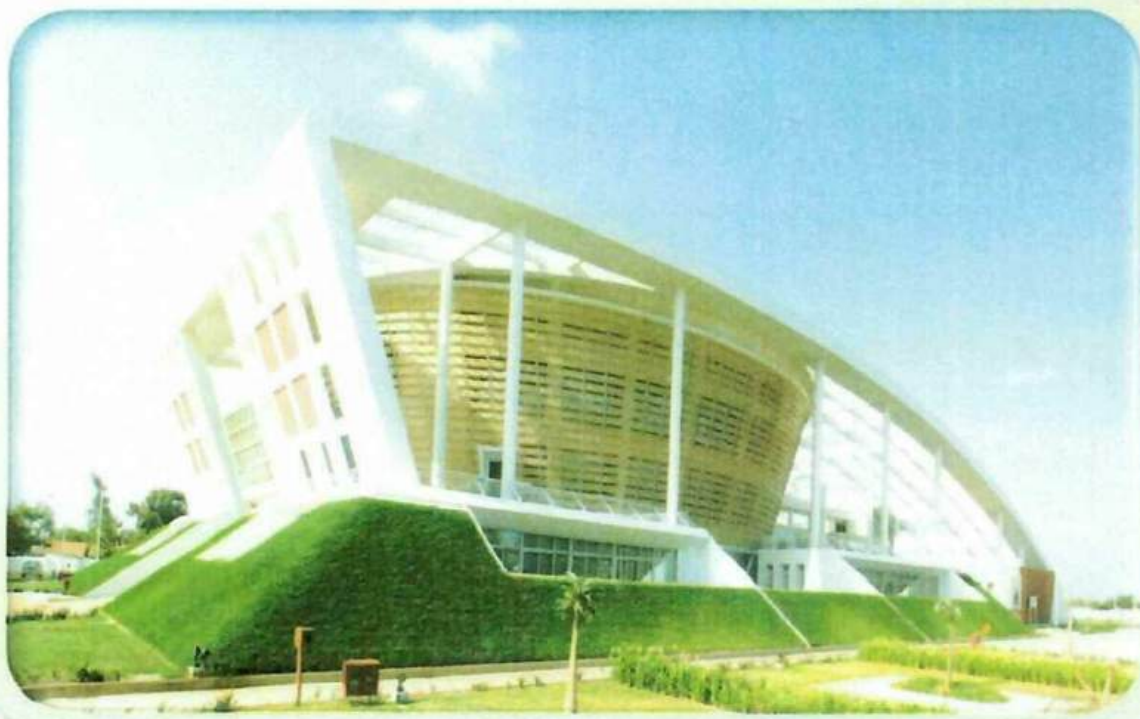




**National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reverend Pye Lane,
Banjul, The Gambia**

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

SIXTH SITTING - THIRD ORDINARY SESSION

06TH OCTOBER, 2017

2017 Legislative Year



**National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reverend Pye Lane,
Banjul, The Gambia**

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[HANSARD]

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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Third Ordinary Session of the Fifth Assembly in the 2017 Legislative Year

Proceedings of the Sitting of the Assembly

Held on Friday 06th October, 2017

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THE CHAMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE ASSEMBLY

**SIXTH SITTING – THIRD ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY
OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC**

FRIDAY 06TH OCTOBER, 2017

1. PRAYERS:

[The Speaker, Hon. Mariam Jack Denton, Reads the Prayers].

[The Assembly met at 10:00 a.m. in New Assembly Building, Reverend Pye Lane, Banjul].

[The Speaker, Hon. Mariam Jack Denton, in the Chair].

The Assembly was called to Order.

2. Correction of Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 05th October, 2017.

THE SPEAKER: Good morning everybody and welcome to the continuation of the debate on the Motion on the Adjournment of this Third Ordinary Session of the National Assembly in the 2017 Legislative Year Sine-Die.

Honourable Members, before us is the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 05th October, 2017 for adoption. Can an Honourable Member please move that the Records of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 05th October, 2017 be considered and adopted?

HON. KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: I so move, Hon. Speaker!

THE SPEAKER: Any Seconder?

HON. SAIKOUBA JARJU [BUSUMBALLA]: I so second, Hon. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER:

[Question proposed, Put and Agreed to]

Any observations, issues, corrections or amendments by any Honourable Member?

HON. BABA GALLEH JALLOW [SANIMENTERENG]: Page 3, the following National Assembly "Member", it should be "Members".

HON. SUNKARY BADJIE [FONI BREFET]: Hon. Speaker, on the same page 3, I was not absent, I was present yesterday but apparently during the sitting, I had an emergency and I had to step out briefly but I was present.

THE SPEAKER: Are you explaining your absence or are you referring to...

HON. SUNKARY BADJIE [FONI BREFET]: No, what I mean is, I am placed under those absent while I was not absent, I was present but left the sitting because I had an emergency, I stepped out briefly.

THE SPEAKER: Noted.

HON. MUSA AMUL NYASSI [FONI KANSALA]: I am on the list of absentees Hon. Speaker and I remembered yesterday, I was at a funeral. I called Honourable colleagues to explain to them. What I am saying is, I was at a funeral yesterday, I called Honourable colleagues to give my reason for being absent at the National Assembly session.

Under the list where you have the following National Assembly Members are absent, my name appears there, I am No.2 on the list of absentees.

THE SPEAKER: Did you inform the Clerk?

HON. MUSA AMUL NYASSI [FONI KANSALA]: I called my colleagues to inform the Clerk.

THE SPEAKER: There is a Table Office as the line of communication, your colleagues should have informed the Table Office or at least announce that Honourable Member for Foni Kansala is absent with excuse, but we will indicate that you were absent with excuse.

SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you. On the same page 9 where you have the following Honourable "Member", it should be "Members" instead.

THE SPEAKER: Table Office should be vetting our records thoroughly because these are elementary errors that can be avoided. In the absence of anymore corrections can we move on?

previous regime, people will enter this country and are recognise as strangers but eventually they secure our national documents for them to vote for the ruling party. This is what was existing and I think the new Gambia will look into that and distinguish the citizens from none citizens.

Of course, Gambians are living abroad but wherever you go, you will be considered even if you are a citizen of that country, you will be considered as a foreigner or may be a second-class citizen hence you cannot come today and tomorrow you become a citizen of a country. I think we have to look into that.

My second point is that there are alarming problems around my constituency and everybody should be made aware of. That is the Trans-Gambia ferry crossing point at Bamba-Tenda/Yelli-Tenda. At these crossing points over the years where we have the ferry services is not even satisfactory to the people because of the conditions of the ferries that are brought to that area. Bamba Tenda/Yelli Tenda crossing points is where the Trans-Gambia Bridge is being constructed and between the two crossing points is where the ferry is also moving from North Bank to LRR, which is giving problems to the people crossing from either side. Why? Because sometimes during the course of last month, the ferry hit one of the pillars that was built by the contractor but fortunately there was no loss of life.

I was not at the scene but I have seen the real picture of the incident. In fact, an emergency boat was called in to evacuate people from the ferry. It nearly became a serious problem between these two operating companies, the Gambia Ports Authority and the Gambia Bridge. It brought a big rivalry between them as at now. I have suggested this to the Minister last time that these three (3) major projects cannot be at one place.

The third one is the electric cable that connects North Bank to LRR also passes through the same point. It is not in fact sensible for a ferry to be moving while you have the electric cable underneath and you have people in the ferry and others around working every day. I explained this at the level of the Ministry for them to look at these problems. To our surprise, the first consultant that has been brought for the

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[The Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Thursday 05th October, 2017 has been adopted with amendments]

3. MOTION:

Continuation of the Motion on the Adjournment Debate

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Members, today we shall continue from where we stopped yesterday on the debate for the Motion on the Adjournment. I will continue from where we stopped yesterday. We were able to have 20 interventions yesterday and the list continues today.

HON. KAJALI FOFANA [JARRA WEST]: Thank you Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor and good morning to my colleagues. It would have been better if the Honourable Ministers were present for them to be able to listen to the debate for themselves without being mediated.

My first comment would be concerning the nationality of Gambians. I have asked this during Questions for Oral Answer Session and it is the same thing I am going to repeat again. Everybody belongs to somewhere. You cannot be a citizen at home and be a citizen away. If we can all remember during the last regime, in most of our settlements you have the same family members divided by a border. Like in my constituency. I have an area called Kabada, they speak the same language, they all come from the same family and at the same time they belong to different countries. Whereas it becomes a matter of choice, to be a Senegalese or a Gambian or be a citizen of both countries at the same time and this has given us a big problem in our democratic process especially when it comes to elections.

During elections, we encountered a lot of cross border voting and that is not constitutional. I raised these questions for the Minister, hoping that I will get response that will satisfy me but to no avail. I was not satisfied with the response provided by the Minister! I thought that they are going to lay down a mechanism that will be able to qualify somebody to become a citizen as enshrined in our constitution. During the

construction of that bridge did not identify that place, a different place was identified separately from the present ferry crossing point to an extent that they had to compensate the people who have their rice fields at that point and that is my own community. People have been compensated with lots of money because the bridge was to be built through their rice fields.

While we were waiting on them for the construction work to start, their mode of operation was automatically changed to the present site without knowing what happened and up to date this question is yet to be answered. What is the result of the first consultancy? Why did they abandoned that place after it has been identified by a consultant? The Gambia Family Planning Association even sensitized the communities on both sides of the river for a possible transmission of disease from the construction materials on site. We noticed that the construction site and everything has automatically changed. We do not know why and because of that change, the development now is that the ferry can only move during high tide which lasts for only six hours. Now the people crossing are paying double fares that is, you pay to have access to the ferry services premises and your pay to cross in a canoe to wherever you are crossing to.

At times, you find 3 or 4 different queues waiting and sometimes you have to wait for the small canoes up to 3 hours before you get on board. It is boring. I talked to my Honourable colleague with whom I share these crossing points because if you cross from my constituency you go to Illiassa constituency. The Honourable Minister should have been here to hear these problems directly so that they can do something about it otherwise there would be a clash between boat owners. Few weeks ago, there was a problem between two boat owners and this almost resulted to a fight. I think many people are aware of that. These urgent issues needs to be solved before it gets worst. Thank you Hon. Speaker.

HON. FAKEBBA NL COLLEY [KIANG WEST]: Thank you Hon. Speaker, I want to talk about four issues concerning Kiang West Constituency. First and foremost, during the last adjournment debate, I raised a question to the Honourable Minister about the Kiang National Park concerning the improper management of the Park. The answer

given was, 'he has 2 applications before him which should be scrutinised for verifications but up to now nothing has been said or done about it. The park has now become a liability to the people of Kiang.

The 14 satellite villages around the park are exposed to food insecurity because cultivation in those areas are no more significant because the park harbours different types of monkeys and bush pigs, which is making the farming communities inactive. I urge the Minister responsible to urgently do something about that.

Coming to the health sector, Karantaba health centre has not been functioning for 3 years now. The health centre has 14 catchment villages which as a result of poor road conditions and lack of proper communication, these villagers would have to ride on bicycles or donkey carts to get to MRC in Keneba and this includes pregnant women. My colleagues, the Minority Leader and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, have taken up these situations in Parliament but still now, nothing is being done about it.

Sangkandi/Karantaba road needs urgent completion or else it will go back to its original state. We have learnt that the Works Minister of the former regime said that the construction of that road came from the former President but revelations from the Commission tells us that it was being constructed from the taxpayers' money and yet incomplete and I urge the present Minister of Works to do something now for the construction to be completed.

I also recommended that the National Assembly Authority looks into possible adoption of health insurance scheme for the National Assembly Members and their families. Hon. Speaker, this is a very significant issue because of the expensive nature of medicare in The Gambia especially for patients going abroad for treatment. On that note, I beg to resume my seat. Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker. I do not know whether Honourable Speaker will be observing the provisions of the Standing Orders because of the travel. I believed that I will have 15 minutes.

The first emphasis I want to make Honourable Speaker is that, when we were in the transition, President Barrow moved from Brusubi to Kairaba Hotel, the police will ensure that traffic stops until he passes and proceed to his destination. That was the case also when he returned. This was made possible because of the right tactics and strategy in ensuring peaceful coexistence under the law.

As the Chairperson of the Inter-Party Committee, I would want to call on all party elders to educate their members to know that all Gambians are equal in sovereignty and all of us should respect each other's sovereignty if we expect to coexist in peace in this country. We will be doing a lot of civic education to ensure that all our members understands how we transformed this country in peace, and we should continue to sustain that peace and build a country base on prosperity and liberty.

Honourable Speaker, I raised an issue when the Honourable Vice President was here regarding National Assembly Members being asked whether they had permission to travel. I did not raise this because that was the condition at the airport. I raised the question because I was asked and I explained to them that National Assembly Members are not civil servants. The Constitution is very clear that National Assembly Members cannot be categorised as civil servants requiring the permission of the Executive to travel that is the point and I hope from now onwards that is what is going to be respected and of course she agreed with me and I passed.

I just wanted to raise that, if that is the status quo, it should end right now. It must be known that we do not need any form of permission from the Executive to leave this country and I would also want that protocol to be brought before us so that we can scrutinize it because section 25, subsection 2 is very clear. Gambians are free to come and leave the country without any unreasonable restriction. We should look at that protocol to see whether it confines itself within the standards of the Constitution.

Honourable Speaker, we have over 400,000 Gambians coming out of our school system every twelve years. I raised a question to the Minister of Trade, whether an exchange programme will not be put into force under section 44 of the Labour Act in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports. It seems like some form of

explanation was given as if this was wrong and something else was there which I would not have understood. Of course, the Ministry is around, I would have really wanted to challenge that notion. I coin these words, I have every right to call it labour exchange because what it entails is registry to ensure that all those people seeking work will be registered, and those who intend to provide employment will be registered so that you can match the employers and the employees. I do not know what language they were speaking in their reply.

In essence, we have heard from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 772 deportees that was the question I asked, that also, what they are doing to ensure that those people when they are received and accompanied to be able to have means of income and we are told right here that, that will be the status quo. So I would not say that from now onwards we hope all those deportees will be registered and in collaboration with IOM to ensure that a program starts right away to provide them with seed money not just training. If there is need for training it should be accompanied after the training with seed money. The issue is income generation not just empty training, how many people have been trained at GTTI all these training institutions, abundant training is taking place in this country, what we need now is income generation and we should scrutinize to ensure that that happens.

It is also important to look at the whole issue of drainage, waste disposal in this country. The Honourable Member for Serrekunda West has mentioned it. We need to develop a strategy on waste management and disposal because where I have been, it is very clear that waste is resource and we need to manage that waste to transform it into resource rather than waste as we see it.

