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[OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT]

1ST SITTING OF THE 1ST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE 6TH LEGISLATURE

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Monday, 2nd March 2026

MINISTER'S REPLY TO REPORTS & BILLS

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1. Prayers

[The Assembly met at 10:30 a.m. in New National Assembly Building, Reginald Pye Lane, Banjul, The Gambia.]

[The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Seedy S.K. Njie, read the Prayers.]

[The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Seedy S.K. Njie, in the Chair]

Assembly was called to Order.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, good morning. I have been informed that we lack quorum to commence business, so I hereby instruct the bell be rang for a period of 5 minutes.

Honourable Members, I am informed that we now have quorum to commence business. Honourable Members, please take your seat. Clerk, proceed.

2. Communication from the Chair

THE SPEAKER: Can they please switch off the bell? Honourable Members, I convey to you a warm welcome as we return to this Chamber to commence another Session of the Assembly since the adjournment of the previous Ordinary Session in November – December 2025.

As we begin the First Ordinary Session of the 2026 Legislative Year, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Allah, the Almighty, for our lives and for making it possible for us to return to this Assembly and interact once again

in the service of our dear country and people. I pray that Allah continues to guide us through this Session and beyond.

Honourable Members, let me recognise the presence of the Honourable Ministers for Communication and Digital Economy and that of Environment, Parks and Wildlife who are here today to attend to their respective scheduled business, and I welcome you all to this Assembly.

Honourable Members, Ramadan Mubarak to you all. While wishing you all a blessed and peaceful Ramadan, I also wish to acknowledge the significance of this holy month of Ramadan for Muslims around the world. I encourage us to adopt the spirit of unity, reflection and dedication to Allah, 'Subhanahu wa Ta'ala' during this holy month.

I further implore on Members to reflect on their roles in serving the people of this country, and how the virtues of Ramadan such as compassion, self-discipline, solidarity and charity align with the work of our Assembly and as representative of the people. May Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala' accept all our prayers and supplications during this holy month of Ramadan and Lent for our Christian brothers and sisters. Ramadan Kareem to all of you.

Honourable Members, as we gather here today, we embark on a new chapter in our legislative journey, that is the 2026 Legislative Year, one that holds the promise of progress, reflection, and constructive debate. I urge Members of this Legislature to demonstrate greater commitment and dedication in the Legislative Year. Let us increase our participation in the Assembly proceedings, engage actively in legislative duties, and focus on addressing key national issues. We must put aside our political differences and work

together towards enhancing the effectiveness of our legislative roles and responsibilities, processes, and ensure that we prioritise the interests of our people.

Let me also remind Members that our Assembly is not merely a forum for debate, but a place where ideas are tested and solutions are achieved for the most pressing challenges of our time. As Presiding Officer, it is my solemn duty to ensure that this Assembly remains a place of respect, dignity and integrity while we serve our people.

At this point, I want to profoundly thank Members of the National Assembly and the Clerk and staff of this great Assembly for your invaluable services to our country. Thank you for the usual support and guidance throughout the process. I want to urge all of us to keep up the momentum or even do better.

Honourable Members, the approved agenda for this Ordinary Session has been circulated to all stakeholders and Members as well to take note and attend to their respective scheduled businesses.

Honourable Members, by way of an update to this august Assembly, a number of 15 acts were passed during the previous Ordinary Session of the National Assembly in the 2025 Legislative Session.

Finally, I would urge Members to once again take note of the relevant provisions of the Constitution and the Standing Orders of the National Assembly during this Session.

Thank you.

Clerk, you may proceed.

3. Corrections and approval of the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday, 17th December 2025

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly sitting of Wednesday, 17th December 2025, is before us for corrections and approval. Can any Honourable Member please move that the said Record of Votes and Proceedings be considered and approved? Yes, Member for Jarra West.

HON ALIEU BALDEH [JARRA WEST]: Thank you. I so move.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder? Yes, Member for Sanimentereng.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I so second the motion.

[Question Proposed]

Any correction or observation from any Honourable Member, he/she may do so by show of his/her tag. And of course, we will look at the record page by page beginning with Page 1.

Honourable Members, can thing on page 1? Yes, Member for Jarra Central.

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I extend my Ramadan greetings to you.

Honourable Speaker, on Page 1, item Number 5, Bills The word 'order' there should contain "s" to read as "Orders 74[8] and 75". Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: It is also correct as it is. Order 74[8] and order 75 is correct, 'and' is there. Use your mic, Deputy Majority Leader.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: I am saying, it did not say Order 74. Can you hear me?

THE SPEAKER: Take the mic.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM]: I am saying that it did not say 'Order 74 and Order 75'. It says 'Order 74 [8] and 75'.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, that is why it is correct. It did not say Order 74 comma 75. There are only two orders, that is why we separated them. It says Order 74 and Order 75.

All right. Honourable Members, let us add "s" there. No, if that is what you want to say, we can. Yes, Sanimentereng.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Honourable Speaker, I just wanted to align myself with Honourable Member for Jarra Central.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Kiang West, are you aligning?

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: No. Whether you change it or leave it, it causes no harm.

THE SPEAKER: It is correct like that. Exactly. It is correct as it is, but we can add "s". Let us not debate on this. It is correct as it is. If you add "s", it causes no harm. Yes, any other on Page 1? Can we move to Page 2? Member for Serekunda, please.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Yes. Order 5, under 74, 'Third Reading of the Early Warning and Response Mechanism Bill 2025 by 'the' His Excellency'. We should delete 'the'.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on item 2 under bills, under 5 by His Excellency. So, he wants us to remove the article 'the'. Any other on Page 1? In the absence of that, can we please move to Page 2? Page 2, Honourable Members. In the absence of any concern, can we move to Page 3? Yes, Member for Niamina Dankunku.

HON SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. My name is marked under absence with permission, but I was here on that day. On Page 3.

THE SPEAKER: You were here?

HON SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: Yes, I was here during the Adjournment Debate.

THE SPEAKER: Did you register?

HON SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: Pardon?

THE SPEAKER: Maybe, you did not register. Honourable Members, was the Member for Niamina Dankunku here?

HON SAMBA JALLOW [NIAMINA DANKUNKU]: I can vividly remember I was here.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. They will confirm. Thank you. Any other on Page 3? Can we move to Page 4? Let us move to Page 5. Honourable Members, Page 6. I now put the question.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Wednesday, 17th December 2025, be approved with amendments.]

