, one minute to go.

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** Mr Speaker, if we do not have time *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** No!

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** I have a lot to say Sir, you were not strict on time and now you are saying one minute.

**THE SPEAKER:** No! I told you that you got three minute.

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** No Sir, you never restricted any Member.

**THE SPEAKER:** No! Well you were not listening.

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** If we know that we *[Interruption]*.

**THE SPEAKER:** You were not listening.

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** I can as well sit down and wait for tomorrow's debate Mr Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** No!

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** No?

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Lahai Marah, you have one minute.

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** Mr Leader and Mr Speaker you both are distorting my debate *[Undertone]* honestly.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable Lahai Marah, you have one minute.

**HON. LAHAI MARAH:** You have not done it to any Member and now you are doing it to. Mr Speaker, I surrender this debate. Thank you Sir.

**THE SPEAKER:** The time is exactly 6:00p.m, I think it is a convenient point for us to stop this debate and we will continue the debate tomorrow which will last exactly two hours, not a minute more and not a minute less. We shall take up the business of the day for tomorrow and then take an adjournment. The MDAs who are here with the Bank Governor and others please do not disappoint us by not coming. We treasure your presence and we will be very grateful for your presence again tomorrow.

*[The House rose at 6:02p.m and was adjourned to Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 at 10:00a.m.]*