In terms of drainage, I worked with certain consultants who are Gambians and they have developed a strategy. I wanted to engage the National Roads Authority. In fact, I have requested many times, 3 weeks, with late appointments and it failed. Halifa Jobe, a Gambian water engineer, runs this and he is showing that really in terms of water inside homes, you can actually have recharge well system that will be able to contain that water and eventually transform it into water that is usable. And even on the road, he has developed an old system in terms of the roads where we have these

potholes everywhere and have all these water, how do you drain it on sight and then you will be able to use it.

There is another person who is a welder-man, who has shown how compounds gates can be controlled so that water will not get in. Therefore, both water inside/outside can actually be managed and we have Gambian engineers who have the capacity to guide the Ministry of Works. I have short meetings with them for 3 weeks, of course I understand their busy schedule that's why am brining it here otherwise I would not have brought it here and I hope from this, we would immediately meet these engineers so that we can start articulating ways and means of drainage issue at the secondary roads. Everywhere the roads are dilapidated. We need to involve these young people to have companies, we have public works before, we have small potholes, which could be repaired with immediacy, and poor maintenance culture is our problem. They waited until the road is totally dilapidated and then you have to rebuild it. We have to address those issues as quickly as possible.

It is significant to bear in mind that as far as the ministers are concerned Honourable Speaker, they themselves do not need to be present here if they are out of town but they need to be represented by their fellow Ministers. What is actually happening at the level of the Executive, any Minister that is absent should have another Minister who is looking after that particular Ministry. So at no time should we give excuse that a permanent secretary must come here, a Permanent Secretary cannot speak here, only the Ministers can take this podium and talk to us. Therefore, it is important for us to bear that in mind and remind our colleagues in the Executive that this is the area that we need to look at.

Finally, Honourable Speaker, we as people must understand that we are trying to rectify a system and we do not rectify a system by emulating what it was doing. I do not understand why some of our colleagues when we mention adherence to the Constitution, even what we are doing say that they are going to denounce us, denounce us for what, denounce me for what. We are saying, avoid the mistakes of the past and we are saying how that could be done and you talk of denouncing such people, then you want to repeat the mistake of the past; that would not happen here

again. This is why Honourable Speaker, I thank you very much, this National Assembly is developing its competence to be able to serve, to carry out its three fundamental functions and only 2 are often repeated.

We have a legislative and oversight functions but we also have an advocacy function. Everybody is talking about how we can ensure that we influence processes to facilitate development in this country that is advocacy. We have also impeachment functions, under section 75 of the Constitution, which empowers us to remove Ministers from office for misconduct, for abuse in terms of the Constitution, we can even impeach the President of the Republic. We have those powers but essentially this is not a war between the State institutions, it is collaboration to work to promote liberty and prosperity in our land for our common interest. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I entirely concur and agree with your intervention on the issue of drainage and the fact that you have engaged the Ministry to meet with them. May I suggest that you liaise with the Committee responsible for drainage and they can always summon them and that you may be invited at the meeting. In as much as is a Select Committee, nobody is stopped from attending the meetings, proceedings of any other committee meetings. You can go there and give your ideas as you said we are collaborating and all you want is, at the end of the day let us get something positive not only for the National Assembly but for the Gambia and the Gambians.

On the second point of the Ministers non-attendance of course, I engaged the Executive and informed them that absence of a particular Minister or a particular Minister being out of the jurisdiction is no excuse. There should be an overseeing Minister to respond to issues, as you rightly said, it is only the Ministers who can take the podium here, to response to issues. Of course, the technocrat of the ministry will be there, the technocrat of the ministry that is, whose minister is out of the jurisdiction will assist the minister overseeing that ministry. So is not that we are just lying low but we have taken it up. We think it is a very serious issue and like the Minister responsible for Parliamentary Affairs, I was made to understand the Permanent Secretary was here. This is not the first time that Ministers have been absent and this

is not the first time that we have taken it up at very high level. It should have been brought to their attention so that we have an overseeing Ministry in which case no backlogs of questions for oral answers would have occurred.

If you could remember sometime on Tuesday, we could not sit because there were no Ministers and we lost the whole day. This is why we were here when we are supposed to sit. Well not too sure, but of course as you said, this is one of our co-functions but if we have utilised our Tuesday we would have concluded the adjournment debate yesterday but because there was no Minister we could not proceed.

These are the two points that I want to bring to your attention so that you know that we have taken it up seriously and I would also encourage you to get in touch with the Select Committee on Drainage systems because we are all suffering. I am sure you know what I am referring to. Churchill's town is a headache and every time the Foroyaa Newspaper would picture it and bring it up. It is a headache and I appreciate the fact that it is not only Westfield to Tabokoto that is affected but other areas too. So the earlier we do something about it, the better.

Thank you very much Honourable Member. May we have the privilege of you and other Members at least not leaving the Chambers upon intervention because we always want to be guided by the expertise and wisdom of everybody present here. Thank you very much.

HON. ALHAGIE DARBOE [LOWER FULLADU WEST]]: Thank you very much Madam Speaker for giving me the floor. I have two major issues in my constituency that needs to be addressed and are as follows:

1. Media coverage of GRTS radio
2. The Department of Physical Planning

Lower Fulladu West constituency has a community radio station in Brikama-Ba which is about 340 kilometres away from the main national radio station at mile 7. However, the frequency of this community radio covers the whole of Lower Fulladu West, part

of North Bank, Niamina and up to the border villages in the Cassamance region of Senegal.

Hon. Speaker, as far as national news is concerned, it is a right for every citizen of this country. The people of my constituency asked me to convey this message to the Executive that they would appreciate if GRTS Radio could be linked to Brikama-Ba community radio station during national news so that people of my constituency can also listen to national news very clearly.

Hon. Speaker, the second point is about the Department of Physical Planning. I stand to be corrected but if there is any law or Act concerning construction work in rural areas, the communities need to be sensitised by the department of physical planning about the act either through civic education, newspapers, radio and television programs or even village meetings rather than imposing laws or regulations on them which they are ignorant.

A lady who was struggling for the past 25 years, Madam Speaker as far as I know, just to build a shelter for her family. The lady came to my house with tears and lodged a complaint that some officials from the department of physical planning came to her home and told her to stop constructing her house simply because she did not get any permit from the physical planning to which she has complied to. The officials went further and forced her to pay D20, 000 on the spot and was also issued an emergency notice to stop work hence any further construction work without permit after this notice is an offence and is liable to a fine of D2, 000 per day or 2 years imprisonment which she also complied with.

Hon. Speaker, the lady appealed to these officials that she was ignorant of such an Act but the appeal was turned down and was forced to pay D20, 000 on the spot. The lady cannot afford to pay the whole amount on the spot but instead paid D10, 000 which was not receipted for and instead a plain paper was written and given to her, the remaining D10,000 was to be paid in 3 months that was from October to December 2017.

Hon. Speaker, I have all the written documents from these officials before me and as the department of physical planning is under the purview of Local Government and Lands, I went through the Local Government Act 2002 to see if there are any provisions in the Act for such a payment but I could not see any. The following day, I went to the Area Council to meet these officers so that they can write an official receipt against the D10, 000 payments but they never come to the council on that day.

However, I was able to get their contacts numbers, I have been communicating with them through telephone since 17th August, 2017 up to now they did not cooperate in giving an authentic receipt to this lady. I take it that the Director of Physical Planning should visit or revisit some of the officials deployed in the provinces whether they are rightfully collecting revenue from our people or not. The lady wants the receipt for the first payment before she can pay the remaining D10, 000.

My Honourable Members of this august Assembly, when we say social protection to my understanding women cannot be left behind if not first to be considered and then others follow. However, to protect women I think the first tool to use is to have sympathy for them otherwise you cannot protect them with their siblings. Just like what had happened to this woman am talking about. These particular officials do not have any sympathy for her much more her children.

On that note Hon. Speaker, and in conclusion, I would like to urge the Select Committee on Local Government and Lands to take this issue in exercising their oversight functions. I would also urge them whenever they are out to the field in the provinces to pay a visit to these officials from the Department of Physical Planning and table this matter before them for discussion. However, Madam Speaker, I will give all necessary information... [Interruption].

THE SPEAKER: I think first and foremost we have to realise that I do not think women need any sympathy, they are equal with men in law. So, it is not a question of being sympathetic to women, it is a question of doing what is legal. As you rightly said, may be if you write a formal letter to the Committee attaching all the documents that you have in your possession, I am sure the Select Committee will summon the

relevant authorities and confront them with those documents. It is good that it is raised at the level of the National Assembly so that it will be public knowledge that there are people going around asking for exorbitant sums of money under the pretext that builders or owners of properties do not have a permit. In any event, more so when it is not provided for under the law, the penalty as you said is D2, 000 per day. I am not sure because I have not read the Act – really, D20 000 I think is too outrageous but I would have refused, I would have said no and I would go to the Brikama-Ba Area Council and then lodge a complaint.

What they could do at the time was what they did, they said let me stop construction, let her stop and then go to Brikama-Ba Area Council or physical planning wherever the officials came from. Again, I think it also brings us to the point that, I think an Honourable Member raised it yesterday, we should try to educate our constituency members so that they would know their rights. It is not just anybody coming, to say that I am from NAWEC or I am from what authority so, you have to pay me this and they comply, No! Like as been said, it is a new Gambia and people are getting more and more aware of their rights so if you enhance and help them with the understanding of their rights, it would help to minimize these kind of things.

I just thought I should bring this to your attention and I call on the Honourable Member for Nianija. Thank you.

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Thank you Hon. Speaker. This is a very important moment to share a very sad story that happened in my constituency. If you can recall during adjournment debates, I always talked about the road conditions in Nianija and also about the feeder roads to the rice fields. On the 17th of August 2017, a woman died while crossing a dilapidated access road to the rice field and she was only 25 years old and with two kids.

Every time we talk here about feeder roads, they would think that we are joking but it is something worthy of being looked at because in Nianija and in many other parts of CRR, what we know is upland farming and rice cultivation in the fields. We cannot be talking about agriculture, about machinery, about bringing in projects and so on

whilst basic things like construction of feeder roads to the farms and rice fields are not being taken care of. These women in my area would struggle for about 4 to 5 kilometres just to have access to their fields and whilst this woman was crossing, not a river but actually a swampy field then suddenly she slipped in a hole and she could not escape which ended her life. That was how this tragic accident happened and she left two kids behind and still nothing is being done. I followed up the issue with NDMA, actually they have made some progress but the lasting solution that can be done is for me to emphasise that these feeder roads are constructed because there is no way you can stop women from going to the rice field that is what they entirely depend on.

On Agriculture in CRR, the majority of the farmers there especially women depend on rice cultivation and most of the men depend on groundnut farming and the like but definitely the situation now is alarming since women have started losing their lives in trying to access their rice fields. Even during the last adjournment debate I talked about it. If you look at a woman between 20 to 25 years, you would think that she is 50 years of age due to the very poor road network to the rice fields. Lots of complains have been made, lot of proposal have been written but still now nothing is being done. We believe that we are neglected, I do not know how to put it because if you go to Nianija today, the only thing the women would tell you is for them to have their access roads to the rice fields constructed.

The other thing Honourable Speaker is about our main roads. We are among the constituencies who have never benefited from even a single gravel more so a tar road. You will travel the entire length and breadth of Nianija you would not see any single road that has been constructed by the government. The road from Njawo Sey kunda in Upper Saloum going through Nianija the entire length and breadth of Niani no road has ever been constructed there and we are part of the Gambia.

The Minister went on tour to look at some of these road conditions but he never visited Nianija. I made a follow-up with him but what he told me was Nianija is part of the list but never visited the area. That is not what we wanted, we wanted him to go and access first-hand information of what we are talking about.

My other area of concern is the issue of Gambians who are stranded in foreign countries and they are to be deported. It has been reported here that 717 Gambians have been deported on different dates but it seems like nothing significant has been done because we are seeing some of them struggling to go back, which means what they have been promised something or what they were expecting when they come back home has not been fulfilled. I agree that the Ministry of Trade is doing something likewise the Ministry of Interior but things needs to be on fast track. We cannot depend on the saying that things will be better, we will put you into something good, but actions need to be taken for these deportees for us to see that they are integrated back in our society and be given the opportunity to contribute immensely towards our national development as they are part of us. They left us due to various reasons but if they come back, it means they are ready and willing to contribute their quota.

The other issue is, I was unfortunate to ask my question when the Minister of Tourism was here about Kerr Batch Stone Circle. If you go to Kerr Batch Stone Circle today, you will think that the place has never existed. It is true that Nianija is remote but we are part of The Gambia and Kerr Batch Stone Circle is part of the historical sites of the Gambia, which needs to be rehabilitated so that tourists and students can start visiting the site as they were doing before because these historical sites must be protected and safeguarded.

Kerr-Batch stone circle for the last 5 years or so, is like a compound whose landlord has pass away because there is nothing absolutely happening there. Even the buildings are collapsing. I think it is wise for the Ministry of Tourism to also pay attention to that site and see what they can do to develop this important place. It is true that there are many historical sites in the Gambia and Kerr Batch is one of them, which need to be looked into. On that note, I thank you.

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor. We have to have a way of fast tracking the number of questions we are bringing to the National Assembly because some of them are time bound and if they are not answered at the right time then they could be rendered stained. For example, the Foreign Minister was here yesterday, I raised only one question among the 5

questions I presented for questioning and one of them was for the Foreign Affairs Minister and when he came here, only 1 question was raise so my question could have been added and he does not have to come here again unless another question is raised. That would have save time for him and for us too.

The GRTS should be fully utilised for the Gambian people are interested in what the National Assembly is discussing and they want to know what is happening and whether their representatives are performing. If they do not hear anything from us, they think we are doing nothing. On that note, I believe GRTS should give us some airtime for our people to view and hear what we discuss here.

Hon. Speaker, I toured the Foday Kunda and Baja Kunda Health centres respectively and I had a meeting with the personnel on the ground. I have discovered that they are almost forgotten. There are no electricity or water supply. It is quite unfortunate and after the meeting, the established Wuli East Development Initiative decided to give them a helping hand by providing them with a 'Sumancy' pump with an inverter for them to have electricity and water supply and some other few items for Foday Kunda Health Centre but for Baja Kunda, their solar system is no longer functioning. They depend entirely on NAWEC power supply and if NAWEC goes off which is frequent, there is no other alternative. If a woman is delivering and electricity goes off, there is no other provision for light.

