

# PARLIAMENTARY NEWS



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## Parliamentary Affairs

# SIERRA LEONE: CHIEF MINISTER CAUTIONS EXPECTATIONS ON PEACE AND COHESION COMMISSION LEGISLATION

By Melvin Tejan Mansaray

Hopefully, the Peace and Cohesion Commission will help to ameliorate the violent conflict situations in the country or even prevent them all together but at the same time we have to manage expectations of the people, I am not so sure that it will solve all of Sierra Leone's problems but it is the starting point and it will be owned by the people, which is important, Chief Minister Government of Sierra Leone, Professor David John Francis said.

He made this call in an interview with *Parliamentary News (PN)* after he tabled the bill title, 'The Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion, 2020' for introduction and first reading, second reading, committee stage in the Fifth Parliament of the



Chief Minister Government of Sierra Leone, Professor David John Francis

Second Republic of Sierra Leone on Thursday 12th November 2020 during the eighteenth meeting of the Whole House.

The bill that has been committed to the Legislative Committee of the House for further scrutiny; seeks to have a permanent infrastructure and address for peace and national cohesion in Sierra Leone, Professor Francis said.

He told PN that he is very delighted to have tabled the bill because it brings to life the dreams and aspirations of President Julius Maada Bio.

"President Bio made this commitment on the State Opening of the First Session of the Fifth Parliament in May 2018 and that was followed by the Bintumani No. 3 National Dialogue Conference in May 2019; so laying the bill is a historic moment in Sierra Leone in a sense that the opportunity has been given for us to lay this bill which seeks after enactment to establish the first-ever in the modern history of Sierra Leone, an Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion. This reinforces the President's audacious vision – "talk and do," Minister Francis noted.

On the first day of the tabling of the said bill, some opposition legislators questioned the timely dispatching of the bill into their pigeonholes causing the main opposition All Peoples Congress (APC) Legislators not to lend their voices to the debate.



**Minister Francis, however, downplayed the procedural lapse of the Executive arm of the state in sending the bill within the stipulated two days period prior debate, adding that, "I am very pleased that the bill was read for the first time and second time."**

The late dispatch of documents to MPs has attracted outcry with legislators almost always slamming the executive arm of government for this defect.

"We are not prepared and need time to read the bill properly before participating on the debate," Hon. Cherron Ramadan Maju Bah, APC party Leader said in the Well of Parliament.

Minister Francis, however, downplayed the procedural lapse of the Executive arm of the state in sending the bill within the stipulated two days period prior debate, adding that, "I am very pleased that the bill was read for the first time and second time."

"That gives the opportunity for all Members of Parliament to read so that they will engage with the process later now that it has commenced and slated for third reading and committee stage. It is really important, I am very pleased actually,"

Chief Minister Francis said.

Pressed by the PN that the main opposition stayed off the first day of debate of the bill because of the late service of the bill, Prof. Francis said: "That is not what I understand from what happened in the Well of Parliament, probably you and I were listening to two different people or two different processes. I am very clear, the parliamentary process kicks in and an agreement was made that those who are not being given the opportunity to read the bill because they received it late will now have the opportunity to read it. The APC will contribute on the second day. That is the parliamentary process. This is a bill that has bipartisan support."

Indeed on the following day, APC Legislators took to the Floor of the House to debate, they registered a plethora of reservations hovering on

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## Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

# GHANA: PAP INAUGURATES AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY PRESS NETWORK



Pan-African Parliament

**BY: Clement Akoloh & Emmanuella Dadugblor**

The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) has inaugurated an African Parliamentary Press Network (APPN), to monitor and provide enhanced visibility to the Pan-African Parliament and individual national Parliaments.

The group which is made up of journalists, media practitioners and media centered PMOs across the continent of Africa who cover the workings of parliaments, was put together after a media session on working effectively with the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) jointly organized by the Parliamentary Network Africa, Mzalendo Trust, Centre for Human Rights and the Pan African Parliament (PAP) to help the continental legislative body achieve its mandate.

The forum which was held on Friday, 13th November 2020, had as part of its objectives, the sensitization of media personnel on the work-

ings of the Pan African Parliament; commitment by the media personnel to work together and engage with the PAP as well as their national Parliaments and Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations-PMOs; and also create a common platform to facilitate all these interactions.

The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) was set up to ensure the full participation of African peoples in the economic development and integration of the continent. It was also intended as a platform for people from all African states to be involved in discussions and decision making on the problems and challenges facing the continent.

However, a greater number of the people on the continent are yet to fully understand the mandate of the continental legislative body which presently, only has consultative, advisory and budgetary oversight powers within the AU.

It was strongly advocated and emphasized at the forum for the institutional involvement of the media in the

monitoring of the workings of the PAP and the dissemination of information from the continental body to the people.

"I am fully convinced that for the Pan-African Parliament to achieve its mandate, it should actively engage the civil society, citizens, the media and the community-based organizations," said Ms. Bonolo Makgale, Programme Manager for the Center for Human Rights (CHR), in her welcoming Remarks at the forum.

Ms. Bonolo further stated that the CHR and African PMOs in general aim to open up the space for the media to participate in reporting the engagements and workings of the Pan-African Parliament and its committees and suggested that the Pan-African Union and AU have to ensure

that the work they do is people-centered.

The Executive Director of PNAfrica, Sammy Obeng, pointed out that Journalists who report on Parliament are actually engaged in Parliamentary Monitoring and that it's right if one says unambiguously that the media indeed has a role to play in open parliaments. He explained that opening up Parliament has many benefits including effective outcomes on the key policy areas that the Parliament deals with. He acknowledged that when Parliaments are open, it then helps to improve and build trust in the relationship with its citizens.