Clerk, we may proceed, please.

4. **Ministers' Reply to the Report of the Joint Committee on Environment and Agriculture probing into the Activities of Transhumance in The Gambia** *[By the Hon. Minister of Environment, Climate Change & Natural Resources, and the Hon. Minister of Interior]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, after the adoption of the Report of the Joint Committee on Environment and Agriculture probing into the activities of Transhumance in The Gambia in the previous Session, the report was submitted to the Government, in particular the Minister of Environment,

Climate Change & Natural Resources and the Minister of Interior for consideration and reply as per Order 100 of the Standing Orders of the National Assembly.

Accordingly, the Honourable Ministers of Environment, Climate Change & Natural Resources and that of Interior are scheduled today for reply to the report. May I now invite the Honourable Minister of Environment, Climate Change & Natural Resources and the Honourable Minister of Interior to take the podium and make their statements. Honourable Ministers.

Now, we will begin with the Honourable Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources. Honourable Minister, please go ahead.

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: 'As-salamu alaikum wa Rahmatullah'. This is my first appearance or meeting with most of you since we start Ramadan. I would use this opportunity to invoke Allah's blessings to accept our 'Ibadahs' and forgive our sins and make us among those who will have the blessings of 'Lailatul Qadr'. Ameen.

Honourable Speaker, I want to use this opportunity to thank the Committee that worked on this report. It is comprehensive, and it is another thing that will also add value to our general management and the sustainable transhumance, enhance rural livelihoods, and promote peaceful coexistence between farmers and the herdsmen, and even the environment in general.

Since the report was also addressed to the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Security, I will concentrate on the

recommendations relevant to the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources.

Therefore, I would take you through the following:

6.1 on the Policy and Legal Framework: The first point is that the Government of The Gambia, through the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources, develops a comprehensive National Transhumance Policy while reviewing and updating all relevant laws to adequately regulate transhumance activity in the country. The Ministry of Environment will work with the Ministry of Agriculture being the lead Ministry in this instance on the development of a National Transhumance Policy and also the modalities for reviewing existing laws.

The second point is The Gambia Government establishes regional and local grazing committees with statutory mandates to regulate, monitor and manage grazing areas and related disputes for the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Security. So, I will leave this one for them.

The third point is that the Ministry of Environment integrates transhumance consideration into National Climate Adaptation Strategy in recognition of the growing impacts of climate change on pastoral livelihoods. Going forward, the impact of transhumance shall be incorporated into National Climate Adaptation Strategy by institutionalising coordination and governance such as early warning system for droughts or pastoral stress for better policy direction. The proposed National Transhumance Policy will better guide on this process and procedures. Therefore, we will work with the relevant Minister, that is Agriculture, to get this executed.

6.2 on the Infrastructure and Services: First, the Ministry of Agriculture prioritises investment in pasture development, water reservoirs and veterinary service posts to support sustainable livestock management.

The second is that the Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Department of Livestock Services and other relevant agencies, develops designated livestock corridors, including cross-border arrangements with the Government of Senegal and other neighbouring countries.

The third is that the Ministry of Agriculture strengthens the livestock tagging and traceability system to improve monitoring, disease control and accountability in livestock management. This is also specific to the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Security.

6.3 on Security and Border Management: First, the Ministry of Interior, through The Gambia Police Force and the Department of Immigration, deploys joint patrol teams at critical transhumance entry points to monitor and manage cross-border livestock movements. This is also for the Ministry of Interior even though we will have a stake.

Second, the Immigration Department enhances its operational capacity to effectively monitor seasonal cross-border entries of herders and their livestock. Also, for the Ministry of Interior.

Third, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, engages with counterparts in Senegal and ECOWAS to strengthen and harmonise cross-border pastoral protocols. This is for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Fourth, The Gambia Police Force is mandated to investigate and prosecute offences including deforestation, violent attacks and livestock theft related to transhumance activity. This is also for the Ministry of Interior.

Fifth, the Department of Forestry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, strictly enforces Forest Act and related environmental laws, particularly against bush burning and illegal felling of trees.

The Department of Forestry has intensified enforcement going by the Forest Act 2018 following the creation of a unit under the Department comprising personnel from The Gambia Armed Forces as well as dedicated prosecutor provided by The Gambia Police Force. This has been provided by the Ministry, the department, to support fast-track cases brought before the magistrates' courts.

Over the last 10 months, 27 vehicles with illegal timber produced were seized and the offenders taken to court and prosecuted. Over 30 illegal charcoal production sites were raided and the illegally produced charcoal also seized.

The Department is also intensifying community engagement and awareness campaigns to enhance local support and participation in the fight and enforcement of illegal practices affecting our forests. Also, it is coming up with reward strategies to motivate community ownership and participation in the protection and management of our forest cover.

All these things are now enforced, and all of you will bear me witness that enforcement has been intensified unprecedentedly.

Sixth, the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Interior, and the Department of Forestry jointly undertake capacity building programme to security agencies focusing on the enforcement of the Animal Health Act, the Forestry Act, and other applicable legislations governing pastoralism. The Department of Forestry, through MECCNAR will engage the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Security and the Ministry of Interior to develop a capacity building programme for security agencies within the limits of the Forest Act 2018 and relating to pastoralism.

6.4 on community participation and support: First, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs empower traditional authorities and local governance structures to manage grazing arrangements, mediate disputes and oversee pasture usage within their jurisdictions.

Second, these ministries also establish and train local mediation teams and Rapid Conflict Response Unit to facilitate timely resolutions of disputes between farmers and herders.

Third, the Government provides targeted support to women farming communities adversely affected, including through livelihood restoration programmes and compensation mechanisms, where appropriate.

All the above are for the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Security and the Ministry of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs,

6.5 on Environmental Management: First, the Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural

Resources and the Ministry of Interior, promotes control grazing practices and rotational pasture system to prevent overgrazing and land degradation.

This recommendation is to be led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Security, and MECCNAR is also on hand to collaborate with them in the promotion of controlled grazing practices, especially that affect our environmental interests.

Second, the Government implements community led reforestation and afforestation campaigns in vulnerable areas affected by transhumance activity.

The Department of Forestry has started a campaign to grow 30 million trees across the country by partnering with local communities and private partners. Nurseries have been established to plant fast growing species that are not only climate friendly but also with respect to our local weather patterns. The Department is also working with private sector to make sure that this is enhanced, and we are able to execute this in the next few years.