In the case of Foday Kunda Health Centre, what they are asking for is a very simple thing and that is a lab technician. They have a well-equipped laboratory but there is no technician. If a women delivers, they should go and have a test but they cannot have a test instead they have to go all the way to Basse to have a test and you need to have three difference tests and the distance from Foday Kunda to Basse is 50Km. One goes to Basse have a test and come back to Foday Kunda and they have to travel between Phoday Kunda and Basse three times just because they do not have a lab technician. That is what they are asking and I took it up with the Ministry of Health and the Regional Health Department but still nothing has been done about it.

Hon. Speaker, on security, the last time when the Hon. Minister was here, I raised a question about Makka Masereh, a village where a security outfit is posted because back in 2016, there was an armed robbery at a shop in that village and one person was killed. The then Government had to send security personnel to secure the area. Since they were posted there, one family has decided to provide them shelter and they are still staying with that family. Though, both the family and the security personnel lives in the same compound, there is no enough space in the house. The government promised that they are going to build accommodation for them. The villagers allocated a piece of land but since then nothing has been done and the Hon. Minister promised that immediately after the last session, he will be going to Makka Masereh and I would want to meet me there. I was there but the Hon. Minister never came but that is not the big problem, the big problem is, I discovered that the security personnel posted there do not have a vehicle. The only vehicle they have was broken down. They waited for an auto mechanic to fix the vehicle but it almost five months the mechanic is yet to arrive. The vehicle is depreciating. These security men are sometime walking 5 kilometres on foot on security patrol. They are not even provided with a motor cycle, this situation need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Hon. Speaker, I asked a supplementary question on Farato Mandina and Nama-kunku. These are two communities that are within the range of electricity and water supply but they are yet to benefit. For some reason, NAWEC developed these facilities around them but neither water nor electricity is accessible by these two communities. As I said, when I went to Nama-Kunku, it was by accident, the whole community came to meet me to explain their problems as the National Assembly Member for that area so that government can know their plight. That is why I am standing here to ask the Ministers to look into it. The Energy Minister should prevail on NAWEC to help those people to have water and electricity supply. I went around the whole area and they showed me only one existing well in Nama-Kunku and that one is no longer usable as it is damaged. People now use their donkey carts to fetch water from kilometres away from their community for their domestic use.

Hon. Speaker, I mentioned about the "Alkaloship" problem in the country. The former government introduced a law enacted in parliament that 'Alkalo election was nullified and that same law empowers the Minister to remove Alkalos and the President empowered to remove Chiefs. Madam Speaker, that law is still in place. Now with this new Gambia, we should be democratic. If we take drastic measures against appointments and removals, others will see it as undemocratic. If we leave them there without being elected, the people may be dissatisfied. Right now as I speak to you, the people of Sutukoba are planning to come to Basse to demonstrate because they do not want their Alkalo, sighting that he was imposed on them and they will not obtain anything from government unless the Alkali is changed because they do not want him. This is something that the regional government should look into and address it as quickly as possible. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable. I do not know whether we can be guided by your expertise, Honourable Member for Basse, Honourable Member for Serrekunda and Hon. Member for Wuli East and Nominated Member because "*laughter*", it appears as if the Ministry of Health and education to a certain extent, concerns have been raised repeatedly. I could see Honourable Members or hear them lamenting over these issues. Therefore, I do not know whether the Honourable Members can seat as a whole, draft their concerns and forward it to the relevant Select Committees and then call the Minister with his or her technicians and let them know that these are issues that have been raised repeatedly but they have not been addressed. As I said, I do not know. We can be guided by best practise and procedure. Honourable Member for Basse, what is your take on that? I am getting more and more concerned with Health and Education.

HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for this good and timely observation. If we want to talk about the problems of Health and Education in this Parliament, it will take us three to four days and we will not finish the topic mentioned. What you have just proposed, select committees in collaboration with concerned National Assembly Members can sit over these issues and see how best to make a proposal so that these problems can be addressed.

Thank you.

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Well, essentially this is the purpose of the Committees Honourable Speaker, that even the Bill can be committed to a Committee to look into it but whatever this is an adjournment debate. Of course, the objective is to also extend all concerns but ultimately, is the committees that will have the muscle to call them and they will be bound to come and address the concerns. So, the National Assembly is very strong indeed.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, because actually the concerns have been raised repeatedly during Adjournment Debates and for some reason they are not even here but they will come and answer to the committees on health and education. Probably if we resort to that procedure, we may have some results. Thank you.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: I just want to intervene in this matter. Sometimes, it is very frustrating like it happened to the Select Committee on Agriculture, whereby we select certain individuals but the major problem will be encountered, they will be telling you that there is insufficient funds. These are some of the excuses that will be coming repeatedly, and that is a major challenge to some of the things we want to do. I do not know how we can address it?

THE SPEAKER: You can always engage them.

HON. MAHTARR M. JENG [LOWER NUIMI]: I just wanted to ask what can be brought to bear in the event they fail to appear?

THE SPEAKER: Remember that you have powers, but I think one of the powers is equivalent to that of a High Court.

HON. MAHTARR M. JENG: Because it looks like they are escaping.

THE SPEAKER: Look at your powers and excises them judiciously, especially if you do that; I am sure...

HON. FODAY N.M DRAMMEH [TUMANA]: Thank you Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor. I will first of all seize this opportunity to thank the Minister of Education and the Ministry for considering and building a high school in Tumana for the very first

time in our history. This is really helping the people of Tumana because I would not have been in the Parliament if there were no school in Tumana. Therefore, this would help to cut down the number of school dropout in Tumana and help in the retention of students especially the girl-child.

Secondly, children are the future leaders of tomorrow but that cannot be if they are not being protected, either by the society they find themselves in or by institutions, like schools, health centres and other government and private institutions. Government as a bigger institution cannot fail because what is happening on the ground is really alarming Honourable Speaker. There are lots of children that are roaming in and around our major towns with donkey carts working as refuse collectors. There are lots of them in and around our major towns especially in the gambling centres and also if you go to the garages they are there as apprentice calling on customers to board vehicles either going to Banjul, Brikama, Serrekunda, West Field and so on.

These children are supposed to be in schools and if this continues, I believe the future of this country will be doomed. If we want to have a brighter future as a country, as a State, we have to concentrate more on our children. The government, especially the Ministry responsible for social welfare should look into these problems because this is alarming and very sad. Children roaming in the streets with donkey carts serving as refuse collectors and some of them are even between the ages of 8-12 years. We expect these kids to be in their various schools not to be roaming the streets or in the gambling centres like what the Honourable Member for Kantora said yesterday and this is what is happening, kids are not going to school, there are schools all over the country. The government should take action on these issues and if not the future of our country will be nowhere.

On road construction, I have said it here that the road from Kantong to Kantora is being constructed up to Basse where it ends. The road from Basse via Tumana to Kantora has never been constructed for 52 years. There are lots of issues that are happening there, the businessmen and women are complaining that they cannot have access to major markets because of the poor state of the road. The vegetable

gardeners are also complaining that they cannot access the markets because of the bad state of the road. The school children that are coming from my Constituency going towards Basse or Kantora are also suffering. This is even a major factor why some of them prefer to stay at home instead of going to school because their parents are not comfortable with the present situation. Thank God, that we have a high school this time around and that will at least minimize these problems.

My last contribution is about the rehabilitation of the Kundang Regional Youth Garden in my constituency measuring 250 metre square, which is 5 hectares. The amount of reservoir needed in that garden is not there, the tank that is supposed to supply over 120 thousand litres of water per day is not working properly as it can pump only 30 thousand litres per day. The fence of the garden is made of chain link wire and is of poor quality and of no use any longer. Both men and women including the older generations are actively working in that garden currently totalling between 200 to 300 people. If the ministry can rehabilitate it, it will be a source of income for my people and would also complement the efforts of government in creating employment for the youths in the region. Thank you.

HON. ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor. Hon. Speaker, presently there is an ongoing construction of a petrol station in a densely populated area and initially the land was allocated for residential purposes but suddenly it is being changed to a petrol station, which is a serious concern to my electorates. I will urge the Minister of Lands to give some clarification as to why land allocated for residential purposes are suddenly being used for business purposes not suitable in residential areas. Again, there are some "kabilos" in Bakau whose lands were forcefully taken away by the then government and the land owners are asking for compensation of which I would want the Minister responsible to give some clarifications on those issues. Why our lands are being forcefully acquired by the government and yet refuse to compensate the rightful owners.

Last week on Gambia Television, I was following a programme that 90 youths were undergoing training and at the end of their training, all of them will be employed as coast guards. Among these 90 youths, according to my findings, none has been

selected from Bakau. I would also want the Minister responsible for Fisheries to clarify to this august Body the criteria used for selecting 90 youths without any single person from Bakau. I thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member. I am surprised that the issues of constructing a petrol station in residential areas owned by individuals was brought up as a question and the Minister would have been here knowing that some of them do come during the adjournment debate. [Interruption]

Sorry let me just land. I would have expected that, that is a substantive question that requires an answer from the relevant Ministry. So, I hope that the Honourable Member may wish to consider both issues as a question [Interruption]. I have been informed that it has been forwarded but unfortunately since there are no overseeing Ministry at the time they could not react but I am sure it will be taken up. Thank you very much Honourable Attorney General for coming back. I thought that you will really liaise with your cabinet colleagues that Honourable Members are concerned that most of them if not all very few of them appear during adjournment debates. We have raised it up with the executive at the highest level but the respond has not been very positive. Some issues of great concern are being raised. Thank you.

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor. I would also like to thank the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Justice for giving us all of his time this week. It shows how concerned he is and how he is really giving us his support, but I would not want to take my whole time on that.

I have been going round my constituency last week Honourable Speaker and it has been quite appalling, the state of Banjul. I wish we had a projector and I would have shown you the condition of certain homes. Like somebody said, 'Banjulians are tired of swimming' and you have to actually swim to get into someone's room. I would not be surprised if eventually we have cholera outbreak in this country due to their living conditions. I would want to appeal to the Minister of Health and that of Environment to make a tour of Banjul with the three sitting National Assembly Members of Banjul for them to at least have a look at what is happening in our constituencies. It is not

only the trucks now, it is the sewage, the drainage and everything else. Now we are not talking about electricity because now we see that as a privilege not a right because we do not have electricity supply nor do we have water in our constituencies but we are talking about our health, which is more important.

I would want to appeal to the Ministers and to His Excellency, that he made a pledge that Banjul is a priority but since he mentioned that, we have not seen him or heard anything from him. I know he is trying to relocate again to Banjul and I think being our neighbour, he will consider us a priority as was promised. We still have hope as long as we are alive. We have seen changes during the recent months and we are all hopeful. I was not really engaged in politics but what I am seeing now, Ministers engaging National Assembly Members is quite promising and there is hope. Somebody mentioned that the Ministers had restored polices, that is not my experience. I just have to say that all the Honourable Ministers that I have approached without appointments, have seen me and have gave me advice; guidance and they are all willing to collaborate on issues that I have tabled before them.

Honourable Speaker, the raining season in Banjul is a very stressful period for us. On Sunday we went to Cotton Street to see the situation of the trucks. I personally saw a police officer who should implement the ban on trucks packing in Banjul, resting in one of these trucks. How could that person implement those policies, Honourable Speaker? I think we should be more vigilant in our oversight functions as well, it is not only for National Assembly Members, it is also for policy makers. We approve and scrutinise laws but is for the people who brought us those laws to make sure that once these laws are enacted, they go back and make sure the implementation is complied with. Honourable Speaker, we are appealing to everybody to make sure that the policies on trucks is complied with because the Banjulians are suffering.

We also have the drainage and the sewage problem Honourable Speaker, I have a short report that the NAWEC guy gave me with some recommendations which I cannot read due to time. I will appeal to you to give me at last two extra minutes which is at your discretion Honourable Speaker. We have recognised that the main blockage is between Hagan Street...

THE SPEAKER: But you have not been given two extra minutes to read, are you reading it now?

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: No, I am not reading it.

Hon. Speaker, it is between Hagan and Anglseas streets that causes the blockage. Honourable Speaker, there is also a big problem at Dobson Street and Hill Street as Gamtel block the major route that the drainage pass through and I think we should task them to make sure that they go and rectify it. We also have a flour mill in Banjul next to KG5 and obviously factories pollute. Honourable Speaker, yes they earned a lot of revenue and we are meant to give employment to many youths which am afraid is not happening, but I think it is part of their responsibility to also give back to the society that they are polluting. Honourable Speaker, I took it upon myself to visit them and we are negotiating because some of the recommendation I got from NAWEC is to repair all the sewage and broken pipes, to upgrade the pumping station and to also get equipment for the drainage system so that they can pump it to reduce the effects of the blockage. So, I have tax it on to that institution to make sure that they contribute immensely to what we want for Banjul.

Honourable Speaker two weeks ago, I visited G4S to get employment for the Banjul youths, it is quite appalling that the minimum requirement is grade 9 and I think it is the government that failed our children by not giving them the proper education. Section [30], read that; "basic education shall be free, compulsorily and available to all, but shouldn't only be basic education, basic education I think is only up to ten [10] years old, what else can that give to any child. I have about 30 people who approached me that they want employment with G4S [Security Company] but they couldn't get it because they did not have the grade 9 qualification Honourable Speaker...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable your time is up, can you summarise please. Thank you.

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: I think we should look at these Standing Orders to give us as much time as we need, because we have legislative, oversight and representative functions. And the people that we represent, obviously,

want to hear us representing them. I think I will rest my case here because I cannot finish all that I wanted to talk about....

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member you have exhausted your time, can you wind up please.

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: I also want to talk about Guinea Nationals because they approached me yesterday, as they are nationals of ECOWAS. I think our free movement is a challenge; they are still asking them aliens' cards and are still being arrested. As I am talking to you, there are about 20 of them who are in custody and they are ECOWAS citizen. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member. I suggest that maybe you can have a small group amongst yourselves, the Banjul NAMs, to engage the Banjul City Council and see? I think that would be a good starting point, and if nothing happens, you engage the Select Committee and they would summon them. You have powers that you can use to make sure that people listen to your concerns, not only listen but take action. Thank you.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker. To start on the absence of the Cabinet Ministers, I have a suggestion, in addition to what is being proposed by the Member for Serrekunda that overseeing Ministers to be invited to hold brief for their colleagues who are out of the jurisdiction. I would suggest that for this sitting, if you can extract the Hansard records and give it to cabinet Ministers, so that the issues that need to be addressed can be to their information so that by the next session they will be at liberty to respond to those concerns. This is the suggestion I am making.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry Honourable Member, before I forget on that point, we have many backlogs with the Hansard, this is a very important issue, and I do not want it to be delayed. I would hope that the Ministers will be watching GRTS so that the issues would be raised or you could write to the different Ministries and let the concerns be relayed over to them but if you want to rely on the Hansard, it may take time, because

we have quite a lot of backlogs. They are handicap, at the unit. We are trying to get experts to help us expedite the process.