Sammy Obeng noted that the PAP represents everyone on

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**The group which is made up of journalists, media practitioners and media centered PMOs across the continent of Africa who cover the workings of parliaments, was put together after a media session on working effectively with the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) jointly organized by the Parliamentary Network Africa, Mzalendo Trust, Centre for Human Rights and the Pan African Parliament (PAP) to help the continental legislative body achieve its mandate.**

## Elections

# GAMBIA: NPP Birom JS Sowe Won Niamina West Seat



The President's Party Candidate Hon. Birom JS Sowe

By Aji Fatou Faal

The President's Party Candidate Hon. Birom JS Sowe, who stood under the National Peoples' Party (NPP) ticket last Saturday won the National Assembly Member Seat.

The much-awaited Legislative By-Election has now been filled by Hon. Sowe, since the establishment of

NPP this marks the first-ever victory in what many perceived as a undertake test for the survival of Adama Barrow's newly formed political party.

After announcing the results, Hon. Sowe secured 1718 ballot casts in his possession while his opponent Yerro Jallow got 805 under the Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC).

The NPP Party Bearer poured heavily resources during the campaign trail,

engaging government officials and cabinet ministers to sell the agenda of President Adama Barrow.

So many promises have been made to the people of Niamina West such as the construction of roads as part of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) projects.

The Gambia Democratic Congress could not secure the seat again after the demise of Hon. Demba Sowe last January.

## GAMBIA: Hon. Birom JS Sowe sworn-in as NAM for Niamina West

By Aji Fatou Faal

The newly-elected National Assembly Member for Niamina West last Thursday took an Oath of Allegiance in the Third Republic after the death of Hon. Demba Sowe last January at a grand ceremony held at the National Assembly Chambers in Banjul.

The Clerk of the National Assembly, Momodou A. Sise who administered the Oath of Allegiance to Hon. Sowe who swore to be faithful and bear true allegiance to the Republic of The Gambia and to execute

the functions of an Honorable National Assembly Member (NAM) without fear or favour, affection or ill will, according to the constitution of The Gambia and other laws of the land.

In an interview with Hon. Sowe after taking the Oath revealed that he would work for the interest of the country and the people of Niamina West.

He then thanked the National People's Party (NPP) leader President Adama Barrow, party supporters and the people of Niamina West for their trust and confidence by electing him as their representative at the National Assembly.



Clerk of the National Assembly, Momodou A. Sise (R) administering the Oath of Allegiance to Hon. Sowe

For her part, Mariam Jack Denton, Speaker of the National Assembly welcomed the newly elected National Assembly Member (NAM) from

Niamina West and assured him that his work would be supported and guided by all members and staff of the National Assembly.

## Political and Presidential Affairs

# SIERRA LEONE: Main Opposition Leader Urges Government to Review National Constitution

By Melvin Tejan Mansaray

The sociopolitical realities of the times have changed and therefore there is all need for the review of 'The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991' (Act No. 6 of 1991) enacted on 1st day of July, in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred and ninety-one, Honorable Chernor Ramadan Maju Bah, Caucus Leader main opposition All Peoples Congress (APC) party, Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone told *Parliamentary News (PN)*.



**"I will not say that the 1991 constitution is very old but considering the fact that it is the first multi-party constitution after 1978, it gave us the need for it to be reviewed. It was first tested in 1996 after the NPRC military government, since then, to date, we have seen many gaps in the constitution, not just Section No. 40," Hon. Bah said.**

Hon. Bah's statement was predicated on the backdrop of the House's ratification of Concession Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone represented by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Finance and All Petroleum Products, SL for the rehabilitation and refurbishment of the Kissy storage tanks project, which he along several other Members of Parliament believed that Parliament must be involved before even the signing of these agreements, contrary to Section No. 40 (Office of the President) of the national constitution of Sierra Leone.

Section No.40.4. (d) of the Sierra Leone national constitution ... "the execution of treaties, agreements or conventions in the name of Sierra Leone;" gives the President the above stated responsibility.

Hon. Bah said that under the APC government (2007-2018), there was a constitutional review process charged on the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) which he said was obstructed by the advent of the year 2018 general elections adding that up till now under the new government of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), nothing has been done to complete the review from where they left.

"I will not say that the 1991 constitution is very old but considering the fact that it is the first multi-party constitution after 1978, it gave us the need for it to be reviewed. It was first tested in 1996 after the NPRC military government, since then, to date, we have seen many gaps in the constitution, not just Section No. 40," Hon. Bah said.

He explained that Section No. 40 gives Executive powers to the President to enter into agreements that are brought to Par-

liament for ratification, " basically all agreement that comes to parliament are reaching the table of the house after same would have been signed - execution completed."

Hon. Bah said: "We are saying that what we believe should have been the proper procedure, is first for parliament to discuss the draft, agree on the content and principles and then we can mandate the Executive to go ahead and sign. Just like we do with bills, they do the drafts and bring them but until and unless we finish with it in parliament, the President will never give them assent. That is exactly what we have been calling for among many other things."

This proposition, Hon. Bah told PN does not contravene the theory of separation of powers, adding that "that is exactly supporting the theory of separation of powers."

"We are saying that let us make laws, let us make and approve agreements before they are being signed just like we make laws before assent is given by His Excellency the President, so it is the same. We don't want the Executive to make laws by entering into agreements, signing them before coming to parliament comes with the impression as if the laws are ready, that we should just look at, take note of and send it back. We want to have the opportunity to interfere with the details of the agreements," Hon. Bah said.

The APC party Leader, Hon. Bah said the current framework does not enhance rubberstamped, " but if the law have not said that, it would have given us and the general population a better space for the general good of society."