Third, stringent penalties be enforced against bush burning, deforestation and other environmentally harmful practices in line with existing forestry and environmental laws.

Penalties under existing laws are being applied by the courts. However, they are not punitive enough to act as meaningful deterrents. That is our assessment, and this has necessitated the ongoing review of the Forest Act 2018. And we are fighting this. A draft has already been submitted to the

Ministry of Justice for legal review to continue on the process of having the Forest Act 2018 completely reviewed to match with the current situations.

On that note, Honourable Speaker, I submit. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Members, as you would have noticed during my introduction of this business of the Order Paper, I indicated that it is for the Ministers of Environment and that of Interior. So now, we will invite the Honourable Minister of Interior to also make his reply. Then we ask questions for both to jointly answer.

The Honourable Minister of Interior, you may take the podium. Members for Serekunda, Wuli East and Sami, please.

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Good morning, Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members of the National Assembly. Ramadan Kareem.

I also join my colleague in thanking the committee for a job well done, and I have the pleasure to comment on the recommendations thereof. I will only limit my answers to the recommendations that have borders toward my ministry.

First, security and border management, the Ministry of Interior, through The Gambia Police Force and Department of Immigration, deploys joint patrol teams at critical transhumance entry points to monitor and manage cross-border livestock movement.

The Gambia Immigration Department is supported by The Gambia Police Force to implement measures for enhanced border control and security. While most of these entry points are fitted with modern technology to keep accurate records of people, the unrecognised entry point remained a challenge. However, this gap is to a great extent closed by improved physical border patrol. However, I must highlight that one factor that limits our capacity in border patrol is the limited mobility and associated operational costs.

Second, the Immigration Department enhanced its operational capacity to effectively monitor seasonal cross-border entries of herders and their livestock. The Department will soon deploy its first batch of Border Patrol Team. This team will focus on all types of cross-border movements to ensure maximum enforcement of all entry points and rules in close collaboration with the Gambia Police Force [GPF] and other law enforcement institutions under my ministry. A more effective and efficient regime of border control will be introduced soon.

Third, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, engages with counterparts in Senegal and ECOWAS to strengthen and harmonise cross-border pastoral protocols. The Ministry will engage the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to create the channel and lead discussion on this particular matter.

Fourth, The Gambia Police Force is mandated to investigate and prosecute offences including deforestation, violence attack and livestock theft related to transhumance activities. The Gambia Police Force, based on its broad law

enforcement mandate, is willing and committed to apprehend, investigate and prosecute all matters of criminal conduct, including deforestation, livestock theft, bush burning and illegal felling of trees.

Fifth, the Department of Forestry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, strictly enforces the Forestry Act and related environmental laws, particularly against bush burning and illegal felling of trees. I refer you to my earlier submission that we are committed to do the same.

Sixth, the Ministries of Agriculture, Interior and the Department of Forestry jointly undertake capacity building programmes for security agencies focusing on the enforcement of the Animal Health Act, the Forestry Act and other applicable legislation governing pastoralism. The Ministry will initiate collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture to sensitise and build the capacity of law enforcement officers as recommended by the committee.

Finally, the Ministry is committed to ensuring the law enforcement agencies support both the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment in all their endeavours to execute their respective mandate.

I submit.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, pursuant to Order 48[6] of the Standing Orders and I quote: *"After a statement has been delivered in the Assembly, a period of questions on the statement, which shall last no more than one hour, may then ensue. The Speaker shall determine the period taking into consideration the content of the statement, the number of Members wishing to ask questions and the pressure of the other business."*

Honourable Members, on that note, may I now invite the Honourable Members to ask questions relating to the statements made by the two Ministers. Yes, Member for Brikama South.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker*…[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Ministers, take note, for a Member can refer to any Minister that he may wish to ask questions, please.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Yes, this question will be directed to the Environment Minister in respect to the policy formulation, the National Transhumance Policy, which I believe is extremely important since it contains a lot of violent activities that are threats to the nation. So, I want to inquire, what stage are you in the preparation of this policy, and do we have a time frame for the policy?

The other one is for the Interior Minister concerning limited mobility. Other than limiting the budget allocation as far as mobility procurement is concerned, is there any option to get extra funding so that our mobility can be provided because this is extremely important? Other than budgetary allocation, do you have an alternative funding area that can be used to procure vehicles?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Ministers, please take note. Maybe, ideally, three questions per Minister, then we will allow you to respond. Yes, the Member for Central Baddibu.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker and our able Ministers.

Honourable Minister of Environment, thank you for appearing before us and Ramadan Kareem. I just want to make a follow up from your office. Since this report has been tabled here, what measures have you taken through the partnership you mentioned with other stakeholders? Have you taken any concrete action to see to it that the violence that we are talking about, the environmental damage, is mitigated; as you know, the season is approaching fast?

Coming to the Ministry of the Interior, we know that resources are a challenge. Despite these challenges, what specific efforts will your Ministry employ to ensure that your existing staff on the ground are able to follow up on transhumance-related issues? We understand that vehicles are scarce, but given that you have various checkpoints across the country, how can these be leveraged effectively?

THE SPEAKER: Member for Old Yundum, your tag was up.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: No, I actually wanted to observe something as a matter of procedure. I am not sure it is an observation. When the Member for Brikama South was asking questions, I was just trying to put this on the table to say

that the questions from Members should be within the recommendations brought forward by the Ministers on this particular issue. you understand?

THE SPEAKER: Correct.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Yes, that is what I am saying. I think we need to scrutinise the recommendation they presented to us, and the questions should be within that. So, if the questions are outside the recommendations, then you have a problem.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, what you could have done was just to raise a point of order, not observation. And then you rose an observation when the Member was at… That is a point of order, you should have raised. That is correct because questions… All right.

Member for Lower Saloum, you have the floor.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor.

Honourable Speaker, my question goes to the Environment Ministry. Yes, at the beginning, you talked about the illegal felling of trees or timbers that are allegedly… There are 27 vehicles that are handed over to the magistrate for prosecution for the felling down of timbers.

Honourable Minister, do you not think already there is a right given somewhere else and taken somewhere else because there is a law that bans felling down of trees? But now there are procedures taken by the Ministry.

As long as we want to safeguard our environment, there must be a condemnation of everything related to felling down of trees.