HON. OUSMAN SILLAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker. On the issue of Banjul, we have made the case for Banjul, which really needs attention and I think every member of this National Assembly supports that. Everywhere in this country need fixing but Banjul really needs it more. There is an opportunity from this present dispensation. We can so speak to kill two birds with one stone in the case of Banjul but this an issue that requires collaboration. Of course, we have engaged as National Assembly Members, the Minister for works when he was here the other time informing the House that at that instance they have instituted a taskforce and they promised that they are going to include us in the taskforce. Of course, we are yet to be invited formally to participate in the process of the taskforce but Banjul is a situation where the Ministries of Works and Trade and by extension Ministry of the Interior should take seriously. Because of the monies that have been given to the country [3.9million – 11million] that is earmarked for the potential benefits of the returned migrants and young people in general.

The government can start civil works, infrastructure for Banjul where young people are not only going to be trained as stated by the Member for Serrekunda, that they don't only need training but engagement and income to survive. We can train and group them. There are courses that can last for three months to acquire skills. Like in Banjul, there are inner cities, it needs proper planning, drainage, good roads and to fix the sewage. These young people can be trained to be organised into groups or small enterprises and provided with equipment that they can use to be making interlocking slaps, which they can use to build gutters, pave the streets in Banjul to Tobacco road area and all the inner streets. Of course, the city needs more durable road construction but for the inner cities, we need quality roads in which young people will be engaged. Therefore, it will be creating employment and it will be addressing the appalling infrastructure condition of the city. That is what I mean by killing two birds with one stone.

These are urgent matters that needs attention and we will be engaging the Ministers. We would want these three Ministries to, really, work on this. It is an opportunity that is presented to them which they address the concerns of the young people and Banjul.

On the issue of reform, this is something that I hold and I am passionate about it. I am glad the Minister of Justice is present. Of course, we know the goodwill and that we always talked about. There are efforts being done, but what we need now is a road map. This is going to help ...-[*interruption*]. Honourable Attorney General, we would really want at least a road map, it will focus people of what is to be done. Like for us we may have the ideas but we also need to be consulting with our constituencies. So if we know that these are pieces of legislation that are going to be presented before us, we will do all the necessary consultation so that when it comes before us, we will give it the necessary contribution that they require.

There is also another issue of dock and maritime workers. These are people who have toiled for this country for too long and they are ageing. Some have already died, some have disabilities because of the work that they were doing but they are neglected. For the past nine [9] years, they have not been working. They are independent stevedores. They were working with the Gambia Ports Authority and their services were engaged on the bases of incoming vessels. They were being paid in foreign currency and they have never received a single currency for their services. The previous regime decided to terminate their services, absorb some of them to be part of the ports staff. I really want the Ministry of works to really look into the concerns of these people. I can tell you it was a union of more than one hundred but they are now designated by virtue of abandonment. For the past nine [9] years they have not been working and they have families. Most of them have died and some have physical disabilities, blindness or debilitating illnesses. This is a course for concerns and I would really love the Ministers to address their concerns as a matter of urgency.

On the issue of GRTS, we are saying that what they are doing is fine. We are seeing coverage in the evening news although very short, but if you dedicate a day for the National Assembly so that people can hear what we are saying and to be done on their behalf.

National Water and Electricity Corporation [NAWEC] is also a concerned battle. I know we are seeing their efforts and people are talking about it. NAWEC really needs fixing. NAWEC is really affecting lives and livelihoods. Small business are going down because of lack of electricity and even water. It is been highlighted that some neighbourhoods wake up between 03:00 am to 5:00 am to fetch water. We need to bring this to the authority to bear on NAWEC so that they will really provide these essential services. They are not giving electricity and water free of charge. People are paying for it and it is an irony that people are paying and buying these services.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I think I have compensated you more than enough *[laughing]*. I do not want to be seen to be taking sides with Banjul. I just want to made a comment, I wish I had the power and means to take the Banjul City Council, Physical Planning and Ministry of Works to see the Sanai City Planning centre. It is just amazing how the city was planned. I have tried to engage the Ministry to see if they can have conducted tour to see and also take along their people, maybe make arrangements for them to be trained so that they know how cities are planned. I thought of it when you were talking about the drainage, you know and it just reminded me of that. Moreover, I am sure members of the delegation would remember it; it was fantastic. Not only Banjul but I think Gambia is a small place that can be developed. We will take it bit by bit and then if we have the commitment, the means and the proper strategic planning I think it will work. As I said the last time, health is also important, education, agriculture and all those portfolios but infrastructure is very important because that is the foundation. Once you have it then the other can follow. If you do not have good roads you would not be able to reach the health centres even if you have a classic hospital and there is no access road. I am sure the policy makers will hear us and try to do something about it.

On GRTS, let us be fair, they have not just been highlighting parliamentary proceedings over the news at 8 o'clock and 10 o'clock but there were instances when they have devoted after the news, time to proceedings of the Assembly. I have watched it on many occasions. In addition to that, I know that the GRTS management have been here and we engaged them and we are working out on a programme of

know your National Assembly Members or know what your National Assembly is doing. In sort of a National Assembly Hour. We were still trying to finalised it, not yet finalised but it is not that they have abandoned us but they are working on something and very soon, in fact, they will engage some of you to go to GRTS not only about the proceedings but to know what National Assembly Members are also doing. I think things would work. It may take time, we have to exercise some little bit of patience and then very soon we will get there. Thank you.

Honourable members, I know ICT is very important because everybody talks about it. The ICT specialist have been encouraging us to know, but let us also try to pay attention to National Assembly proceedings, because if we concentrate too much on our computers and laptops we may not be able to capture everything that is being said. It is important to listen to others as well. We can give our views, have our interventions but like if I were very busy on my phone and my laptop, I would not be able to catch all these interventions. It is equally fair that when we come to the Chambers let us please stop the use of our laptops. I notice that people concentrate a lot on their machines and mobile phones at a point that they do not even know what is happening during the proceedings. Thank you.

HON. MOMODOU CAMARA [FONI BINTANG]: Hon. Speaker, may I first of all thank the Hon. Ministers who are present today and the Attorney General. We are very happy and we really appreciate their attendance. Yesterday, the member for Serrekunda spoke about increment of rent in this country which is very alarming. We all know the rent issues in The Gambia is very high compared to the Gambians average earning and our salaries. The procedures that is being taken by the landlords to recover their monies from the tenants are not easy. This is why most of the landlords are charging six months or one-year advance payment as the member for Serrekunda West said yesterday. If somebody owes you, take the person to court, the court case would drag on for two to three months before recovering that one thousand dalasi and you have to pay extra money sometime more than the thousand dalasi and time to recover that money. So this is why landlords are asking for six months' deposit because they don't want to be going to law courts and their case dragged.

At first the tribunals were by the Area Councils and the municipalities then, it was very easy to solve tenants'/landlords' problem but now it is very difficult because when you have a problem and you have to go to the courts, it takes a long time before your problem is addressed. Sometimes if there is leakage in your house, you have to go to the court, and before the court make any judgement, the rainy season is over. So I would urge the Minister, if they can set up an office as before within the municipalities and councils these type of problems can be addressed by that office. If that office cannot address issues, then it can be forwarded to the courts. Some of these issues do not warrant going to court because it takes the time of both tenant and landlord. As far as the Minister is here, I am appealing to him to look into it. The other complain from the landlords are the high amount of taxes paid to GRA yearly; the charges are 5% to 10% of your annual earnings from tenants. What they also do is to add their rent fees to cover the amount of tax they pay to GRA. So I think we have to look into that also. There are many problems about rent in this country which needs to be addressed. The laws governing landlords and tenants here are not very much favourable. We have to see how best we can reform them to meet international standards. I am appealing to the Minister to look into this seriously.

Many of my colleagues spoke about electricity problem here. This is a problem for the whole country; electricity is a very big problem. We cannot move without it, no country can have development without electricity, it is very important. There can be electricity now but before you get up is off again, and that destroys our appliances. I think that is a burden to the consumers. The management of NAWEC or the Ministry of Energy should explain to the general public about the problem so that people can know because people don't know what these problems are and how they are trying to fix them.

The other issues is that everybody has the right to express your feelings and the party you want. Yesterday I wanted to come in but I was content with what the Minister of Justice and the Minister of foreign Affairs said. They clarified everything here and what they have said is what should happen. We have freedom of speech and freedom of

expression and this is very important in a democratic country. This is what we need and I am very happy to hear that from the Ministers yesterday.

The other issue I would want to talk about is that some of my colleagues thanked the President for giving us vehicles to ease our transportation. During adjournment debates, we must talk about vehicles for our mobility and thank God we have them but our main problem is sustainability. We all know having a car is not a problem but sustainability is another problem. We all know that our salaries cannot sustain these vehicles because some of us will use 10-15 thousand Dalasis of fuel for the month and we know how much we are being paid. For example, National Assembly Member living in Basse, going to Basse and coming will spent not less than 6-7 thousand Dalasis on fuel only, not talking of maintenance *[Applause]*. So how can we be able to sustain these vehicles if we cannot be provided for maintenance and fuel? I am appealing to the government to look into this and come to our aid, if not most of us will be boarding public transports to come to the National Assembly *[Applause]*.

Madam Speaker, we really applaud the President for giving us these vehicles, but also my people are asking me how did the President acquired these vehicles. We need to explain to our people whether is a gift from him, somebody or taxpayers' money. We need to know because I have been asked many questions and I need clarification. Thank you.

HON. ALHAGI S.B SILLAH [NIANI]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor. I knew the moment I stood everybody will think that I will talk about the hippos, but this time around is not about hippos. I will first of all thank all those who have shown their solidarity towards our flood victims in Kuntaur. Our special thanks goes to the Hon. Speaker because it was a concern to her and she was there during the past three weeks. The flood I know is a concern for everybody. Things are very similar but different. Kuntaur is food-self-sufficient; we feed ourselves. I think anybody who has been to Kuntaur or has been posted there can attest to that. So the moment it happened, I made a quick respond for everybody to see it on GRTS. This is why it was a concern. It is not only our household materials that got spoil but I can tell you

that this year we have zero harvest because all our rice fields submerged under water. So this is why it was a concern.

In some areas, if flood happens, it will be only their house furniture, materials or things like that but for us it affects both our houses and everything in those houses and our rice fields. We are no longer cultivating. Kuntaur is not buying imported rice but this year, I can tell you that we did not harvest any rice due to the flood. I think this was a concern to everybody who knows Kuntaur. It is a concern to the government, GRTS and everybody who have given solidarity towards the flood victims. The people in Kombo do not need the rice they normally distribute as gift but the poor people need it the most and they are resident in the provinces.

Presently almost 1300 [one thousand three hundred] bags are being distributed in Niani and other constituencies in the provinces. So if my colleague is asking why Kuntaur? This is a clarification for him. For us we depend on our local produced rice. My wife before she went to Mecca, she cultivated about three to four hectares all transplanted. I never inform her that this had happened until she came back to open the store and found imported rice, she cried. Even if she is traveling to the Kombos, she normally goes with local rice. This is why there is a felt need for people to understand, show their solidarity and to assist us to making sure that this problem is addressed. I am appealing to the government to provide drainage system, it has happened, and maybe this will not happen again because we have never ever encountered such a flood in Kuntaur. Water will always come and stop at the rice field and that's it. There are some blockages from the rice fields to the river and this is why we had this flood. I don't need to elaborate much about that but we are still appealing for donors to see how best we can address such a situation so that it will not happen again.

On Tourism, the Minister is not here today but Wassu Stone Circle is known to everybody and well mentioned in the history of The Gambia. We want tourists to visit and see Wassu and Sara Batch Stone Circles, therefore it should be rehabilitated as a tourist site.

Hon. Speaker, there is an alarming issue at the department of agriculture. I would want the public appointment committees to be aware of it. Are appointments made based on qualifications or the person only to be conversant with the institution? Why I am saying this is because an appointment has been made at the Department of Agriculture, the former Director General is retired and another was brought in who has never been in the system. As far as I know, he was always with directives...
[Interruption]

In brief, the Department of Agriculture has lodged a query on a person appointed to a position. It has come to the notice of PMO that they have revoked the appointment but still the person appointed is insisting and he is in the office, using the office car but has no administrative functions because all the Directors have backed out and they are refusing to work with him whenever he comes to work. I am informing the Public Appointment Standing Committee to make further enquiries about the issue. On that note, I thank you.

HON. MUHAMMED NDOW [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor. My fellow National Assembly Members from Banjul have already talked about the issues relating to Banjul but I will also talk about it, because the situation is alarming. Madam Speaker, Banjul is the smallest capital city in the whole world and should have been the most developed and most beautiful but it is the other way round. Banjul is one of the most underdeveloped capital city anywhere in the whole world. This is very disgraceful. It is a disgrace for Gambians to present Banjul as their capital city to other nationals. As at now, there are only few main streets that are in good condition in the city namely; Hagan Street, Buckle street, Box-ba/Angelson and from Denton bridge to the Arch. All the other main roads are dilapidated, they are in a bad condition and even the road to The State House is not good.

Madam Speaker, this present government promised that Banjul will be prioritised. We are definitely and really in a haste for that to happen because as at now, we have not seen any sign to show that Banjul will change. The condition that we are living in presently is not favouring Banjulians and we are very concerned. I am appealing to the government to make sure that work should start before the next raining season

for us to have temporal drainage system and at least few constructed main roads. As for feeder roads, there are less than eight in good conditions. Therefore, it is very disgraceful for a capital city to be in such a situation. Therefore, I am appealing to the government to take urgent steps.

Talking about agriculture, there is a need for government to empower the national Agro Dealers Association by giving them the mandate to ensure that foreign dealers in key agricultural products like groundnut and cashew nuts and other cash crops to liaise with the association. It is very important because most of foreign dealers like Indians and Chinese do take advantage over our farmers here by giving their own prices. This association should be involved in the determination of products, pricing on groundnut, cashew and other cash crops and for them to be issuing licences in support of government efforts to regulate the agricultural sector. All foreign dealers should deal with the National Dealers Association instead of the farmers directly because most farmers are not educated and can easily be cheated.

There is a need for this organisation to collaborate with the ministry to be recommending good seeds Hon. Speaker. Most of the time our groundnut seeds are exported to Europe, they are normally rejected. It is only China that accepts it, which means that government always loses on groundnut exports.

It is so important for this organisation to be empowered because it helps to create market stability and management to all stakeholders with the ultimate goal of a level playing field from farmers to end-users.