On the benefits that would be derived if the law of signing agreements before they are taken to parliament is reviewed, Hon.



Honorable Chernor Ramadan Maju Bah, Caucus Leader main opposition APC party

Bah said: "It will add value and be difficult for the Executive to enter into contracts without value for money being achieved and we would have looked at all the gaps, pluses and minuses to see what is good and not good before we get it through to them for signature. It would definitely add value."

Hon. Bah refrained from saying that parliament is restrained under the current legal climate on the signing of agreements, adding that once there is party politics, challenges are inevitable.

Hon. Bah also said that calls for the review of Section No. 40.1 of the national constitution that gives the President 'supreme executive authority' gives excessive powers to the officeholder, noting that, " that was the perception of the then opposition that are now in government, but I will tell you, if you have an executive president under the type of governance that we are practicing where the president is an executive president, there is no way that you can be an executive president without having that authority."

Critics say the hybrid parliamentary and presidential governance system being practised in Sierra Leone with the President also being an MP, leaves limited space for accountability and probity from a parliamentary standpoint.

"The President is in parliament

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## Finance

# GAMBIA: 2021 Revenue, Grants estimated at D25 Billion

By Aji Fatou Faal

The Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, Hon. Mambury Njie revealed that the total revenue and grants for 2021 is projected at D25.76 billion (USD 498.3 million), representing a minimal growth of 5 per cent over the 2020 figure of D24.3 billion (USD 471.9).

He said that the increment is mainly attributed to project grants to come from their development partners.

Hon. Njie made these disclosed in Chambers while laying the Estimates of Revenues, Recurrent and Development Expenditures for the fiscal year 2021 before the National Assembly Members for consideration and approval.

According to him, the project



Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, Hon. Mambury Njie

grants is expected to reach D8.8 billion (USD 170.2) compared to D8.1 billion (USD 156.7) in 2020. Meanwhile, total tax revenue is projected to marginally increase by 5 percent to D12.2 billion (USD 235.9) compared to D11.6 billion (USD 224.3) in 2020, whilst Non-Tax Revenue is projected to decrease by 23 percent to D1.53 billion (USD 29.59 million) compared to D2 billion (38,6million) in 2020.

Hon. Njie stated that he 2021 budget would factor Budget Support amounting to D3.2 billion (USD 61.9 million) from their development partners, compared to D2.7 billion (USD 52.2 million) in 2020. "The total Budget Support expected from the European Union in 2021 is 13.5 million euros (812.0 million), whereas an additional \$7 million (D361.9 million) is expected to come from African Development Bank, and \$20 (D1.03 billion) from the World Bank. Additional grant of D300 million (USD 5.81 million) is expected from the Catastrophe Containment and Relief trust (CCRT)

of the IMF in addition to a top-up of Extended Credit Facility of D700m (US\$13.56 million) from the same institution", he noted.

#### Expenditure & Financing

He said that total expenditure and net-lending is projected to increase from D28.3 billion (USD 547.4 million) in 2020 to D31.90 billion (USD 617 million) in 2021, representing a growth of 12 percent, the bulk of this is related to capital expenditure, more specifically, the funding of various road projects across the country.

He alluded that the Personal Emolument (PE) expenditures are projected to also increase from D4.4 billion (USD 85.1 million) in 2020 to D4.9 billion (USD 94.7 million) in 2021.

The Increase in PE is as a result of an additional 2,000 teachers being recruited from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, payment of Allowances to Election officers, as well as factoring yearly increments based on promotions. Finance Minister Njie averred

to invite reflection on the truism that the crafting of this 2021 Budget is being done under very unusual and difficult social and economic circumstances, premised on their current challenges, they expect that 2021 would require a lot of sacrifices. However in a paradox, he added that 2021 provides opportunities for innovation in all aspects of their national economy and leveraging the potentials of digitalization to transform their businesses, create an IT savvy populace, and restructure sectors worst hit by COVID-19 to make them more resilient. "Our intention now is to place our energies in the pursuit of local solutions to our economic challenges, achieve greater value addition, establish sustainable domestic value chains, and diversify production and expand our export base".

He told NAMs that 2021 promises to be transformational, it would be revolutionary and despite the gloomy clouds associated with COVID-19, their 2021 national budget can place us on the path to becoming a highly productive nation.



**"Our intention now is to place our energies in the pursuit of local solutions to our economic challenges, achieve greater value addition, establish sustainable domestic value chains, and diversify production and expand our export base".**

## Parliamentary Affairs

# SIERRA LEONE: CHIEF MINISTER CAUTIONS EXPECTATIONS ON PEACE AND COHESION COMMISSION LEGISLATION

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the composition of the Board of the Commission and the need for inclusivity of members of the civil society organizations, for example, the Women's Forum, etc, and even political parties.

Various submissions nonetheless stressed the need for bipartisan support for the bill noting that peace and national cohesion are in the national interest.

"Peace is not about one party, it is a collective interest for everybody, so you can see that everybody is really on board for this," Prof Francis said.

The need for a national face of the Peace and Cohesion Commission was stressed by Lawmakers (Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina, Hon. Abu Bakarr Fofanah both from Kono District) of the Coalition For Change (C4C) political party and Prof. Francis said that there cannot be any two ways about it because the outcome of the Bintumani No. 3 conference was validated across the country.

Prof. Francis said: "All the sixteen districts are involved, civil society organizations, political party groups, etc, were all involved, so the bill is really the summary of a nationwide consultation and ownership that is important."