But now we have seen that the Alkalos, Seyfos, and the Forestry Department will issue a license to fall a tree in a particular place; in fact, endorsed by the Ministry, yet you have already stated that we want to preserve our environment. So, why not ban it altogether because in my constituency, for example, the Alkalo of a village already has the right to authorise the felling of a tree? There is a procedure that goes all the way to your office, where you give final approval.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, it is question time for Members. Please, do not make a statement. Do not debate.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, I am not.

THE SPEAKER: No. Question, please.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, I am laying my foundation before putting a question to the Minister.

THE SPEAKER: No, Honourable Member. We are not constructing a house here. No, you cannot lay a foundation. We are not constructing a house here. No, no. No foundation, please. You cannot lay a foundation here.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: It is a parliamentary term. Maybe, you do not know. It is a parliamentary term. Yes. Allow me to come, please.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: That is not a parliamentary term. Foundation is for the engineers.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Okay. Can I ask my question? Honourable Minister, license is issued by your Ministry for people to fell down trees in various villages, and also there is illegality on felling down of trees at the same time. Why can we not stop falling down trees altogether to preserve our forests?

THE SPEAKER: We will have one more then we will complete the first round. Yes, Member for Sanimentereng.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

My question will be directed to the Minister of Interior. With regard to the limited resources that you have already mentioned in your recommendation with regard to mobility, and I would advise the Minister of Interior to incorporate this in the budget because mobility is a very, very serious issue when they are trying to protect the transhumance area. When they do not have mobility, it is a serious issue, as I said. I would also advise if you can incorporate it in the coming budget so that this can be captured. I mean.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, we are not here to advise Ministers or make statements. We are here to ask questions, please.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Let me reframe my question. Honourable Minister, given the serious challenges your Ministry faces with mobility, especially as we want to address transhumance issues, could you consider including this matter in the upcoming budget for the National Assembly's consideration because this is a very serious issue?

Honourable Speaker, to the Honourable Minister of Environment with regard to charcoal as mentioned by the Honourable Member for… *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, who is your previous question meant for?

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: I ask the Minister of Interior.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, calm down. I am just asking you about your first question. It is for who?

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: The first question, I said, is for the Minister of Interior, and the second question will be directed to the Minister of Environment with regard to charcoal.

Honourable Minister, will you consider as a Ministry to completely ban the falling of trees to create charcoal out of it in order to maintain our trees in the communities?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I will now call the Honourable Ministers to respond, then we will go in for another set of questions. We will

begin with the Minister of Environment. Honourable Minister, please provide answers.

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

I start with the Brikama South's question; that is about the policy formulation on the transhumance. I think agriculture will lead to that. He asked, what have we done since we have received this report. Agriculture is the Ministry responsible for this transhumance issue. We will work with them; we have not started.

At my own level, I will have to consult with the Permanent Secretary because this is for them to work. But we will make sure that we work with them on this and not to give you a specific time because I am not the lead Minister. But once we settle on a date, you will be duly informed, 'Insha'Allah'.

For the Member for Central Baddibu regarding efforts taken so far since the report was submitted on the transhumance challenge mitigation, this is not a new thing. Even before the report comes into action, the Ministry has been working on this. Whenever I go on tour, most specifically nationwide tour, we do come across these activities, and we engage governors. It has been discussed at the level of Cabinet some time back.

So, action is being taken even though we are trying to be very sensitive to protocol that governs us as a nation, that is the ECOWAS Free Movement of

Goods and Services. But notwithstanding, this would not be detrimental to any country's national interest or even against local laws.

So, with the coming of the policy, I think that should guide on what we are to do because the policy will be tabled in Cabinet, where you have all the key stakeholders at the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and even Trade. They will look at it and ensure that at least we are in context with what governance has as a country, but also putting in place our national interests as well. So, we are waiting for the policy to incorporate all these. But at our own level, we have been doing consultations here and there whenever we have issues surrounding it.

Now, the Member for Lower Saloum on the confiscated vehicles, specifically saying that we should not even be giving permits but ban it totally. This is outside the law. Endangered timber species have been banned, but not timber usage or even sales. We are working within the limits of the law.

So, in this case, we cannot say that we completely ban timber cutting or usage. We cannot as we need them, but we need to regulate it and make sure that at least the endangered species are protected. And that is what the Ministry has done. Even those that are endangered, whereby their existence also affects human life, we will give permit for it to be caught.

So, we are working within this. And I once said that our trees are even more protected than human beings if we follow the laws. because you have to go through the entire chain of authority to be given a permit, if followed. We are encouraging people to make sure that they follow the due process to avoid illegalities. So, if you want to go through the legal channels, you have

to go through the process. We rejected some permits and also gave some permits. For some permits, we even take other actions because we have stock if you need it for something, we give you that stock to buy.

Like last week, I gave two permits and then revoked about two or three. So, it depends on how we review it. We ask people to go through the laws, but there is no complete ban, and it cannot be completely banned. These are natural products that we use, but we want to make sure that their usage is regulated. Thank you.

Also, for the Member for Sanimentereng I think concerning charcoal burning, I did not get the finished part of it, but I think it is on charcoal burning. What are we going to do? Maybe, you can come back to the question if I am allowed.

HON FATOU CJHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker and Honourable Minister. I think my question relates to the answer you have already given with regard to timber because I am also asking if we can ban the cutting of trees for charcoal. So, I think the answer that you have already given has answered mine.

Thank you.

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: Maybe, even to add charcoal burning. I said it here several times that in as much as charcoal usage is not illegal, the process continues because if you use dead trees or

dead wood to burn charcoal, you are not doing anything illegal as you follow the legal process.

But what we are saying is that we must discourage the use of charcoal. You have those going to jump the law and then do the illegal process of burning it because there is market. So, if we discourage the market side of it, you will discourage also people going that extra mile. Even if you have wood, you will end up seeing people not even using it for charcoal. You have dead woods in developed countries, but they are not being burnt for charcoal because they do not need it.

So, this is what we do as a country. And then as time goes on, we are discouraging people to use charcoal so that we will now use at least clean energy resources for cooking.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Interior.

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

The question asked by the Honourable Member for Brikama South is whether there is any other means apart from the budget to purchase vehicle. Yes, because for the past 20 to 25 or even 27 years, the budget allocation for vehicles cannot only buy for Police.

So, most of the vehicles bought by the Police come from other means like bank escorts and, in the past, the peacekeeping, which is now very limited.