On taxation Hon. Speaker, government should consider reducing tax levied on workers in the private sector. The tax was 35% but it has later been reduced to 30% but is still high. This does not help increasing the living standard of Gambians, because at the end of the month, they only have small income and nothing to save and that is definitely not favourable. Being a tax based economy does not mean that high income tax should be levied on the citizens of this country. We are now in the New Gambia and should advocate for policies that will be in favour and benefit the citizenry. The then government was doing this because they were discouraging people working in

the private sector to move to the public sector. In democracy, everyone has the right to decide where he/she wants to work. So they shouldn't discourage them by increasing the tax on workers in the private sector. As far as we are all Gambians, everything should be fairly equal when levying tax on both public and private sector. I am appealing to government to reduce tax charged on the private sector from 30% to 15% possibly effective January 1st 2018. Thank you very much.

HON. ALHAGIE H. SOWE [JIMARA]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor. I have only two things to talk about. On behalf of the people of Jimara and the GDC party, I wish to thank His Excellency, President Adama Barrow for providing us with new vehicles. I also wish to thank the Minister of information and the GRTS management for changing our then analogue transmitter, which we were using since 1978 to a digital transmitter through which we can now tune GRTS very clearly. I also thank the staff of the National Assembly for the efforts they did for National Assembly Members to have these vehicles. Thank you very much.

HON. MOMODOU S. CEESAY [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you Hon. Speaker. I am very happy that the Minister for Justice is around to hear some of the concerns I want to raise. The first item I have on my agenda is the Constitution. We have seen the Executive coming up with bits and pieces of Constitutional amendments and we here have this famous section 91 (1) (d) and (e) of course, the Constitution refers to my Honourable friend, Member for Basse. Honourable Minister, we are calling for the total overhaul of this Constitution. These piecemeal changes do not help us; there are lot of things in this Constitution that need changes. Therefore, changing it in bits and pieces does not help us and at certain times, we were being told that there is a Constitutional Review Commission that is looking into overhauling the Constitution but we are not even sure whether this is happening. Please we want a total overhaul of the Constitution.

My second point is on voter registration [that is for IEC]. I will take a typical example of my constituency Janjanbureh. Each time I talked about it, people are always saying that it is one community constituency but it is that complex. Many registered people in Janjanbureh Island are not even Gambian born. I hope when the new registration

is being done, people will have the courage and zeal and with the collaboration of IEC, allow the people to identify Gambians who will have the right to vote as Gambians.

My last point Hon. Speaker will be centred on Janjanbureh. I asked the Minister of Education on the skill centre issue. Hon. Speaker, majority of the back-way people were illiterates and if we do not give them something to live on, this is why some of them are still venturing to go back. In the whole of CRR, there are no skill centres, I have said this here, and if this is not addressed, it will always create another vacuum somewhere. The Minister for education should be aware of that.

This time my friend from Niani did not talk about hippos but I will still talk about them. There it is about the entire Central River Region [CRR] and not Kuntaur alone. Sometime ago, a hippo came to a car and killed a young one, next time it comes, probably will attack the people in their compounds, maybe that will be time the government will do something about them. We have concerns about stray dogs in Janjanbureh and I talked about them here. These stray dogs would go to the graveyard and try to unearth the graves of our dead people. So is a real concern and the Minister told me we would be going together to Janjanbureh but until now I did not hear from him.

My last point on Janjanbureh is about a newly built health centre/clinic there. It was supposed to have been a referral centre for those within the Niani area before they can reach Bansang hospital. This health centre was completed about one year under the Ministry of Health. Many people are admitted there from the subzone of Janjanbureh and no cooking is being done for them. So I think the Minister should go round to find out some of these issues and see what should be done. You have a hospital, admitting people and some of them do not even eat. Therefore, people in Janjanbureh will have to cook and count who and who does not have relative or whose relatives cannot bring food for them. So these are the real situations and I hope the Minister of Health would be able to look into this health centre issue.

Motion: [To sit beyond 1:00 p.m.]

HON. OUSMAN TOURAY [SABACH SANJAL]: Thank you Hon. Speaker, I rise to move that this Honourable Assembly sit beyond 01:00pm.

HON. AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Seconded.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[To sit beyond 1:00p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, may I just plead with you that today is just one of those Fridays that we will have to sit [maybe] beyond 2:00pm or 2:30pm reasons. So please I am appealing to Honourable Members so that we can finish up the adjournment debate – sorry to say this but notwithstanding it is just an appeal on just one Friday out of many Fridays that we have. So please!

HON. ALH. MOMODOU L.K SANNEH [DEPUTY SPEAKER]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor. Let me join my colleagues who proposed that the National Assembly should be informed when the Ministers are going on tour in their respective areas. This is a move in the right direction because recently I remember the Minister of Works, Transport and Infrastructure made a visit to most parts of the country to look into the way and manner in which our roads are built. Almost all the National Assembly members complained about bad roads in their respective areas.

Hon. Speaker, the Minister carried out that exercise, of course. Maybe he could not cover the whole country but he has done a lot. I think that at the end of the exercise, he will present a comprehensive report of what he saw and plans. I am not speaking for the Hon. Minister but really, he needs to be commended for what he has done. He has taken/carried all his technicians with him to see and almost visited all the areas of the country. It is good that National Assembly Members are informed and involved, because I remember when the Minister was in LRR, myself and Honourable Kolley were not informed. However, when we heard of his visit and we took it upon ourselves to go and join the Minister to cover the whole of Kiang so that the Minister and his team can see everything physically. This programme was Sankandi Karantaba but we

were able to convince him and he willingly visited Karantaba, Missra, Karantaba Kemoto, Karantaba Tankularr, Jally and Keneba. He saw all the technical problems. I would really thank him for carrying out that exercise and I am sure he will do more of that.

Coming on to Banjul, yes Banjul is our capital city for all Gambians, but our problem is, it is being neglected by both the first and the second republic. This is the real fact. I only hope this time around this present government with the able Minister of Works and Transport will look into these issues and take it up with the government to see how Banjul's problems can be solved.

After having said that, I would go to agriculture because it is the backbone of this country's economy and it appears that Gambian farmers are now going into cashew farming including groundnut of course. I am suggesting to the Ministry of Agriculture to revive the cooperatives for the easy marketing of our produce.

Hon. Speaker, the other point I would want to talk about is for the Minister for Interior and Minister for Justice. I am happy that the Minister of Justices is here. Going to prison reminds me that wing is overcrowded and every day the police are taking people to prison. Some of them did not have their cases heard for five years or more. Now that the judiciary has been reformed and there are judges and magistrate all over. I would urge the Honourable Minister of Interior to look into these things and to make sure that those arrested and sent to remand wing of the prisons are quickly bring before a court of law. If they are convicted, yes, that is fine but if not convicted, they should be released.

Hon. Speaker, on the issue of the government buildings is very important. These buildings are being built from taxpayers' money but almost all our regional headquarters are all dilapidated and are not functioning. How can we do that, we have to change our attitude. If tax payers' money are used to build something for the interest of the nation and after sometimes is been abandoned is a problem which means we have to start from scratch.

On Public Enterprises, Hon. Speaker, really, when I watch GRTS these days, I felt very uncomfortable for that fact that these Public Enterprises have been provided with an Act of the National Assembly for them to carry out their functions and mandates. It is disheartening, Madam Speaker, to hear some of the directors saying in their revelations that they are afraid of refusing orders and you know that you are afraid of receiving orders, why can't you resign. I think we are talking about the former president but we should also talk about ourselves. It is a very sad situation, this issue needs to be looked into, and of course, this is a learning lesson for all of us and of course this new government. With this new government, we should not allow such things to prevail in our country. Putting somebody in a position and made him a God that you cannot even decide to tell him the regulations and correct issues. If he does not know and I did not know, I think my permanent secretary has the right to tell me sir, this and this is not in line with government policy. But if we all fail it is a very sad situation. I do not think such a thing will prevail in this country; social security and GPA. You cannot just believe that Madam Speaker, some people came from State House with a piece of paper with an amount of money written on it to the Central Bank and the Governor approved payment based on that piece of paper is a sad situation.

My final contribution is about the statement made by His Excellency, the President of the Republic, during his first State of the Nation Address to the National Assembly. On page 15, where he said, with your permission Honourable Speaker, "My government has tasked the Personnel Management Office [PMO] to conduct a comprehensive nationwide staff auditing for the entire Civil Service and of course, including the Security Services." Madam Speaker, this is a welcome move and the purpose of doing that is to see that what went wrong to be corrected. I congratulate the president and his cabinet for coming up with this proposal but I only want to see that if this exercise is done, let it be done properly and the government take action on their findings. Thank you very much.

HON. KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker. My position today on this adjournment debate is to show my profound and sincere

gratitude to your humble office in the effort in making it possible for each Member of this august Assembly obtained a brand new Pick-up car from the new regime.

Hon. Speaker, on behalf of my constituency, Jarra Central and myself, I would also want to thank President Adama Barrow for the new vehicles he has given to the Members of this Assembly. I also concur with the member for Foni Bintang about maintaining the new vehicles given to us by President Adama Barrow's government. It is true that it is very expensive to maintain these cars in respect of maintenance and fuelling. Therefore, I am appealing to the present government to at least help us to fuel these cars and to uphold the maintenance cost. I thank you Madam Speaker and I beg to take my seat.

[Pont of Correction]

HON. HALIFA SALLAH [SERREKUNDA]: Hon. Speaker, each Member who speaks here should speak for himself. If something is given to you, say that it is given to you but do not say that it is given to each and every Member. I think that is what is fair.

THE SPEAKER: With all due respect Honourable Member, I cannot sanction whatever any Honourable Member wishes to say *[Applause]*.

HON. SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you Hon. Speaker. I concur with the Honourable Member for Janjanbureh on hippo issues. Recently I got the information that these hippos have destroyed nine rice fields in my area. My question is, are we there to feed these hippos or to feed our families? This is my question, which I want the Minister for Interior to look at thoroughly. Hence, we cannot say that we want to eradicate poverty whilst our people are suffering down there.

Secondly, the issues concerning the electoral reforms. Hon. Speaker you will agree with me that on the 14th April and what has happened here. We need these electoral reforms as it is our right. People were tortured, killed or harassed on these issues and still no sign of any action is taken against them. I am happy the Honourable Minister of Justices is here and he should take full responsibility in considering these electoral reforms that we need this government to bring before us. They are the people who

were jailed or other ugly things were being done to them why we need to repeal these electoral laws and surely it will be done.

Thirdly, Gambian air passengers coming from the diaspora, our own people are really being affected. Whenever they come from the diaspora to the Gambia International Airport, they will search their luggage thoroughly to see whether there are mobile phones or laptops whereby they demand and collect high taxes from them, which I think, should not be because in other airports this is not happening there. Only in The Gambia, one would see such acts and I think we should look into that thoroughly.

I am urging this National Assembly to be protected because what happened here yesterday we all know. We need proper security in the Assembly. People entering in the Assembly without any notice. We do not know whether the person is coming with good or bad intentions. We saying this is democracy of course but when we are in the chambers, one would absolutely not know anything happening outside. I think we the Members including the Speaker should be protected because we do not know the cause of what happened here the other day and the journalists were here with us. I am appealing for them and other visitors to be searched properly and whoever is coming in the National Assembly should be searched for security reasons to know your mission to the National Assembly before you are allowed in. I would like this to be considered. I beg to take my seat. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member but I think the Office of the Clerk knew what happened. Thank you.

HON. OMAR CEESAY [NAIMINA EAST]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker. I may not have much to say because some of the general issues I wanted to talk about has already been addressed and for that reason, I would just like to emphasise on few issues.

Hon. Speaker, we are trying to rectify a situation. What I mean is, we are saying the new Gambia in trying to rectify some situations we have established. We should allow different people in the government and private sectors to have adequate division of labour in their specialized areas. What I am try to put across are those at the

educational, agricultural and private sectors must be well equipped, be motivated and supported in their work. I believe if these three criteria are well maintained, I see the Gambia progressing forward and the situation will be corrected.

I would want to talk about the farming sector. There was a slogan to all Gambians which says "*eat what you grow and grow what you eat*" but is this happening? That is the question. If this was a slogan we talked about but there are indications that we cannot address the issues of hippos then today on our own behalf, I will talk about them because I have to talk about two constituencies and that is Kuntaur and Niamina as we share the same problem.

The people around Kuntaur, Sambell Kunda and Banni for some years have not been buying rice. However, what is denying these people from making the best use of their rice fields now?

This is because of the increasing number of hippopotamus. Secondly, there are no proper roads connecting these people to the rice fields. In as much as these are happening, the slogan that we are calling for "*grow what you eat and eat what you grow*" will never happen as these people must be motivated with the necessary equipment and given all the necessary support for them to make the best use of their rice fields. I am urging the Ministers responsible to ensure that our people are given the necessary support.

Also there are no ferry crossing points between Niamina and kuntaur and for the people in Niamina, it is a difficult situation because as I said it here earlier on, there is only one hospital in Niamina and the people around Banni are closer to kuntaur than the hospital in kudang as a result they have to cross the river if they want to visit any hospital and there are no ferry crossing points. Sometimes sick persons and or pregnant women will be waiting to cross the river bank for almost between 3 to 6 hours and in the event that the person died, what will happen?

Hon. Speaker, this is something that is very serious hence accessibility to hospital is also a very fundamental key area that the government should pay attention to, so as to help these people. Thank you very much.

HON. ALAGIE JAWARA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor. I would refer you to the Standing Orders No. 6 which has given us the privilege to deliver notwithstanding, I will respect your command and comply.

Hon. Speaker, as we all know water is a basic human need and that we cannot go without it. The major challenge here is the people of my constituency have already paid for meters and still they do not have access to water. The people of Lower Baddibou particularly Kerewan and a settlement on the other side of the road called Cross-Maudoh have paid for their water meters and still they do not have access to water. I am appealing to the Minister responsible for this sector to look into these situations to solving them for us.

The issues of health are paramount in everyone's life and as I am speaking here, the people of my constituency did not have ambulance and I had a call yesterday that a woman lost her baby boy because there was no ambulance that could transport her to the hospital at Kerewan. This is a major challenge that the people of my constituency are facing.

On the issue of electricity, the people of my constituency particularly those in Baddibu Gunjur, I must applaud the VDC and the entire village for providing themselves a generator worth more than D5m [five million Dalasis]. Before that, during the then government, they paid for electricity meters but still now they do not have access to electricity from NAWEC and they still have their receipts issued to them.