Poked on his expectation from the main opposition APC who arguably boycotted the Bintumani No. 3 Peace and Dialogue Confer-



**"Peace is not about one party, it is a collective interest for everybody, so you can see that everybody is really on board for this," Prof Francis said.**

ence saying that they were not officially invited to wit the government says the contrary, Prof. Francis said the APC was represented although not all of its members attended the conference back then, adding that that the APC agreed with the communiqué of the conference. He praised the APC lawmakers for what he described as "a good support."

"Obviously, the support here in the Well has been very good, the engagement before my arrival and with Parliament; they have been very supportive. The APC, NGC, C4C, political parties have been supportive because they believe that this is in the national interest, this transcends political party divide. I am very pleased and be rest assured that the APC will be onboard just like the other opposition political parties," Prof. Francis said.

Asked if the establishment

of the Peace and National Cohesion Commission would simmer down the ever-growing political tension and bitter rivalry especially between the APC and SLPP political parties, Prof. Francis said: "Well, we are trying to manage expectations. On one hand, there is great hope that this Commission will be established for the first time, an independent platform where people can go in and help prevent, manage, resolve conflict, make and build peace. That has not happened for a very long time this is the opportunity now that it can happen."

Prof. Francis, however, underscored that: "Hopefully, this will help to ameliorate the violent conflict situations in the country or even prevent them all together but at the same time we have to manage expectations. I am not so sure that it will solve all of Sierra Leone's problems but it is

the starting point and it will be owned by the people, which is important."

Prof. Francis said after the bill would have gone through parliament, there is a two-phase implementation strategy outlining that following that of parliamentary enactment and presidential assent; establishment of the Commission itself to be preceded by the appointment of the Chairman, Commissioners and Executive Secretary of the Commission.

"That will form the operationalization and implementation of the Peace Commission itself, these are the two stages, but be rest assured that we have been able to secure donor support for this but also Government of Sierra Leone support, so this will be up and running as soon as possible in the first quarter of next year (2021)," Prof. Francis said.



**"Well, we are trying to manage expectations. On one hand, there is great hope that this Commission will be established for the first time, an independent platform where people can go in and help prevent, manage, resolve conflict, make and build peace. That has not happened for a very long time this is the opportunity now that it can happen."**

## Finance

# SIERRA LEONE: PARAMOUNT CHIEF MP EXPRESSES GRAVE CONCERN OVER ISSUANCE OF TAX WAIVERS

By Melvin Tejan Mansaray

The Honorable Paramount Chief Member of Parliament (PCMP) representing Tonkolili District, Northern Sierra Leone Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka the 3rd has registered serious concerns over the way and manner in which the Government of Sierra Leone is doling out tax waivers and concessions to multinational investment companies.

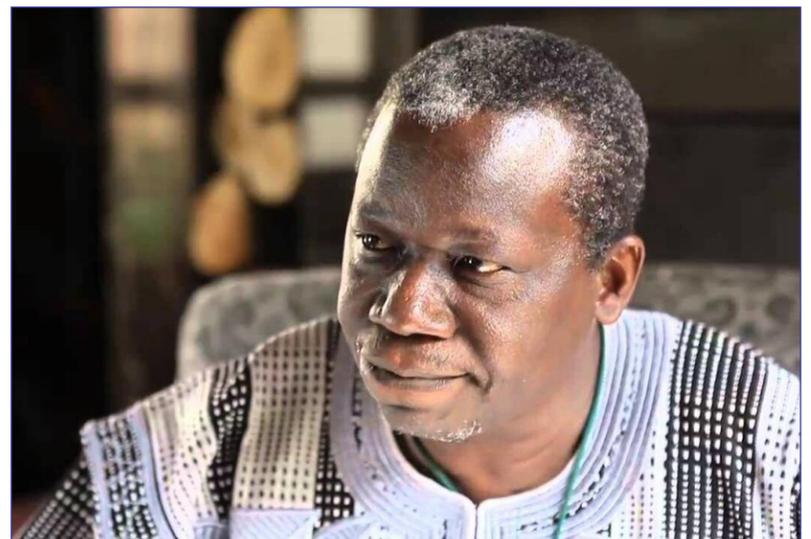
This position was first made

known in the Well of the Sierra Leone Parliament on Tuesday 17th November 2020 during the ratification of a Government motion by the Minister of Trade and Industry Dr Hinga Sandy on the 'Concession agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone represented by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Finance and All Petroleum Products, SL for the rehabilitation and refurbishment of the Kissy storage tanks project,' for which the company was a tax concession.

According to the Dictionary of Business Terms, a Tax Waiver is a document issued by the state specifically stating that the tax department consents to the transfer of the stock being presented for transfer.

Hon. PCMP Sanka the 3rd, told *Parliamentary News (PN)* that he sees Sierra Leone as a very small and poor country and when multinational and big companies are allowed to come in and operate, "we should not give them tax breaks on what should increase our tax base."

"This is because we are not a manufacturing country, we do not even produce enough food to eat, so we expect that if our poor people are paying taxes, these big companies should be paying taxes too because they are enjoying certain facilities. The amount of money they spent in buying



Honorable Paramount Chief Member of Parliament (PCMP) representing Tonkolili District, Northern Sierra Leone Bai Kurr Kanagbaro Sanka

their cars, on houses, and luxuries, some of them cannot even afford in their countries," Hon. PCMP Sanka the 3rd said.

He stressed that these companies should not be given tax breaks for them to have all the goods that they need to enjoy and for the country not to benefit.

He cited example with corporate social responsibilities which they carry out, noting that if these companies are given thirty or forty per cent tax cut, "that means that they are just double dipping."

Hon. PCMP Sanka the third said: "They are not paying taxes and then we are refunding, we give them kick backs, for me, that is a concern."