Now, they are only depending on the bank escort fees. So, that is what they are using to buy vehicles.

And anytime we buy a vehicle for a station after two years if you want to…, we are not adding. We are replacing vehicles. So, that is not the only reason why we are not actually patrolling the border. It is just not very effective, but we are.

Now, the Member for Central Baddibu's question. Yes, if you look at my response to question number two, the Immigration Department enhanced operational capacity. I have answered that question. In fact, I think in the last four weeks, we have graduated a team, especially for Border Patrol. So, that will be collaborating with the Gambia Police Force to do joint patrols. But at the same time, as I said, the resources are limited because you not only need the human beings but also other resources to do border patrols.

Sanimentereng, yes, the same thing. Anytime we increase our budget in terms of getting vehicles when it comes here, it is cut. Yes, anytime. No, it is not removed but cut. They just slice it every time. You cannot expect the Gambia Police Force to operate without vehicles every time. So, the issue is that we do not have the necessary resources to do our work properly. We are just making sacrifices; that is why we are here.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. I now invite the Member for Foni Kansala to ask questions.

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Yes, Honourable Speaker. My question is directed to the Minister of Interior. On page 2 of your submission, you link the issue to the Immigration Department's need to enhance its operational capacity. Honourable Minister, currently the Interior Department as an institution, had trained the Border Patrol Unit [a new unit] which has already graduated from the training. The aim is to enhance border patrol control and overall security. Looking at its creation, the bill is still not enforced.

As a ministry, what would you do to enhance its effective operation as a unit, particularly by giving it legal backing so that it can be sanctioned by law to handle transhumance issues especially when offenders are caught so that they can be fully prosecuted by law?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please. Members, let us confine our questions to the responses of the Honourable Ministers. Honourable Member for Upper Fulladu West, you have the floor.

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Yes, thank you. Unfortunately, the question that I want to ask was asked by Brikama South, Honourable Sanneh. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. The Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu, you have the floor.

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, my question is going to be directed to the Minister of Interior with regard to point number three, which reads: *"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, engages with counterparts in Senegal and ECOWAS to strengthen and harmonise cross-border pastoral protocols."* My question is, what are the achievements and challenges with regard to these plans?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Sami, you have the floor.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

My question is directed to the Minister of Interior. Honourable Speaker, last year, 2025, a serious incident happened in Jarumeh Koto. This has prompted everything and, according to him, the mandate of the Police is to investigate and prosecute. So, did your office ever prosecute anybody who has done these violent attacks?

THE SPEAKER: Member for Lower Baddibu, you may please repeat your question.

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you very much. Honourable Minister, my question is, what are the achievements and

challenges with regard to this plan that I have just read to you; that is to engage your counterparts in Senegal and other ECOWAS countries?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Banjul Central, you have the floor.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you very much.

My question goes to both Ministers because it is a bit cross-cutting. It regarding 6.3 on security and border management when it comes to joint patrolling teams. I would like to ask if there exists a clear operational framework to be able to execute or rather distinguish between the lawful pastoral issues and also the cross-border activities.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Foni Brefet, you have the floor.

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

My question will go to the Ministry of Environment. Under 6.2, infrastructure, which states that the Ministry of Agriculture prioritises investment in pasture development and water reservoirs. Honourable Minister, I want you to at least mention which area the Ministry of Agriculture has provided the water reservoirs because I want to know whether it has tackled the challenges of the areas facing issues of transhumance.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Foni Brefet, why would you want the Minister to mention things that she has not mentioned? And you want her to mention that because you want to ask her a question.

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: Listen. Honourable Speaker, listen to me, please.

THE SPEAKER: I am listening. Go ahead. You said, Honourable Minister of Environment, I want you to mention a, b, c, d because I want to ask this question.

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: No, no, no. I did not say that because…

THE SPEAKER: Okay. Start again.

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: There are areas where the Ministry of Agriculture has provided reservoirs. It would have been important if it is mentioned so that the people will know whether they have provided the reservoirs to the areas facing the challenges of transhumance or not. That is what I want to know.

THE SPEAKER: No, that is not mentioned. Wait until it is mentioned or you invite the Minister of Agriculture when that is mentioned, then you talk about that. You cannot ask the Minister to mention something, and you ask a question on that, Honourable Member. No that is out of order.

The Member for Foni Jarrol, you have the floor.

HON KEBBA T. SANNEH [FONI JARROL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

My question goes to the Minister of Environment. We are talking about fighting deforestation and 90% of the Gambian population depend on forest products such as wood, firewood and charcoal. What effort is Government making to replace the use of firewood and charcoal?

For the Ministry of Interior, we are talking about enforcing an effective border patrol, and then we are yet to receive this Immigration Bill. How soon will we receive this Bill here at the National Assembly?

THE SPEAKER: Member for Serekunda, you have the floor.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

I would like to ask a question regarding recommendation 6.1 to the Minister of Environment. In your response to the recommendation, you said my Ministry will work with the Ministry of Agriculture being the lead Ministry in this instance, but since your Ministry is mentioned, what steps have you taken to facilitate this cooperation between your Ministry and the Ministry of agriculture?

Then two, that would be 6.3 about timber issues. Does your Ministry have comprehensive data on the species of trees that are used for timber production?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Bundungka Kunda, you have the floor.

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, my question is going to the Honourable Minister of Environment on the environmental management [6.5] where it states: *"The Department of Forestry has started a campaign to grow 30 million trees across the country by partnering with local communities and private sector."* I think this is very important.

So, I just want the Honourable Minister to inform this Assembly whether they have strategies in terms of collaborating with the local communities to maintain and keep these trees growing. I also want to know the period to grow this thing. If it is during the rainy season, that is fine. But after the rainy season, is there any strategy to nurture and maintain them to grow?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Kiang West, you have the floor. Oh, he is out. Member for Tallinding Kujang, you have the floor.

HON MUSA BADJIE [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

My question goes to Honourable Minister of Environment. Honourable Minister, in your response, you mentioned that you are discouraging the use of charcoal or encouraging alternate use of energy. Now, are there any strategies in place at the level of Ministry to achieve this?

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Wuli East, you have the floor.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, the farmer-wildlife conflict is still raging, and I have not seen anything in response as to how that would be minimised.