Many people have spoken about youths and it is a major challenge. We have heard that 772 Gambians have been deported. Honourable Minister responsible for Gambians Abroad, what can be done for these youths? I would like the Minister himself to be here so that he will hear some of these issues but without wasting much time, I will reserve some of these comments until he is present here. I think these youths deported need to be trained in the sense that they need to acquire certain skills so that they could have means of survival, which I think the government is not paying much attention to, and we can all testify that for the government of the day, the youth are the pioneers. They are the change makers and we have all witnessed that during

the campaign, we have given them promises that things will change and I hope and pray that these promises will not go in vain.

On the issue of health again and access roads Madam Speaker, the people of Lower Baddibu particularly Lower Baddibu North did not have access to good road. There are almost 21 villages in my constituency and are living in the interior and they find it difficult to come to the health centre at Kerewan that is what has caused the lady to have that incident that I reported earlier.

Security is paramount and we can all testify to that. The people of my constituency are not secured, in the sense that I went on a tour a week before last in my constituency and I had a report that armed robbers attacked a village called Suwareh Kunda and Kerr Ardoh. This I visited myself and I saw cracks on the walls caused by bullets during which two shops were attacked. The Minister responsible should consider my people as they are part of The Gambia.

The Deputy Speaker has talked about the issue of government buildings, which is very important. As I am speaking to you, if our memories could serve us well, our regional headquarters are now dilapidated particularly in Kerewan. When I was elected, I went on a tour in my constituency and I went to the Governor's office. I felt embarrassed and I think the government has to do something about the dilapidated building. Even the ceiling is damaged, a Governor's office! I think the government must do something about that.

Hon. Speaker, the issue of youths, I will come back again, I think... [Interruption]

I think the government should have to take the issues of youths very seriously as they are already frustrated. They left here with the hope that when they reach their destination, things would be better for them but nothing has changed for better. They came back home and we do not provide anything for them. I would like the ministers to be here for them to hear what I am saying. So I beg to take my seat. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry they are not here and I do not know why?

HON. MUHAMED MAGASSY [BASSE]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker. I am also equally, as my other colleagues, very grateful to all the National Assembly staff for the services rendered to us for the smooth execution of our functions.

Hon. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the engineering department of the National Road Authority [NRA] because when I went to NRA to request for their attention about the road conditions in my constituency. They dispatched surveyors to go and have a look at the problems on the ground and to come up with proposals for a remedy. At that point in time as I am talking I already had a meeting with them to see how best we can do in order to solve those problems. The areas that are definitely affected today starting from Kanyubeh, crossing point to Sandu. There, if it rains for hours, you cannot ply the road. If you go to Nafuganal and Sare-makal because of the road conditions, those villages are flooded if it rains.

If you go to Basse town, from Manneh Kunda to Mansajang, the culvert of the bridge built there takes the rainwater to a wrong direction as a result the water floods to Kabakama and that is why every year Kabakama experience flood. The road between Basse to Sabu-Serreh is too narrow for two vehicles to ply from corresponding directions. A bridge is built going to Touba Tafsir but unfortunately with only two culverts but more culverts are needed to allow the water to pass through. From there you go to Kubijah, Kubijah/Basse crossing points. In fact, this is very important because even some communities in Tumana, Tinkinjo, Kiskissi up to Dingire, Manna-samako pass through Kunjang to go to Basse but if it rains, the people in Kunbijah and those passing through Kunbijah cannot have access to Basse and interestingly after Kunbijah, you have the school, the Madrassa and the health center. So, if it rains in Kunbijah for almost 4-5 hours, nobody can cross over and these are serious concerns.

Sabi and Samba London and Sabi/Demba Kunda crossing points are of the same nature and Sabi/Sarre-Pirasu crossing, likewise. At the entrance to Sabi Health Centre, there is a need for a culvert because if it rains because of lack of a culvert, the water enters inside the health centre; nobody can access the health centre for more than 3 to 4 hours after a heavy down pour. These are what National Road Authority have

gone to survey and they have done their reports. Now what we are doing is to seek for assistance not only from the government but from organizations, NGOs and philanthropists that can come up to help us so that these problems and challenges will be addressed.

Hon. Speaker, linguistics by the name of Fredina De Souseur said and I quote *"human mind and human language are like the two side of a piece of paper"*. That is to say, language is value not only a tool of communication. We can promote it by speaking, develop it by writing, but if we want to value our National Languages, one of the ways to value it is to speak our National Languages in our National Parliaments. I have been saying this repeatedly and if you go to certain countries today, you can see why they have developed through the usage of their national languages as a medium of communication in their parliaments. Madam Speaker, it is not everything that I want to say, I can be able to say it in foreign languages. I was not brought up in English language. There are certain cultures, I cannot translate them in English language but if I am using my language, I can do proper communication and I will be accountable to my electorates. They can easily hold me to account if I am representing them or not but I do not know why we are still on these usage of the English language in our parliaments and how best we can do in other to make a reverse?

Hon. Speaker. I was challenged last year by some of my colleagues that if you use Mandinka to those who cannot speak Mandinka, how you would make them understand. I said to them that if I am allowed to speak my national language in the Parliament, I will speak Sarahule for my Sarahule listeners and whatever I say in Sarahule, I will summarize it in English for the benefit of others. I am not saying only to use the national language and then that would be the end of it. I know some of us are Mandinkas and they cannot speak Sarahuleh like some are Sarahulehs but they cannot speak Mandinka but we use our national languages to express our views then we can translate it by summarizing our views into English for others to get benefit of what I said in my language.

I want to use this opportunity to call the attention of the Select Committee on Education to engage the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education about the level of

adult literacy programmes. You know adult literacy programmes and the benefits it has. First of all, it will increase the awareness of the adults and secondly, it will reduce the dependency and poverty. Thirdly, it will increase the potential product of the citizens of a country.

If you go to the National Assembly of Senegal, there are illiterate members of Parliament but they pass through adult literacy programmes and those people are representing their people far better than those who went to Sheikh Anta-Jobe University are. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, I just want you to help. I think if my memory serves me right, there is either in the Constitution or in the Standing Orders about the use of local languages in the Assembly. Thank you very much.

HON. DEMBA SOWE [NIAMINA WEST]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker. I just have some few things to talk about. I want to start with education first.

For some years now, the HTC and the PTC students of the Agriculture planning unit have not been paying their fees until recently the Ministry of Education has introduced that each candidate should pay an amount of D21, 000 for the cost of doing their HTC and PTC certificates, which has not been happening since independence until now. Also to my surprise, the Public Health School students who were enrolled are asked to stay at home because of lack of funding. I wish to engage the government to look into these issues and also the Select Committees on Health and Education. It is not helpful for them to pay that huge amount of money, a lot of us are living below D100 daily income, and not every person can pay it, because of the previous system that is why we are able to have many qualified teachers. Because of this payment introduced, most teachers could not pay and they have to go back to teaching unqualified in our schools, which will reduce the number and level of qualified teachers.

On the issue of IEC is very important and they should be observant in conjunction with the village heads like the Alkalos. Kabada is just at the border with Gambia and Cassamance, which is in Senegal. These two communities inter-marry and they are the same people, which makes it very difficult to identify who is a Gambian or a

Senegalese. It should be the IEC and the village Alkalos who should be vigilant with the help of the IEC presiding officers who should be trained and even employed because some of them are not consistent. During voting, they were only looking at the serial numbers and not cross checking the photos of cardholders. Other people were using others voter registration cards. In my constituency, we caught many people who were trying to vote using wrong cards and nothing was done about that. Somebody has died but somebody would pick his voter's card and vote. This is happening and they need to be more sensitized.

On the problem of land issues in the Kombos is because there are no proper border demarcations between the villages. The Minister of local government and land with the department of Physical Planning should come up with a proper demarcation strategy between villages so that they would not be selling each other's land. If that is done properly and where land ownership is identified, it will reduce this double land allocation. The physical planning unit should be doing something about where a piece of land is sold to between 2 to 4 people from different places and are issued clearance certificates and this could create serious misunderstanding.

On the Ministry of Agriculture, the groundnut season is fast approaching and we are expecting a bumper harvest this year. I think there should be consultations between stakeholders so that there will no credit buying otherwise most of our groundnuts will be sold to Senegal because some dealers are coming from Senegal to buy our groundnuts.

On that note, I want to thank the government for providing me with a brand new pick-up that will help me because am even proposing now from here I am going to Niamina without that vehicle, I cannot do so. *[Applause]* Just after this session, I will use my vehicle to go to Niamina and I am saying bravo to them. It is my right but I cannot force them to provide when it is not available. I am saying thanks to the government of His Excellency, President Adama Barrow. Even the private radios are operating normally and we talk without fear when we have the chance to. Thank you.

HON. YAYA GASSAMA [KIANG EAST]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker for giving me this opportunity. We need to understand that at this moment, Gambia is at

a crossroad. We have engaged many people both in the National Assembly here and outside. This country needs to move forward but we cannot move forward by just paying lip service to important national issues. Practical actions must be taken if we want to make any headway. I really want to talk about many areas but given the limited time that we have I will restrict myself to just two.

One is a National issue that affects everybody actually and this has something to do with education. We are into the third week of the new academy year and of course, we know the issue of quality education has been on everybody's lips, people always talk about it and each time the result for either grade 9 and 12 are out, the story is always the same, declining quality education, poor results.

I have been receiving calls from different parts of the country that some teachers have still not reported to the school to where they have been posted especially in the provinces. The recent call that I received was yesterday from all the way in Wuli, informing me that teachers in many schools in that area have not yet reported to their schools. The worst case in particular, is a school in Wuli, all the teachers have not yet reported so far and we know that many of these factors affects the results. Important among these factors are students and teachers' absenteeism. Now if students have lost three weeks of learning time, how is it going to be possible in the rural areas to compensate for the lost time because we know as soon as the schools are closed, all the teachers come rushing to the Kombo areas.

This is something that the Ministry of Education needs to look at. We know there are serious disparity between schools in the Kombos and those in the rural areas. Most of the teachers want to concentrate and to teach in the Kombos and of course many schools in the Kombos are over staffed when schools in the provinces are experiencing serious shortages of teachers. These needs to be addressed and I hope the Minister of Education will hear this message as soon as possible so that they can try to address this issue. Even if it means improving the incentive package for teachers in the provinces. Of course I know there are lot of incentives to encourage teachers to go and teach in the provinces but I think the Ministry still need to look at it seriously and if necessary to increase the incentive packages.

My second area of intervention has to do with my own constituency. During the last raining season, I engaged some of my people in the provinces. Gambia is an agrarian society; we depend a lot on agriculture but unfortunately, agriculture has been neglected. At the beginning of the raining season, farmers were promised fertilizers and the issue has become very critical. Unfortunately, for the whole area of my constituency, farmers could not get fertilizer at the proposed price, which was to be D700 per bag was never to be and was never issued. I have a village in my area called Medina Sanjah, it is a very big farming community and they farm extensively. When I engaged them during the raining season, they raised a number of issues, which has to do with fertilizer.

- The fertilizer that was promised was never supplied to them
- They weren't even allowed to buy fertilizer from Senegal. They said they were blocked from buying
- Farmers in that community uses fertilizer very intensively, one farmer can use as many as 150 bag of fertilizer I was told and they were restricted to only twenty-five bags per person.

I was told by this very big farming community that they were restricted to only 25 bags of fertilizer per farmer and this was a serious problem and they have asked me to raise this issue so that the Ministry of Agriculture can look into it come next farming season. This year's farming season is over, nobody need fertilizer right now but as we look forward to the next farming season, I hope the Ministry of Agriculture will look at these issues seriously. I want to add that the Ministry of Agriculture consider building a fertilizer store within that area because it is a very big farming community and fertilizer is on high demand and used extensively during the farming season.

I also want to add my voice on The Gambians in the diaspora to vote in the next coming elections because their contribution is very important considering the amount of money that comes from them. I think we need to give them the right to vote during elections.

As part of the electoral reforms, I would like to see that the IEC comes up with some serious changes so that none-Gambians do not vote, if we are to mean the saying that

the sovereignty of The Gambia lies with The Gambian people. I do not think it is fair for none-Gambians to determinate the future of The Gambia by voting in our elections. Their number is large and we know they can influence the results of elections. Thank you.

HON. MUHAMMED MAHANERA [SANDU]: Thank you Hon. Speaker for giving me the floor and I seize this opportunity to thank the Minister for Justice for his presence.

Hon. Speaker, we have series of issues as far as development is concerned in The Gambia and we have been saying this and we keep on saying the problems with our road network is a countrywide problem. All part of the country has a problem concerning roads. Sandu in particular for the past six months, transporting goods from Banjul to Sandu or from Basse to Sandu is almost impossible because of the condition of the roads. People depend on transporting their goods using two main secondary roads that is Sara Fodeye to Chanhah and also from Sami CRR via Naudeh to Darsilameh which is the last village to Wuli.

Sometime ago, I had to leave the induction training at Paradise Suites hotels to go and meet the Minister for Works and Construction then they decided to go on a tour of my constituency, Sandu. They went to Basse crossed over to Wuli but when they reached, Yorobawol, they then gave us excuses that they cannot reach Sandu. Only during elections Ministers and or dignitaries would go to Sandu but apart from that, we are like marginalized.

On health, as I am speaking now, according to the 2013 censuses, Sandu has 24,000 inhabitants and yet still health conditions in Sandu are terrible. We do not have ambulance; neither do we have access to go to Basse or Bansang. If you can do whatever you want, you must be in good health. Madam Speaker, I believe in our new Gambia, we should not misplace priorities.

When you look at the Centralization of Public Institutions, almost everything is in the urban areas here. I do not dispute what the Honourable Member for Banjul has said that Banjul is the capital city and Banjul should remain the capital not by the word capital but by being a developed capital but when you look at the centralization of

these institutions Hon. Speaker, almost everything is in the Kombos. Recently the Government has signed a multi-Billion project then if you look at the other regions beyond West Coast Region Madam Speaker, you will be sympathetic for those people who are living in those areas. Like when you come to initiatives, we should centralise because as of now, we have people who cannot have access to GRTS and we are the National Assembly Members, representing them. We talk on their behalf and raise their concerns as alluded to earlier, we are the National Assembly Members – we represent them. We talk on their behalf for the authorities to know what is happening in our area and what they need.

Hon. Speaker, when you come to agriculture, some time ago in my constituency, the farmers were provided with a seed store during the first Republic but now these farmers are finding it very difficult to store and preserve their seeds because they do no longer have a seed store and nowhere to preserve their seeds. As a result, the seeds put aside for the coming rainy season are sell out. When farming season starts, they have to look for money to buy seeds and other necessary requirements for them to be able to farm.