Dr Hinga Sandy Minister of Trade and Industry, on the contrary, argues that tax waivers are given to help cushion the financial burden of companies invest-

ing in the country, pinpointing that some of them need the tax breaks.

Hon. PCMP Sanka the 3rd argues that the notion of the Trade Minister cannot be uniform for all the companies, noting that, "there are certain companies that we can give tax breaks for a period of four to five years without paying taxes because of the huge amount of money that they are expending, and we are benefiting directly from that if we employ so many number of Sierra Leoneans, since they are paying insurance trust for these workers, national revenue tax, etc, that will be good for the nation."

The PCMP, Hon. Kurr, however, raised eyebrows, on the contrary, saying that, "but for those companies who come in and make profit immediately they start to operate, there is no

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**"This is because we are not a manufacturing country, we do not even produce enough food to eat, so we expect that if our poor people are paying taxes, these big companies should be paying taxes too because they are enjoying certain facilities. The amount of money they spent in buying their cars, on houses, and luxuries, some of them cannot even afford in their countries," Hon. PCMP Sanka the 3rd said.**

## Transparency and Parliamentary Openness

# GHANA: PAP INAUGURATES AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARY PRESS NETWORK

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the continent of Africa and just like any Parliament, the role of oversight, legislation and representation cannot be overemphasized. He however bemoaned the fact that members of the PAP have not effectively played their dual roles, as members of PAP and primarily being members of Parliament in their respective countries.

He observed that often representatives of various countries who attend Pan-African Parliament meetings come back and basically do nothing to aggressively promote things discussed at the PAP and therefore re-emphasized the need for the relationship between the media and the PAP and its members to be enhanced for it to deliver information on work they have done.

He recommended that the communication department in PAP should make a conscious effort in working with the media across the continent especially on the issue of press passes and free movement within Parliament; spaces should be allocated for jour-

nalists and media outlets so they can have the facilities to write and produce stories on activities happening in Parliament.

PAP Media Officer, Mr Jeffrey Onganga in his presentation, expounded the mandate of the Pan- African Parliament and potential areas of media engagement. While highlighting the entry points for the media, he noted that one has to consider the differences in conveying messages and the plurality of languages since the Media have to ensure that whatever is covered is in French, English, Portuguese, Arabic and Swahili.

Mr. Jeffery Onganga further noted that the PAP Media Office has realized that some of the journalists who cover the PAP proceedings still don't exactly understand the mandate of the Pan- African Parliament thus the need to work with a more dedicated group of journalists such as the APPN to gain a better understanding of PAP's mandate.

He stated that PAP aims to explore media partnerships on how media houses are working in ensuring that they have programmes that



**PAP Media Officer, Mr Jeffrey Onganga in his presentation, expounded the mandate of the Pan-African Parliament and potential areas of media engagement. While highlighting the entry points for the media, he noted that one has to consider the differences in conveying messages and the plurality of languages since the Media have to ensure that whatever is covered is in French, English, Portuguese, Arabic and Swahili.**

focus on the Pan-African Parliament. He added that PAP will ensure that it has joint activities with the media houses so as to give people clarity on its key mandate. He revealed that PAP aims at awarding media from different parts of the continent and identify journalists who work tirelessly in telling the African story.

Mr. Onganga concluded his presentation by stressing that the ratification of the Malabo Protocol is very important for the work of PAP and in the meantime, PAP, PMOs and media should not ignore the power that comes with members of Parliament from the continent under one platform.

Deputy Clerk-Pan-African Parliament, Ms. Charlotte Marck, while delivering remarks on behalf of the Clerk of the PAP stated that the

PAP protocol is intended to extend the powers of the PAP into a fully-fledged legislative programme and that PAP expects the media to hold the Pan-African Parliament to account and scrutinize the institution and its activities.

She noted that the Pan-African Parliament was not well-known among Africans and it's for this reason that the PAP set out to grow its visibility through outreach programmes.

The Programmes Manager of PNA, Mr. Gilbert Boyefio, who was in charge of the establishment of the APPN, noted in his statement that the work ahead of the group is not just about making sure the PAP becomes visible or that the Malabo protocol gets ratified but also to ensure that even the people in the Hinterland have access to Parliamentary information.



Pan-African Parliament

## Gender, Children and Social Welfare

# SIERRA LEONE: FORMER MP CITES REASON FOR FEMALE MP ATTRITION

By Melvin Tejan Mansaray

**H**onourable Patricia Hum a Brown, former (2012-2018) Member of Parliament representing Kambia District constituency 060, All Peoples



Parliament of Sierra Leone



**"I can tell you that during the Tejan Kabbah government we saw a little bit of increase in female MP numbers. When the Ernest Bai Koroma government came in, the number of women representation doubled, we have come a long way but our own problems started with us (male and female MPs) in Parliament not doing the right thing. For instance, most of the women in the 2012 to 2018 Parliament were from the diaspora, mostly United Kingdom and America , so when the issue of the dual citizenship surfaced, it helped to reduce the number of female representatives in the current Parliament. It could have been more in this current Parliament but because of this dual citizenship holders ban, there were lots of impediment for female representation."**

Congress (APC) party said that the reason for the reduction in the number of female legislators in the Parliament of Sierra Leone is as a result of a certain constitutional provision that bars holders of dual citizenship from not being President, Vice President or a Member of Parliament.

She said that it was very good to be the first female legislator representing that constituency and boasted of making a difference that surpasses that of his male predecessor.

Hon. Brown said: " I can't say I am the best but I tried to do my best. That is why I am still with my people."

She explained that the difference between a male and a female lawmaker is that women play more of a motherly role while serv-

ing.