So, what compensation mechanisms do you have, if any? And if we do not have, do you have any plans to come up with a policy online human-wildlife conflict? The hippos are supposed to be endangered species. They are not supposed to be killed by the farmers, but they are always eating the rice grown by the farmers, especially during the rainy season. So, how do you really want to tackle that crisis raging between them? That is for the Environment Ministry.

For the Minister of Interior, we have discovered in my area that those who come with their sheep across the border, we call them transhumance, indiscriminately cut the plants of the farmers to often feed their animals, for example, the 'Kenoo' tree. But when they are going, we have a security problem. The farmers are complaining that when these people are returning, they do return with a lot of sheep from The Gambia across the border, and there is no way to detect that. What effort is the Ministry making or planning to minimise that theft?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Foni Bondali, you have the floor.

[Observation]

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana.

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, I just want to observe that the first question asked by the Honourable Member for Wuli East does not align with either the recommendations from the Ministry of Interior or that of the Environment, and you allow it to pass. He is talking about hippos invading rice fields.

This is for the Ministry of Agriculture. I am proposing that the same mechanism applied on the Member for Foni Brefet be really use on it. He can equally forward that to the Minister of Agriculture. Here we are talking about transhumance, illegal felling, deforestation.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please Order. Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana, I am sure it escaped most of us. You could have raised it at the time, but I agree with you. That one is out of Order. Member for Tumana, you have the floor. No, Foni Bondali.

HON PA DEMBO SANNEH [FONI BONDALI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, I would like to direct this question to Honourable Minister of Environment. Honourable Minister, can you elaborate on who the legal and illegal charcoal producers are?

HON MUSA CHAM [SERREKUNDA]: Observation, Honourable Speaker. I have an observation. Let him give me the floor.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Foni Bondali, what is your question?

HON PA DEMBO SANNEH [FONI BONDALI]: During her deliberation, she made mention of legal charcoal producers. So, I want to know who the legal and illegal charcoal producers are.

THE SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Tumana, you have the floor.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Observation, Honourable Speaker. I want to observe.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Observe, who?

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Proceedings.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Honourable Speaker, can I go ahead, please?

[Observation]

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I have seen that it has occurred here two times. When Members raised questions, some Members would try to disqualify those questions

after. So, I would urge Members to read the document before them. The issues raised by the Member for Wuli East are embedded in this report.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, take your seat. I have made a decision on that already.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: The reference is 6.4[3].

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please. Honourable Member, please take your seat. Member for Tumana, you have the floor.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, and Ramadan Mubarak to you and all the Members.

Honourable Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Environment with regard to Recommendation 6.1[2] where it states: *"The Government establishes regional and local grazing committees with statutory mandates to regulate, monitor and manage grazing areas and related disputes."* I want to know whether these committees are selected newly, or are old arrangements, please?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I will now invite the Honourable Ministers to respond to those questions and then, of course, wind up. We begin with the Minister of Environment.

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

I will start with the one from Banjul Central, if I am right. I think he asked whether we have a clear operational framework. I did mention that in my initial response that we are waiting for the policy to be produced first to guide us on these modalities because frameworks must be guided by at least some legal base. Hence, we are still working on the establishment of a legal base to support the sustainable management of transhumance practices. I want us to expedite that, but also to wait for that to have a framework that will guide us with a clear legal base.

For the Member for Foni Brefet on the infrastructures regarding areas that have reservoir by the…, I think this is not under my mandate. I apologize because I will not be able to know where Ministry of Agriculture has built these reservoirs, but I know they do this in consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure that at least they are within the areas.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister.

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCE]: Yes, please.

THE SPEAKER: Once a question is not admitted, you cannot answer them.

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCE]: I did not get that part. Sorry, for that. Thank you.

On Member for Foni Jarrol concerning our plans on replacing firewood and charcoal usage by Government? The plans are on. It is not an easy way because we do not have gas and the best alternative is to use gas, which is a little bit cleaner in terms of energy. But this is what we are working on. We have started preparing a concept project proposal to get support from partners to see how best we can do a pilot that will be scaled up as we move on. But plans are on the way. We are trying to target our carbon trading finance. We have already started collecting some few amounts on the carbon trading. We have engaged partners, but most of the partners that we have engaged so far do not have the interests aligned.

The Minister of Finance is our key supporter on this, and he is ready, but we need to look at the sustainability mechanism. That is what we have to work on. We do not want to have only one set of finance to support one year then the next year it will go and then die out.

So, it is important in as much as Government is willing at the level of the Ministry of Finance, so we must also incorporate the sustainability mechanism, and this is where we need to get partners to work on. Thank you.

For Member for Serekunda, steps are taken to facilitate cooperation and names of trees used for the timber. The names of trees, maybe, if you can come back to this. I might miss your question.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much. I asked two questions. I said, in recommendation 6.1, you said that your Ministry will work with the Ministry of Agriculture being the lead ministry in this instance, on the development of a national transhumance policy.

So, my question was, when you received this report, did you engage the Ministry of Agriculture so that you can work on these recommendations; that is to show your commitment as a ministry? And number 2, that is on 6.3, does your Ministry have comprehensive data on the species of trees that are used for timber production since you are the Ministry and the authority that issues license?

Thank you.

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCE]: Thank you. On the first one, during my initial phase, I did mention that these recommendations were sent to the Ministries of Environment, Agriculture and Interior. So, we will all work towards this. I have not engaged the Ministry of Agriculture personally on the policy and also our next steps, but from here I promise we will do that.

On the second phase, I think we will have to do a follow up to this because you are asking for lists, and I will have to engage my technicians to give us a comprehensive list to avoid giving you half-baked answers. Thank you.

For the Member for Bundungka Kunda on environmental management, strategies to manage and sustain survival of these species of trees, yes, I

mentioned also in my first response that we will embark on community awareness and engagement process so that at least we will have the buy in of all stakeholders, including National Assembly Members for sustainable mechanism.

We are now out of tree planting. The slogan is no more 'tree planting'; it is 'tree growing' because we understand that when you plant and you are not growing, then we are just going from back to worst 'Taa yanto senyi koomo' as the Mandinkas would call it. So, we do not want to do that. We want to make sure that the sustainability mechanism is being built.

So, we are making sure that at least now it is no more tree planting being used as our agenda but tree growing. There are mechanisms put in place to make sure that people take ownership. One of these initiatives is the community forest. Community forest is now targeting people to take ownership and motivate them to take the responsibility to grow these trees. Among others, making sure that people are also aware and understanding that trees are the essence of our survival.