The other problem we have is about the education sector, not only in Sandu but also in the whole country. There are lots of educational institutions like the Gambia College and other institutions but they do not have a proper library in their schools. Even junior secondary schools are not having any libraries. In some schools, their teachers are teaching science without laboratories. Madam Speaker, are we going to remain in this situation for Gambians to be job seekers not job creators. I think by now Gambia should be called job creators, we should be creating jobs instead of seeking jobs but when we continue with these kind of situations, Gambians will ever remain job seekers everywhere. *[Applause]*

The other issue is, Sandu has a Police post because they don't have a station on their own. They are occupying a building that was constructed by the forestry department because now the forestry workers are no more using the building why the police officers are staying there. During the raining season, it is not a place where human being can live or stay. Sandu as a constituency Hon. Speaker, those police officers

have serious mobility problems. When they have issues or cases to follow, they cannot move quickly to those places unless they go to somebody to borrow a motorbike and in doing so, they use their own money to buy fuel. As a result of this constrain, I sacrificed my own motorbike to them to keep and use. I think the Minister concerned should look into these issues and make sure they are addressed.

All what we are saying here are concerns for every Gambian. Road network, Health, Education and all other issues we will keep on saying them until it becomes like music. Thank you.

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH]: Thank you very much Hon. Speaker. During the question and answer session, Madam Speaker, I asked questions surrounding the Lamin Bojang Firing Range at Brikama Jamisa and indeed the Minister for Defence responded to the questions but what I want to register is that, the response was not to my satisfaction. In the sense that, it was mentioned that some years back, there was consultation between the community and the Armed Forces regarding the range and there was a balance conclusion. As I am speaking, the position of the community of Brikama is that, if it was said to be balanced but as at now it is imbalanced, the range is not actually serving to protect the lives of the people. The people feels that their lives are threatened because of the firing range still situated in that particular area of the community.

Some years ago, I could recall there was massive demolition exercise of what they claimed were compounds that encroached in the area and up to now there are lots of inhabitants surrounding the area which make it quite insecure for the range to be at the centre of a populated community like Brikama. On that, I did made a supplementary question and then requested for the Ministry to consider engaging the community to make sure that this range is relocated to a safer place. It is no more save where it is and it will never be save if it still continues to be there. Yes, it was responded that the Armed Forces have never registered any case of incident of any nature because of the range and that for the cost purpose it was considered not fitting for relocating. I think that should be revisited because I augured that we do not have

to wait until when there are causalities for us to take action. Prevention is better than cure.

Hon. Speaker, drainage systems my colleague mentioned about that, when Westfield/Mandinaba road was constructed. I was made to understand that there was supposed to be a second phase of the construction that would be the construction of the drainage system that was attached to the road construction contract but this never happened. The compounds along that road in Brikama when it rains yearly, they are always affected by floodwater. Before the construction of that road, they were never affected. It was the road that brought that condition to that part of Brikama for those along the constructed roadside because the drainage system has not been constructed the way it is supposed to be constructed. Even the Jambang Sanneh area of Nyambai that has never experienced flood is now affected.

Yes, we need roads but beside that, we also need drainage systems alongside the roads and this is a problem that we are experiencing whenever roads are constructed in The Gambia. They will construct roads but drainage is not seriously looked at and that is why continually we will be affected by floods when it rains. We should always pray for rain to come because rain brings life, as we need it to have our living. If we do not have rain, we will not have our living and if we get rain and we get destruction there is a need to see how best we can avert that situation. The answer to that is a proper drainage along the roadside. The Brikama central market drainage system were blocked because of the road construction and even the drainage system there before is not functioning now. I do not know how we go one-step forward and two steps backward. What kind of development is that?

Brikama District Major Hospital but now before a district hospital... *[Interruption]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable your time is almost up can you wind-up, please.

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBO: There is erratic supply of electricity to Brikama District Hospital and I was made to understand that the supply lines of the Health Centre is now transferred from Brikama electricity transmission lines to Gunjur. I know that there is erratic supply of electricity all over the country but priority is given to certain

areas. I want to appeal to the Ministry to give Brikama District Hospital a priority for consistent supply of electricity to save lives.

National Youth Service Scheme, I was made to understand that it means...
[Interruption].

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBO: Can you give me one minute... *[Interruption]*

THE SPEAKER: No, I cannot give you...when others do not...

HON. ALHAGIE DARBO: Very good, thanks.

National Youth Service Scheme, I was made to understand, it means to...
[Interruption].

THE SPEAKER: No maybe you did not get me I had given you 1 extra minute which you have taken by this dialogue.

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBO: I was thinking you were saying now 1 minute.

THE SPEAKER: No, no I have already said it then. So you have 1 and a half minute to wrap up please.

HON. ALHAGIE S. DARBO: That is exactly why I wanted to wrap up. National Youth Service Scheme was made to provide skills training for youths who freshly leave school. I believe this venture should be looked into so that it can be adequately captured and nurtured. All newly, school leavers should undergo that skills training at the national youth service scheme so that what we are talking about giving discipline in our institutions as we are learning from china, we can now realize but 200 corps per training is quite inadequate. We need more rooms for National Youth Service scheme to provide training for our young people.

THE SPEAKER: May I at this point in time call on the Hon Minister for Justice to answer to the issues raised because I exhausted my list. Thank you.

HON. ABOUBACARR BAA TAMBADOU [ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE]: Madam Speaker, Honourable Members of this august Assembly, it is always a pleasure to appear before you.

I will start with the issue raised by, I believe, the Honourable Member for Banjul North about the roadmap. I wish to share with this august Assembly that when I assumed Office, I had already found a strategic plan of the Ministry of Justice which was prepared on the tenure of the previous government.

However, in the view of the change in the political atmosphere in the country, there was need to take into consideration the reality that we are now faced as a new nation. Certain matters needed to be treated in a transitional manner. So to speak, and that prompted my Ministry to devise a transitional strategic plan to physically replace the earlier strategic plan of the Ministry. However, our plan was unlike the previous one, which was for five years, our plan was for the next three years. We looked at the key priorities of the Ministry during this period, which includes constitutional review, institutional and law reforms, the establishment of the Truth and the Reconciliation and Reparation Commission and a whole host of other issues. I will be more than happy to share the plan with this August Assembly. Perhaps in order to give an overview, I will just quote a short preamble to this plan, which intends to capture the vision of the Ministry.

The 2017-2020 transitional strategic plan of the Ministry of Justice is aimed at setting out policy and the operational roadmap of the ministry for the next 3 years in light of its role responsibilities and goals. The strategic plan aims to lower the main objective of the ministry, highlight the main challenges anticipated in achieving those objectives and make recommendations on how to address those challenges in both the short and long term.

The overriding consideration of the Ministry in adopting these strategy plans is to ensure that Gambia lease the function for a better governance environment and cut open the rule of law and live up to expectations as a peaceful democratic nation by encouraging National Reconciliation. That is the preamble to this strategic plan. So we have a roadmap in place at the ministry and that roadmap has been guiding our activities since I assumed office.

On the question of the Rent Act and, of course, issues surrounding property owners and tenants relationship, I am pleased to inform Honourable Member for Foni Bintang

that is actually one of the Acts we are working on right now. We hope to complete the review of the Act by end of October and the goal is to restore the jurisdiction of the Rent Tribunals to the Councils. Again, that is the idea, it is part of our effort to take off the heavy workload of our court system but we need to bear in mind that moving the jurisdiction of the Rent Tribunals back to the Councils is not automatic. Perhaps, a final solution to the issues of the landlords and tenants. I think what needs to accompany that is training for lay magistrate to preside over these tribunals in a lot of legal issues but particularly on the role of natural justice issue like hearing both side before you make a decision etc. A lot of issues about that but we hope that the restoration of the jurisdiction back to the councils will be accompanied by training for those who are going to preside over these landlord tenants' issues.

On the amendments to the Constitution, I think it was raised by the Honourable Member for Janjanbureh, allow me Madam Speaker to say that while I agree completely that Ministries must appear before this Assembly whenever they needed unless, of course, if there is good reason not to be here. However, I would like to *seek* your indulgence to also impress other Members of this Assembly to be present when Ministers are called to respond to their questions. I am not sure if the Honourable Member for Janjanbureh was here but I did address this issue when I appeared during my questions and answers session and I believe he would not have asked if he was here that time. Now on the rest, I will still indulge and summarize my responses that I have given earlier.

I agree with you that there is a preference for a wholesale review of the Constitution. In fact, that is why the government has decided to draft a new Constitution of the Republic and my Ministry is in the process of drafting legislation to be presented before this august Assembly for the establishment of the Constitutional Review Commission that will be mandated with responsibilities to engage in consultations and provide a draft Constitution.

However, I did also say that we wish to adopt a twin track approach. We will engage in exceptional piecemeal amendments of the Constitution should there be the need and the urgency to do so because while on the one hand, we want to effect change

speedily on the other hand we do not want to tie our hands so to speak by the existing provision of the Constitution. I give an example of the desire to present before this Assembly soon another amendment to the constitution to allowed for the direct election of Chairpersons of Councils instead of having them being selected among elected councillors. We want to ensure that the people outside the municipality also enjoy the same rights as those within the Municipality who directly elect their Mayors. Therefore, those kind of amendments will come, I hope they will defer and few in between, but that will happen once in a while, while we are reviewing the constitution with the view to adopting a new one.

On section 91 (1) (d), I believe I have heard Members of this Assembly mentioned it before, you certainly know more than I do that you can present a Private Member's Bill. I believe there are plans for that. My Ministry has been engaged and requested to assist. I think we have assisted in drafting the gazette notices. I think it was the Minority Leader who engaged me on that. Therefore, it is up to you. You can choose to do what you want with the law that affects you.

On electoral law reforms, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I believe that there will be electoral law reforms – we are looking at it. However, in view of the anticipated drafting of a new Constitution, we need to make sure that whatever new laws, fundamental new laws that are going to be promulgated, are done in accordance with whatever new constitutional dispensation we will be having. So, we want to synchronise and make sure that the constitutional review process work very closely or perhaps, let me put it this way; we want to ensure that whatever laws we going to promulgate, take into account, the provisions of whatever new constitution we are going to make. We do not want to find ourselves in a situation where we basically put in the cart before the horse. We adopt a law, an electoral law and then the constitutions comes up with a provision that seems to be in conflict or inconsistence with, ideally we want to avoid that. But whatever the case I can assure you that before the next presidential elections, there will be a new constitution and there will be a review of the electoral laws to be in line with whatever new constitution we are going to bring in.

On diaspora votes, I believe we have said it over and over again. I personally have a very strong desire to ensure that Gambians in the diaspora have an opportunity to vote. In fact, is nothing presently in our laws that prevent this from happening. But personally speaking, I would like to reinforce this view and in the form of a constitutional provision and make sure that it is in our constitution. That is why in drafting or in establishing the constitutional reviewed commission, we want to engage Gambians in the diaspora, we want this commission to reach out to the Gambians outside the country and consult with them on more views and opinions as to how this country should be governed in the future. So, certainly I welcomed the idea of the diaspora vote.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, on the overcrowding of the remand-wing of the prisons and long period of detentions. We inherited a situation where we found a very overcrowding and one of the first actions that I took, as a Minister, was to establish the criminal case and detention review panel to review the cases of the detainees at the remand-wing. We had to do that because we cannot assume that everyone who is detain in the remand-wing was innocent, we understand the difficult situation under the previous government, a lot of innocent people where unjustifiably detained, but we have to go through the process of vetting and screening and that was done. I cannot remember the exact figures but it was close to a 100 people whose cases where pending before our courts were dropped on the bases of insufficient evidence. With respect to those in the remand-wing, we also had to look at the offences for which they were charged. In the case of those who still had a case to answer, we had to look at the offenses that they were charged, we look at the maximum sentences punishable and then if they have already spend half or at least half of that maximum sentence, we will release them as part of efforts to decongest the detention centres. I can assure you Honourable Deputy Speaker and all Members of this Assembly that as at today, I am not aware of any person detained in the remand-wing who has not been brought before a court of law in this country; everyone has been so far.

In terms of increase in the number of judges which should speed up trials, I agree with you that the increase in the number of judges and there will be more coming and

will assist to speedup trials. However, the system of administration of justice is such that, it constitutes different parts that are interconnected. If you increase the number of judges, then you will of course have to increase the number of investigators and then increase the number of prosecutors. They all work together. And while we are doing that, it will take some time before we get the situation to a state that we all desired. It is work in progress and we are working hard on it.

The last point Madam Speaker, is the issue of language. Allow me to come in just very quickly and draw the attention of this august body to section [105] of the constitution which reads; "*The business of the National Assembly, shall be conducted in the English language or any other language prescribe by an Act of the National Assembly*". Therefore, that means English language – but is up to you now, you can decide what other language you want. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Minister. We thank you for coming here. You have been here since the Session commenced and we appreciate your presence and your responses to the various issues and concerns raised by Honourable National Assembly Members.

May I at this point call upon the mover of the motion for the adjournment debate, Honourable Majority Leader and Member for Kombo South, to respond to issues raised and wind-up the debate. Thank you.

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: Ma, point of observation, please!

THE SPEAKER: Sorry Honourable, yes!

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: I hope you did not see my tag, I raised my tag yesterday.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry Honourable Member, we have gone beyond that stage.

HON. FATOUMATTA NJAI [BANJUL SOUTH]: It is ok then.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry, I had a long list of about 49 Members and I do not know how I missed it, but I was able to capture almost everybody from yesterday. I have two lists and your name does not seem to have been registered here. My apology but

procedurally, I do not think we can go back to interventions. Therefore, I will call on the Majority Leader, please.

HON. KEBBA K. BARROW [MAJORITY LEADER/KOMBO SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker. To begin with, I want to thank Members of this august Assembly for their continued commitment and concerns for the electorates who have elected them to this National Assembly. This is the new Gambia, everybody is looking upon us to play our leading role in representing them and do our oversight functions as enshrined in the Constitution. The debates and the comments from all the Members are the realities on the ground.

For us as Gambians everything is synonymous, there are no differences between Banjul and the last remote village in CRR or URR. My colleague from Kantora had talked about Nyamanarr. I had my experiences with Nyamanarr, an uncle of mine who was a teacher, had to be buried in that village because of the poor road conditions as he cannot be transported back to Gunjur to be buried where his relatives are and where he has spent all his life. Therefore, this shows the dilapidated conditions of our roads that has brought a lot of misery to many people in this country.

Coming to Members' contribution on agriculture, agricultural production has been very poor. I think one key fundamental thing that has been brought up by the Member for Upper Saloum, is for the Ministry of Agriculture to revisit and engage the stakeholders in designing programs and or projects that are going to be implemented in this country. It is about time that we listen to our farmers. The population has been yarning for the last 52 years, that there is a lot of shortages when it comes to equipment, inputs and also the training that the farmers need to commercialize their programs and activities to move from subsistence farming to commercialization.