"Women sympathize more with their constituents, we have empathy for them, they always feel like we are their mothers, sisters, or aunts, and the way they feel about us is different to that of the male MPs," Hon. Brown said.

She said that the male MP he succeeded had served for thirty-two years but by evaluation of the people, her five years was incomparable to him.

Hon. Brown said showing care to the people can be a tangible or an intangible deliverable citing her support to Muslims during the month of Ramadan which is no longer happening and it is being missed by the electorate adding that she also constructed schools, provided furniture, school

bus, build boats to transport kids in riverine areas, among things.

Sierra Leone is currently overshadowed by the conversation of having a thirty per cent quota for women participation in governance and decision-making, but the figures of female MPs sharply declined from the Third to Fifth Parliament.

Explaining the reason for the attrition rate among female MPs in the current Parliament, Hon. Brown said: "I can tell you that during the Tejan Kabbah government we saw a little bit of increase in female MP numbers. When the Ernest Bai Koroma government came in, the number of women representation doubled, we have come a

*Continued on Pages 13*

## Political and Presidential Affairs

# SIERRA LEONE: Main Opposition Leader Urges Government to Review National Constitution

*Continued from Page 5*

ceremonially not actively, he does not participate within parliament making laws. In the USA, the Vice President is the



**"My message to the government and general citizenry is that the constitutional review is a must, people need it, it is relevant, we have identified so many gaps in this constitution and the attempt by our government in the past to institute a committee to look into the constitution and do a review was necessary and as everybody had acknowledged by then, that necessity is still around, so I am encouraging this government to make sure that they continue with this process and the citizens to continue putting the necessary pressure that they could legitimately for it to be finalized," Hon. Bah said.**

Head of Senate as well, that does not make them a hybrid, so that does not make us a hybrid either, we are suppose to be practicing total separation of powers but that is what the constitution called for and that is what we should be doing," Hon. Bah said.

Hon. Bah commented that the notion of the president having excessive constitutional powers does not subsist because it is constitutional, adding that, "that is why we are calling for a review of the constitution, we will look at it, if there are areas were we believe as a parliament and eventually through a referendum by the people that certain powers are excessive, they will be looked into, but as it is now, what has been happening is what is expected within the 1991 constitution."

During the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) deliberations, the issue of having a recall clause being included into the new constitution for non-performing MPs surfaced but Hon. Bah disagrees with this proposal.

"I disagree with this and I will also tell you why, MPs are voted in by their people, the only way that they could be recalled is by their constituents, those who voted them, few people should not just seat in a room and decide on their own to recall MPs. That is undemocratic and should not be tolerated," Hon. Bah said, adding that this is not practised in any modern and civilized democracies including UK, USA or even Ghana of Kenya.

Sierra Leone's Supreme Court is presently clogged with numerous constitutional matters that needs interpretation, Hon. Bah said it is a probable reason why he is calling for a constitutional review but not in totality.

"There are other instances when

this constitution is very clear but the Supreme Court has still refused to set up or empanel judges to listen to certain applications. That has nothing to do with changing or not changing the constitution, that falls squarely within the domain of the Chief Justice to ensure that cases that are filed, brought to the court must be taken before judges," Hon. Bah said.

Asked if he thinks partisan politics might be behind the reluctance of the Chief Justice's failure to assign some of these cases, Hon. Bah said, " Well, I hope not but the perception outside is that the judiciary is not performing well, that is the perception. I can't tell for now what is responsible for that but considering the complaints we have made in the past when we had one party state and the development we made between 1996 to 2018, we are shocked with the retrogression we are now seeing in the court."

Critics of Hon. Bah's party said that they had all the time and resources to have completed the CRC exercise. They registered displeasure over the waste of local and international taxpayers' monies and resources, a frustration that was once openly expressed by the former Chairman of the CRC, the late Honorable Justice Edmond Cowan.

Hon. Bah said: "We did a lot, we went very far with the process but because of politics, those in the opposition were saying, put the constitutional review to a halt, you want to delay elections, you want to frustrate us, let us focus on the elections after the elections we will continue with the process and being a listening government then, we listened to the calls of the people, stopped the process even though we had gone that far but because they taught that going into a referendum meant attempting to delay the election from their own

perspective. We had to listen to the call, focus on democracy, respecting the constitution and hold elections. We are expecting them to continue from where we stopped."

Hon. Bah, however, noted that he believes that the constitutional review process has not yet efflux adding, "Government is continuous."

He, however, expressed hope that the governing SLPP party will be willing to continue the process as it is something that they promised and caused a lot of noise and piled a lot of pressure on the government then.

"They must keep to their words," Hon. Bah echoed.

"My message to the government and general citizenry is that the constitutional review is a must, people need it, it is relevant, we have identified so many gaps in this constitution and the attempt by our government in the past to institute a committee to look into the constitution and do a review was necessary and as everybody had acknowledged by then, that necessity is still around, so I am encouraging this government to make sure that they continue with this process and the citizens to continue putting the necessary pressure that they could legitimately for it to be finalized," Hon. Bah said.

Section 29 (Public Emergency) is one area that Hon. Bah said must be looked into with the removal of the health aspect for future cases, "we must strengthen our Public Health Act and ensure that health should no more give necessity for a state of emergency to be declared." He also said that the law abhorring dual citizenship should be reviewed with people being giving their rights and not to be deprived of holding certain positions, " there might be some, where there will be some exceptions including the office of the President, Vice President, NRA, Police Chief, Police and Military, there are exceptions to certain rules. Yes, there will be exceptions but let us look at the general principles and ensure that we have a level playing field."