So for the Member for Tallinding on strategies in place to use alternative energy, I think I already addressed that when I was responding to one of the questions from the Member for Foni Jarrol.

The Member for Wuli East concerning human-wildlife conflict, I think it was overruled. Well, maybe, you will have to go back to the Speaker.

Regarding Member for Foni Bondali as to elaborate on who the illegal and legal charcoal producers are if I understand your question, who is talking about*... [Interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, please go ahead.

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCE]: If I understand your question, the who means the individuals. I might not be able to know who the illegal or legal charcoal producers are. These are individuals and I know it includes people from Foni, from Baddibu. So, I will not be able to know who they are. But if you talk about what is illegal and legal charcoal burning, I can talk on that.

It is just the process I mentioned here in my first deliberation. The process you take makes it legal or illegal. If you follow the due process to get applications and you are given permit to at least bring down a certain tree or collect waste timber from the forest and you burn it, then you have gotten the legal base to do a legal process. If you do not follow the legal base, you bring down trees or and burn it, and you do not get the permit, then you are now doing illegal process. So, is it two, following the law and not following the law.

On Member for Tumana regarding whether establishing regional grazing committees is a new thing or an old thing, this is under the Minister of Agriculture or let me say the Department of Livestock. So, I do not know whether they have committees established or whether it is going to be a new one or an old one. It is under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Thank you so much.

[Observation]

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Honourable Speaker, Honourable Speaker, observation.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: My question was not overruled by you. It is only after you have ruled that it is admissible that it is the time when Honourable Kebba Lang Fofana got up. Are you saying that you have overruled my question?

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Because everything I have said is in relation to agriculture, wildlife and transhumance.

THE SPEAKER: But that is what I said earlier.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes, so it is not overruled?

THE SPEAKER: It is.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: No, it is not. You did not overrule it?

THE SPEAKER: No, I did.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: How can you allow my…

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: No, please. Member for Wuli East, please take your seat. There is a point of order by the Member for Kantora and Majority Leader.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: I am rising on Order 8[1]: *"In all cases where matters are not explicitly provided by these Standing Orders, the questions on procedure or order shall be decided by the Speaker."* So, once the Speaker has already ruled on the question, it cannot be challenged again. So please, it has been ruled.

HO SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Is this the first time*… [Inaudible]*

THE SPEAKER: Order sustained. Now, the Minister of Interior, please take the podium and respond to those questions.

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

The first question comes from the member for Foni Kansala. He said that the bill is not yet here, so can we add these things into the bill? The bill is almost done. It went through a lot of processes, and it is going to the Ministry of Justice so that we can finalise it to bring it here. So, we cannot add it here. Maybe, when it comes here, you can look at it.

Member for Lower Baddibu, yes, I do not actually understand where you want to drive at. The successes and the failures of maybe our bilateral relations with Senegal and The Gambia in relation to what? This one we did not even start yet. But we have a lot of successes. Not this one.

Member for Sami on serious incident in 2025 at Jarumeh Koto, asking whether we have ever prosecuted successfully such cases. Yes, maybe, but you must give me, because I cannot just tell you these are the cases we prosecuted as it is so vague.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Can I?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Sami, what is the problem?

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: I must make it clear to him.

THE SPEAKER: Yea, if the Minister wants you to clarify your questions, you can go ahead. Minister, is that so? Honourable Minister, do you want him to clarify his question?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Yes, I think so.

THE SPEAKER: Aah?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Yes

THE SPEAKER: Yes, please, go ahead.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you. The reason I said a serious incident happened, it was caused by this transhumance, the 'Walankos' in Jarumeh Koto and…

THE SPEAKER: No, what was your question, please? Can you repeat your question?

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: You know, the question was about…

THE SPEAKER: Repeat your question.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: The question was… no, He said he does not understand. So, I am trying to lay the foundation.

THE SPEAKER: No!

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: So that he can understand.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you see, we are not constructing buildings here. Do not lay a foundation.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: No.

THE SPEAKER: No!

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Honourable Speaker, I asked my question. He said, it is not clear.

THE SPEAKER: Can you repeat the question? Just repeat the question.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: I do not want to repeat the same question because he said that he did not understand it.

THE SPEAKER: No, just repeat it. Do not build any foundation. We are not building a house here.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: No, what I am trying to say is that we are talking about the violence caused by the 'Walankos', the transhumance. It happened in Jarumeh Koto. The case was reported to Kuntaur and I learned that the man is apprehended. So, I do not know…

THE SPEAKER: Now

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: What is the development of that case at the level of your Ministry?

THE SPEAKER: Okay. Now, Honourable Member, the Minister has not responded in his reply to the Assembly on the circumstances of the Jarumeh Koto and the 'Walankos'. So, you are out of Order.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: No, Speaker because he talked about violent attacks. Who caused those violent attacks?

THE SPEAKER: No, now…

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Is the 'Walankos'

THE SPEAKER: I agree but you want… because that case… No, in this instance, you want him to know what the development of that case is. He

cannot answer that because… No, he cannot answer that. No…, Minister, please continue.

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: The Member for Banjul Central asked whether there is any operational framework in relation to the border patrol. For border patrol, whether it is pastoral or any other thing is border patrol. Whatever happens, we take care of it.

THE SPEAKER: No, Honourable Members. Honourable Minister, Honourable Minister.

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: We cannot do that. Operation is operation. Border patrol is border patrol. You take care of everything.

Member for Jarrol asked how soon will the Immigration Bill be here. The Immigration Bill is almost, and it will be almost here. We have finished, and it has gone to Cabinet and then came back to us. We did the ratification. Now, it will be coming very soon.

Honourable Member for Wuli, unless those things are reported, it will be very difficult for us to be able to do anything. We will do the patrol but if you see people going with herds of cattle and others, how would you identify this one belongs to Gambian people or even belong to them?

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Honourable Speaker, can I clarify because he is asking me and I want him to understand what I am saying?

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: He is not asking.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Honourable Member for Kantora, can you shut up?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Wuli East, do not use… I saw the Minister packing his things, so I do not think he asked you a question.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Ask him?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, did you ask him a question?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: I did not ask him question. I answered his question.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Members, I want to thank the Honourable Ministers of Environment, Parks and Wildlife and that of the Interior for those replies and answers provided to Honourable Members. And I thank Honourable Members for those questions.