I think this is very key, and is about time for us to engage our technocrats and the Ministry to listen to the farmer, to enable them to put in place structures that can help them to eradicate poverty. As we all agree that agriculture is the backbone of this country and there is a need for us to be able to come with policies that will help these farmers to be able to go out of subsistent farming and go to commercialization so that their personal economic statues and livelihood can be improve and to have more

nutritious food that will help the Gambian people and encourage the young people to have knowledge which will cement their educational programs.

I think some of the key areas of concern and issues about agriculture that has been raised not taking its right steps with all the potentials that they have, the in-fighting has to stop in this new Gambia. The last comment that was made by the Honourable Member for Niani, the appointment of a person who has never served in the Ministry of Agriculture and we have all seen the in-fighting that appointment has brought up in that Ministry, we will not want to see that happen.

The Department for Employment or the PMO, had done a thorough review of the workforce of this country and they have made their recommendations. So, if the Ministries are going to make appointments, they have to follow the procedures that are laid down for the appointment of senior officers. It has to be in a way to ensure that we do not go back to chaotic situations at our Ministries where people will continue the in-fighting. This is going to stop, because the Gambian people are ready to work and we want to see a Gambia where people will be giving their potentials to represent the people in the best interest of the country.

This problem was announced over the National Radio that the appointment is rescinded. How an individual can be employed in a position, which is not in line with the code of conduct or principles of appointment in this country. Therefore, it is about time as Gambians, we have to take the bull by the horn and make up decisions and I want to urge the Agriculture Sub-Committee to take up this matter urgently and make sure that these issues are trashed out to ensure that the Gambian people forge ahead to do our development programs that we need.

When it comes to education, it is the backbone of this country and since from independence, we have strived to work to ensure that our people have the right educational background. I am always quoting people who have taken the initial step to go out of the shores of this country; one of them is with us here in the person of the Honourable Member for Wuli West. Those are the few Gambians who had opportunities before our independence to go out to learn and build their capacities to come back home to serve their people. We have the potential in this country. Why are

we still struggling to get the shape to put the education sectors in place and to ensure that we have a solid foundation for our young people? We need to tap the resources of our people in this country and we will be able to do that if we listen, engage, have dialogue and involve people who matter and really ready to move this agenda forward.

The issues of adult literacy is very key, we need to move from pedagogy to go into a system where people will have to learn more skills to be more functional. One of these things that we need to do is functional education, which is very important. Literacy will not just only be able to help the women to be able to read and write but it enables them to build their capacities to have the skills, to be able to lead the programmes that they have identified, that they want to do for their livelihoods are upgraded. Of all these programs that I have mentioned, the 300 Million [whatever] given, what is the Department for Employment and Interior is doing to help these young people? I think there is a need for us to have programs that would be sustainable in helping the young people out of poverty that will help them to build their capacities, to use their resources, their initiatives, work for the betterment of the people, and ensure that there is that social cohesion that is going to help them.

One of the important things that was also mentioned about our financial institutions especially the Central Bank of the Gambia and I think what is being said is that the Central Bank of the Gambia should be overhauled and all the necessary financial regulations that are in place have to be implemented to the later. It's disheartening to listen to the revelations that are being heard from the Commission of Enquiry, where hundreds of millions were received from the Central Bank within 24 hours, you cannot imagine. Last night, I was listening to the radio and it was announced that social security made a single withdrawal of \$4m to purchase an aircraft for The Gambia and D15m. for the purchases of ram for "Tobaski" ram sale.

Where are the financial regulation that are put in place and are alluded to by the Deputy Speaker? Gambian Technocrats have failed the Gambian people because they are not committed to their work. They do not want to take their responsibilities and they just continue to be misused and we found ourselves in this mess. This is something that we need to do as Gambian that it will never have to happen again in

this new Gambia and we as Gambians will continue to make sure that it never happens again.

We talked about infrastructure. The road conditions in this country as I also want to join the Deputy Speaker to say that we have people in this country who are committed as the Minister has also said it. Let us engage each other to have dialog and to discuss with them. The Hon. Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure has promised us during this sitting that he has conducted a tour of all the constituencies in this country including my own constituency and I took it upon myself to join the Minister to look at all the roads that need attention in Kombo South. He assured me with his team and he even was on tour with partners to really see the area for themselves and as Kombo South is one of the most endowed constituency in this country, because it has most fishing villages in the Gambia. All the five main fishing communities of the Gambia are in Kombo South. Therefore, the Minister is very much concerned to improve in various productivities and to create job opportunities. It is based on his agenda to make sure that all those roads are constructed if the funds are available before the next 24 months and this is going to happen, "In-Shaa-Allah". His technicians are working with him and they want to see it happen as he said it here. We have less than four thousand kilometres of roads to be constructed in this country. Why is it taking 52 years for just 4 thousand kilometres of road to be built in this country? These roads are to be constructed and I am sure it will be done and it will bring development.

The Honourable Attorney General had talk about rents. For those who have been renting all over, as said by the previous speakers, property owners are putting extra monies on tenants. When I was staying in Bundung in the 1980's, we were paying only D50 to my landlord for a room and a parlour. This was in the 1980s. Now you go to a landlord in Serrekunda, Tallinding or Faji Kunda, he would demand D2, 500 to D3000 and some of those houses were constructed when a bag of cements was only D6. 50, and a packet of corrugated iron sheet was only D12.00. So what is their basis for skyrocketing of prices? Charging the tenants such an amount for what reason? What are their reasons and why are they doing that? They would also ask you to pay for water and electricity different from the tax they are going to pay. I am happy that

the Hon. Minister and his Ministry are taking care of that as to why Gambians asked to pay in foreign currencies? Where are we going to get that kind of money and why not in Dalasis our own local currency? These are issues that need to be looked into and to ensure that when that legislation comes back to us here, we will take care of it appropriately.

There is a need to expand the activities of the National Council for Civic Education. That is the only thing we as Gambians need at this moment. We need a lot of education and a lot of sensitization to be able to know the policies of all the departments, institutions and Ministries in this country and that cannot be done unless this institution is strengthened and decentralized. Those are things we need to do. We cannot continue to be enacting Bills in this National Assembly and when it comes to implementation, it is pushed aside to gather dust that should not be happening, it should be a thing of the past. The National Council for Civic Education has to be strengthened to ensure that Gambians are more enlightened in this new dispensation.

On the issues of Health, that is across the board and the Ministry of Health also needs to look at strategies and that it is important that we have them here and hopefully during next session. We will make sure about that. I want to urge the table clerk not just to be sending letters pertaining to ministers' coming here to attend meetings parliamentary sessions but you have to make a follow-up and make personal contacts with the ministers and let them give you the commitment that they are coming to attend the session. Hence, they will tell you the letter sent was in my folder and he did not see it and may be late for them to attend as excuses. Go there personally make sure you discuss with them one to one for you to tell them the urgency and the importance attached that we want to see as a National Assembly. Our people are concerned about health issues and these are things that we need to do. We need more personnel at the Ministry of Health. Some health centres are there in structure but the working staff are not there because they are not satisfied with what they are being numerated with.

On Energy, NAWCE needs an overhaul. We know that the generators are old, yes, but they have been running. Why is it that the generators are not running now? With all

the engineers and the technicians that they have, they should be able to do something. Where is all the Money that is being collected from cash power sales and also monies collected from conventional meters yet they cannot buy spare parts to keep the generators running?

Water is very essential especially for the population in the KMC areas. In my area, we are not also privileged though we have water supply as alluded to by my Honourable colleague from Wuli East. The source of water supplies to Banjul, parts of Brikama and KMC are from Kombo South as there are fourteen boreholes constructed and functioning now. From Farato, Madina-Farato and Tujena are all connected but we do not have water supply or electricity. The water is being sent to the water treatment plant in Sukuta, supplying Banjul and KMC but Kombo South being the source does not have adequate water supply. Water pipes do not even run across my area therefore no pipe-borne water in my place and this is a big problem and it needs to be looked at. NAWEC needs to be accountable. NAWEC received lots of money on loans but not to be realised.

One of the areas mentioned by the Minister for Tourism and Culture, it is for us to maintain our national heritages in the country and we need to be able to share our programmes and plans as alluded to by the Hon. Minister for Justice. At this point, I would like to appeal to the Hon. Minister for Justice for him to share his new revised strategic plan (the developed road map strategic plan) through the Office of the Clerk for National Assembly Members to receive and read it.

Expansion of electricity is something that needs to be considered. My colleague from Lower Baddibu also talked about it. There is a payment for water, when you want water supply. You only pay for meter when you apply for electricity. Therefore, those who have applied for water supply, NAWEC would come to survey the area then they will tell you how much you should pay. It is after you have paid upfront, that they will come to lay the pipes for you to be connected and a tap installed for water. Electricity is paid when you have your meter. I have some people in my constituency and they may be experiencing the same problem like those in Lower Baddibu because my people have paid during the last six months for electricity supply to be installed but

they still could not have the necessary and essential services from NAWEC. These kinds of situations should be looked into and addressed.

HON. ALAGIE JAWARA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Point of correction Ma!

HON. KEBBA K BARROW [KOMBO SOUTH/ MAJORITY]: As I stated earlier, all the monies that the people have paid for services from NAWEC should be given what they have paid for. Six months is too long for those people in that situation to be waiting.

As mentioned by the Honourable Member for Jarra West, the feasibility study which was done concerning The Gambia Corridor Bridge Project at Yelli Tenda/Bamba Tenda needs to have more engagement. The Gambia Corridor Project Contract is being hired on the community sensitization aspect of the project. But the issue of collusion between the ferries and the construction pillars are issues that needs to be resolved through the Ministry of Works, Infrastructure and Communication

The Gambia Radio and Television Services are coming up, yet still some of the rural Gambians also need to be receiving good reception to be able to listen to the news and other programmes aired. I am urging them to ensure that they work on their built transmitters in Kudang and the one near Basse so that people in the North Bank Region of the country could also have good frequencies. Transmissions and communication difficulties are being experienced by people in the North Bank Region and on either side of the river. Most of this communication problem are mainly with the North Bank or both side anywhere you go. And I think those are things that needs to do.

When we come to ferries services, the Honourable Minister has also said that they are going to put new ferries in-service but important areas to be considered that are linking these crossing points are also very important. That is in the Niamina area, when you go to Jimara area crossing from Mankama Kunda going over to Sandu instead of going around to Basse. If you cross over to Kerewan Tendala, it takes you almost 24 hours before you get to Sandu. I have sent my son to Diabuku but he spend two days on the way before he got there. If they have a ferry at Mankama Kunda,

they will easily cross and in 30 minute they would reach Diabuku. All these vital crossing points needs to be considered by ensuring that there is continuous and adequate engagements to making sure that ferries are put at proper crossing points for efficient service delivery.

The controversial issues surrounding the Firing Range in Brikama, I totally defer with the National Assembly Member for Brikama North constituency. I was brought up in Brikama. The area that they are talking about was my grandfather's farmland. The range was encroached by the people of Brikama. In 1970, our farmland used to be at that place. We have a road that goes from Brikama to Cassa Kunda and we had a forest there, which was called Sulu Dinka which we used to pass through to where the range is measuring over 2km square protection zone so that there would be no settlement near the Range. In the 1970s, from the junction, where you have Methodist Mission for Agricultural Production, there was no settlement in that area. It is the people of Brikama who encroached the Range because there was no proper coordination between the Area Coouncil and the people of Brikama. Now the government is saying that they are going to discuss and have dialogue with the people for them to make a decision on what to do next.

From 1970 up to 1985, there were no settlements in those areas. How can you say that the town has expanded? The town has not expanded in that area in the 70s up to 1985, there was no settlement there. It was only the Methodist Mission for Agricultural Production [MMAP] built by the Catholic mission, which was the only settlement at that junction; from there right down to where you have Lamin Jatta as the "Alkali" were our farmlands. It is Brikama Mansaring Su, Jatta Kunda and Foday Kunda who owned those areas and they are the people who were the traditional custodians of those said land. When the Brikama Area Council got involved in land allocations, they messed up everything. What we need to do now for security reasons is for them to go back to the drawing board with the Minister of Defence and the Gambian National Army and see what they can do. Either they relocate those people who have encroached the area or leave the area period. Somebody has mentioned that the demolishing excise has started and that is true because they have encroached

the Firing Range. I was in that area from 1968 to 1973 when I was going to school and those areas were our farmland. I know the history of the place. It is the people of Brikama who encroached not the government. I think these land issues are related that we need to deal with.

One of the key functions that we also need to do, as an Assembly here, is to ensure that our committees are vibrant Honourable Speaker. We should take the bull by the horn and make sure that the select committees engage with all the Ministries, Departments and Agencies and give them all the necessary policies and laws to better prepare them to make sure that all this recurrences that are coming up are addressed before our next Session.

Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Minister and Attorney General for his commitment. That is what Gambians need. We have very committed people and as I said here before, they have come to work for The Gambia, our nation so that we are out of the mess that we have inherited from the last 22 years. If we have competent and willing people who are ready to work, all that they need is the support and that will be given by us as a National Assembly for us to build a better Gambia for our people. Some of us are getting old and the younger generation who are coming up can have a consolidated program and a solid foundation to lead this country. I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Majority Leader and National Assembly Member for Kombo South for the respond to the various issues raised and winding up the Motion on the Adjournment Debate.

Honourable Members, on my own behalf, I want to take this opportunity to thank everybody. I mean everybody. Everybody actively participated and I am impressed by the level of participation, the commitment and the lack of visible show of party affiliation. You have all actually demonstrated the national interest and not party interest. On that note, I sincerely owe everybody a very big thank you and to say that your commitment to patriotism has been adequately reflected in the interventions and the general conduct of the sittings of this National Assembly.

I hope and pray that we all continue with that spirit. Nobody has monopoly of knowledge, we are all learning and anybody, as I always say, who has any suggestion that will improve the level of development of average Gambians and the Nation as a whole, should work with the relevant Authority. There are people with expertise here and I think that expertise should be used. Let us not allow it to slip through our fingers and at the end of the day we blame ourselves.

I thank everybody for his or her interventions and contribution. Not only during the Adjournment Debate but also throughout the Session. The questions were very pertinent and the Honourable Ministers tried to answer them. The supplementary questions also help to enlighten and to amplify the answers so that everybody will understand them. I urge all to keep the spirit of patriotism in nation building irrespective of our party affiliations.

[Question proposed, put and agreed to]

I would want to put the question, "Be it RESOLVED" that this august Assembly do stand adjourned sin-die.

[The Assembly adjourned Sin-die.]