## Trade and Industry

# SIERRA LEONE: AFCFTA IMPLEMENTATION FACTORED INTO 2021 BUDGET EXECUTION

By Melvin Tejan Mansaray

**I**n preparation, Government through the Ministry of Trade and Industry with support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNFCA) have developed the National Trade Strategy with a specific focus on repositioning Sierra Leone for trade across the African Continental Free Trade Area," Jacob Jusu Saffa Minister of Finance Government of the Republic Sierra Leone told Members of the Fifth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone on the occasion of the tabling of the bill title 'The Appropriation Act, 2021,' Friday 13th November 2020, with a three days debate commencing Monday 23rd November 2021.

The Appropriation Act, 2021, 'Being an Act to authorize expenditure from the Consolidated Fund for the services of Sierra Leone for the year 2021 and for other related matters,' is otherwise known as the fiscal budget.

Minister Saffa made this statement on page 19, point No. 71 (Regional Integration) of the 'Government Budget and Statement of the Economic and Financial Policies for the Financial Year 2021,' themed, "Economic Recovery for Job Creation and human Capital Development,"

The Finance Minister said: "Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members, given the trade and supply-chain disruptions with Europe, the Americas and Asia, it is imperative for Government to strongly leverage the economic potential of regional and continental trade relations within the context of the COVID-19 recovery," emphasizing that, "As a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), we are committed to the single currency project, and we will continue the implementation of the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and the Common External Tariff (CET)."

Minister Saffa reminded Members of Parliament (MPs) that the House ratified the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) on 7th November 2018, joining 28 other countries.

The AfCFTA implementation seeks to harness the potential of free trade and movement of people, goods and services across the continent, but due to the COVID-19, its initial date of implementation was shifted from 1st July 2020 to 1st January 2021. It is estimated that by 2035, implementing the AfCFTA would contribute to the lifting of an additional 30



Jacob Jusu Saffa Minister of Finance Government of the Republic Sierra Leone

million people from extreme poverty and 68 million people from moderate poverty. Real income gains from full implementation of the agreement could increase by 7 per cent, or nearly US\$450 billion, according to Experts.

The Minister, Saffa reported to Lawmakers that in preparation for the AfCFTA implementation, "Government through the Ministry of Trade and Industry with support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNFCA) has developed the National Trade Strategy with a specific focus on repositioning Sierra Leone for trade across the African Continental Free Trade Area,"

He noted that "Government will work with the private sector, development partners and AfCFTA member countries to ensure that Sierra Leone benefits from access to the free movement of persons, goods and capital across the entire continental market."

Early this month (November 2020), a Joint Committee of the ECOWAS Parliament headed by His Excellency Honorable Mohamed Sidi Tunis, who also doubles as a top-ranking Member in the current Sierra Leone Parliament, convened a meeting in Benin, Cotonou to deliberate

and resolve the way forward for a successful AfCFTA implementation, dissecting some soft and hard issues.

The 93 pages 'Government of Sierra Leone Budget and Statement of the Economic and Financial Policies for the Financial Year 2021,' is themed, "Economic recovery for Job Creation and Human Capital Development," with Jacob Jusu Saffa noting that regional integration among other things is key for the achievement of his government's fiscal policy.

A whopping 9.2 trillion Leones is projected as the capital budget for the financial year 2021 but economists say realistic projection, domestic and external revenue mobilization, inflation, debt management, etc, are all issues that must be robustly addressed if the economic shocks of COVID-19 pandemic are to be submerged.

The debate on the budget was at first scheduled for five (Monday 23rd to Friday 27th) days but House Leader Hon. Mathew S. Nyuma used relevant provisions in the constitution and standing orders to shorten the length of time to three days, ending on Wednesday 25th November 2020 when the legislation is expected to be approved.



**"Government through the Ministry of Trade and Industry with support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNFCA) has developed the National Trade Strategy with a specific focus on repositioning Sierra Leone for trade across the African Continental Free Trade Area,"**

## Gender, Children and Social Welfare

# SIERRA LEONE: FORMER MP CITES REASON FOR FEMALE MP ATTRITION

*Continued From Page 10*

long way but our own problems started with us (male and female MPs) in Parliament not doing the right thing. For instance, most of the women in the 2012 to 2018 Parliament were from the diaspora, mostly United Kingdom and America, so when the issue of the dual citizenship surfaced, it helped to reduce the number of female representatives in the current Parliament. It could have been more in this current Parliament but because of this dual citizenship holders ban, there were lots of impediment for female representation."

Hon. Brown emphasized that "until and unless Parliament do something about this law, we are going to be reduced less and less because it is only when you are outside, although there are people here with money, some of them are not brave enough. The capacity of female aspirants for parliament is mostly coming from the diaspora, they have seen what is happening out there, they are not afraid, they are able to standup. Until Parliament do something. We can cry about the thirty percent quota as much as we could, but charity starts at home. We have to take care of ourselves first before we think of others taking care of us."

Hon. Brown said, "yes, the dual citizenship law ban should be amended or re-

viewed to a point where it would not be discriminatory as it is now."

It has been a global discussion that in a bid to promote equal gender representation, women must be given safe seats.

"Yes we need safe seats for women. That is one key thing, don't give me a seat when you know I am not going to win," Hon. Brown said, adding that when and where a symbol is given by a political party to a female candidate has a toll on that woman's victory.

On life after parliament, Hon. Brown said that she has been home with her people, having started development long before she entered Parliament.

"When I was in Parliament, I was involved in entrepreneurship, I thank God that it has helped a lot, I don't miss Parliament as such because I am much more busy now than when I was in Parliament. I am engaged in petroleum dealership, I work with women's organizations, every time something is happening in Kambia that relates to women, I will be on the fore front because they will come to me and ask that I participate and because I now have the time and more closer to them. They feel more comfortable working with me. I am always engaged, I also have a farm, so I am very busy and do not miss Parliament at all. Honestly, since I left the doors of Parliament, I have not been back. I feel guilty some times for not

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having the time to go and visit friends," She said.

Hon. Brown nonetheless advised MPs to work closely with their con-

stituents and represent them well, urging the Leaders of the House not to be one-sided but be fair, straightforward and transparent.

## Finance

# SIERRA LEONE: PARAMOUNT CHIEF MP EXPRESSES GRAVE CONCERN OVER ISSUANCE OF TAX WAIVERS

*Continued From Page 8*

need for us to give them tax breaks."

He cited reference to advance economies that gave tax breaks because of investments they are pouring in and the number of people that they employ who in turn pay taxes to the countries in question, adding that, "they are benefiting

right there and they are investing millions of dollars to let us for example say run a factory. That, we can understand, but for another company that comes to sell or buy, we should not give them tax breaks because from where are we able to get our dividends for the benefit of the nation and of our raw materials."

Asked about his suggestion on a solution to the tax

break issue, PCMP Sanka the 3rd said: "The solution is that we allow companies to operate, we look at how much profit that they have made, then we can say pay ten or fifteen percent instead of twenty or thirty percent, depending on the profit that they have already accounted for. But again, even at that, we don't have the accountants, finance officers, management team, etc - so the companies can give you any

figure saying that they are losing money. The verification of these reported figures on the part of the state is very weak unlike in other countries where they put in key elements and people to monitor if companies are losing or making money."

Sierra Leone is notorious for issuing frivolous tax breaks to multinational companies. A study on just tax breaks for mining companies showed that the country could have benefited much more in revenue that could have been used to ameliorate conditions in the education and health sectors combined. The authors then urged the Government to cancel those tax breaks, an action that the current Government said it will undertake but with prudence not to lose investments into the country in a period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

PCMP Sanka the 3rd also registered concerns on concession on fuel price without paying taxes while the ordinary poor people and Government are paying taxes on that.

Hon PCMP Kurr said: "We should stop that, if we are going to give them a tax break on fuel, let these companies bring their own fuel, store it and use it, but they should not take our fuel and we give them tax break again on that. That means, we are subsidizing the big companies as a poor nation, this is my greatest concern.



**"The solution is that we allow companies to operate, we look at how much profit that they have made, then we can say pay ten or fifteen percent instead of twenty or thirty percent, depending on the profit that they have already accounted for. But again, even at that, we don't have the accountants, finance officers, management team, etc - so the companies can give you any figure saying that they are losing money. The verification of these reported figures on the part of the state is very weak unlike in other countries where they put in key elements and people to monitor if companies are losing or making money."**

## General News

# SIERRA LEONE: HON. DR UNPHA LENDS FINANCIAL AND ELECTRICITY SUPPORT TO CONSTITUENTS

By Melvin Tejan Mansaray

The ushering of development to constituents has come to be known as the fourth unconstitutional mandate of Members of Parliament (MPs) after lawmaking, oversight and representation, Honorable Doctor Unfa Sorie G. Koroma, MP constituency 114 Western Area Urban/Rural (Wellington, Calaba Town, Tarsor Island, etc) is seeking to be an epitome of this new phenomenon.

Despite the facts of being an opposition All Peoples Congress (APC) MP with limited access to state resources compounded with the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, Hon. Dr Koroma doled a whopping sum of Ten million

Leones (Le. 10M) as soft loan to traders to be paid monthly with a 10% interest rate.

On Sunday 1st November 2020, Hon. Dr Koroma provided cash support as micro-finance to some twenty-three (23) market women in his constituency.

"It is a loan because we want a scheme that is sustainable and more women across the constituency may benefit from it," Hon. Dr Koroma said.

According to Hon. Dr Koroma, the funds for the provision of the said loans were derived from his savings and monthly salary.

"The purpose of this loan is to assist petty traders with capital to expand their existing businesses," Hon. Dr Koroma said, adding that, "My expectations are that they use these funds to grow their businesses and that with this structure, they will be guided to be disciplined in managing the affairs of their respective business ventures," Hon Dr Koroma said.

It is worthy to note that some of the businesswomen and traders took away one million five hundred thousand and others, three hundred thousand Leones separately depending on the kind of businesses that they do. The said amounts are to be repaid after some time and this money is to be recycled to another batch of traders to maximize profit and pay back the seed money.

Hawa Jalloh, Mariama Sesay among other beneficiaries, registered their appreciation to the Hon. Dr Koroma calling the gesture timely and necessary moves. They, however,



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Honourable Unpha Sorie Gbassay Koroma

urged the MP to do more developments while praying for God's provision for him.

"We are happy for this money as it shows that our MP cares and concerned about our plight. Business has not been smooth of late but with this loan we can be able to stay in business. We assure that we will continue to support you to stay longer in Parliament as you are unlike your predecessors," the Traders said.

In another separate constituency development, Hon. Dr Koroma donated and installed three (3) solar lights at the Old Wharf Fishing Com-

munity, Wellington Freetown.

The Harbor Master, Chairman Tribal Heads Ya Alimamy and a cross-section of the APC Constituency Executive, Fishermen, Boat Owners, Residents of Old Wharf and other stakeholders expressed gratitude to Hon. Dr Koroma, noting that light is life and for far too long the place has been engulfed in darkness.

"With this solar lights, I hope that crime and insecurity especially at the Wharf area will be salvage. I am here to fulfill the promise that I made before you elected me into office" Hon. Dr Koroma said.



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