You may go now, Honourable Ministers. Thank you.

Clerk, we may proceed.

5. Bills:

i. **Withdrawal of the "Vetting Bill, 2023" in accordance with Order 76** *[By the Hon. Attorney General & Minister of Justice]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I will now invite the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Justice to move a motion for the withdrawal of the Bill entitled "Vetting Bill, 2023". Honourable Attorney General, you may take the podium.

HON DAWDA A. JALLOW [ATTONRNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Good morning to Honourable Members. It is my first appearance for your First Ordinary Session of the year. I wish you a successful Session and a successful Legislative Year ahead.

Honourable Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill entitled "The Vetting Bill, 2023" be withdrawn. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder? Yes, Member for Old Yundum and Deputy Majority Leader.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, I second the Motion.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Bill entitled "Vetting Bill, 2023" to be withdrawn from the Assembly.]

Honourable Members, the Bill is withdrawn. Thank you.

Clerk, we may proceed.

[Observation]

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Member for Lower Saloum.

HON DAWDA A. JALLOW [ATTONRNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE]: Yes. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: No. Attorney General, I have not called you.

HON DAWDA A. JALLOW [MINISTER OF JUSTICE & ATTONRNEY GENERAL]: Oh, you have not called.

THE SPEAKER: No. Yes, Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: I just want to observe, Honourable Speaker. You see, if a bill is introduced in the National Assembly, it comes with objects and reasons. So, if he is going to withdraw the bill, he should also give us the reason he is withdrawing the bill.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, is that your bill?

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, it is not my bill

THE SPEAKER: Is that your bill? He brought the bill and wanted you [National Assembly] to consider and at some stage… Order, Honourable

Members. Deputy Majority Leader, order, please. Honourable Members, there are no reasons. The law has not requested him to give any reason. It is his bill. He can withdraw it at any time. Please, Honourable Members…

Clerk, can we proceed, please?

ii. **Second Reading of the "Intellectual Property Bill, 2025" in accordance with Standing Order 66** *[By the Hon. Attorney General & Minister of Justice]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you would recall that the First Reading of the "Intellectual Property Bill, 2025" was done on Wednesday, 19th November 2025, and today is appointed for the Second Reading in accordance with Standing Orders 66[2].

Therefore, pursuant to order 67 of the Standing Orders, I now invite the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Justice to move a motion for the Second Reading of the Bill entitled "Intellectual Property Bill, 2025". Honourable Minister.

HON DAWDA A. JALLOW [ATTORNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill entitled "Intellectual Property Bill, 2025" be read a second time.

Honourable Speaker, Members would recall that there was an earlier version of the "Intellectual Property Bill" that was tabled before this Assembly and went through the First and Second Readings until we got to the

Consideration Stage. During consideration, we discovered some cross-referencing difficulties, and it was going to be too painstaking to be able to correct all that.

So, we advised ourselves that we withdraw and go and tidy it up and reintroduce the Bill. Because some time has passed, so the title of the Bill has now become 2025, but Members should be able to recall that it is not an entirely new bill. It was a bill that has gone through all stages up to Consideration Stage, an advanced stage of the Consideration Stage itself.

Honourable Speaker, by way of objects and reasons, the purpose of this Bill is to give effect to Intellectual Property Rights Administration, which is currently fragmented and administered by two distinct institutions in The Gambia. Industrial Property Rights are administered by the Ministry of Justice while Copyright and related rights are administered by the National Centre for Arts and Culture under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

This segregation of administration and mandate has generally affected the development and efficient administration of Intellectual Property Rights in The Gambia. The enactment of the "Intellectual Property Bill, 2025" will therefore streamline the administration of Intellectual Property Rights and make it a one-stop shop in line with the principles of ease of doing business and international best practices.

Furthermore, the enactment will also give an opportunity for new intellectual property regimes which are beneficial to national and international Intellectual Property Rights holders to be incorporated in this act. In addition, The Gambia being a member state of the World Intellectual Property

Organisation, the African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation, and the trade related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights of the World Trade Organisation has a legal obligation to ensure that Intellectual Property Rights are effectively administered in its jurisdiction.

So, therefore, as part of the processes of defining the practical application of these conventions and agreements, this Bill has made provisions to ensure adequate provisions to address all issues of Intellectual Property Rights.

On that basis, Honourable Speaker, I beg to move.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder? Yes, Member for Kantora and Majority Leader.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKRA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the floor, and I so second the motion.

I also want to thank the Honourable Minister for moving this Bill for the second time. Honourable Speaker, I understand pursuant to Order 67, when the Bill is read for second time, the merits of the Bill may be debated upon. But of course, as earlier said by the Minister himself, this Bill has gone through a series of stages up to Consideration Stage, and we have gone through First and Second Readings of the Bill.

So, it might be more of a repetition as well because we all understand the content and importance of the Bill as far as intellectual property is concerned and The Gambia being a member of the AfCFTA [that is African Continental

Free Trade Area]. This Bill is germane for us to make sure that we protect innovation. We also protect our invention and artistic.

So, basically, I think this will go a long way in protecting the pattern in terms of invention, protecting the trademark in terms of artistic, and also protecting the logo in terms of brand.

So, basically, I think we are in the right direction as a country; that is being a member of African Continental Free Trade Area where we open our market to 1.3 billion population, which is a very big market.

Therefore, it is right to make sure that some of these innovations, brilliant ideas and some of artistic are also protected. So, I think the Government is really acting on the right track. Basically, it will promote growth and compensate research as well because you cannot just go and take ownership of someone's hard work. It also even protects consumers in terms of knowing the originality or origin of a particular product. So, it has a lot of good things in it.

Without further ado, Honourable Speaker, with your permission, I want to after seconding the motion rise on Order 53[c] to refer the Bill to ABC for committal without debate.

Thank you very much.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order from the Member for Lower Saloum. Honourable Members, please order. There is a point of order from the Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, I refer you to Order 76 of the Standing Orders, which I want to base my argument on. Can I read, Honourable Speaker? Order 76 of the Standing Orders, Withdrawal of a bill. My earlier submission was on the withdrawal of the Bill. 76[1] states: *"A person in charge of a bill may make a motion…"*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes. It is a point of order. It is the procedure. Do not worry, for I am in line. Now, it is left to you to disregard it based on your principle. It is up to you.

Honourable Speaker, Order 76, Withdrawal of a bill, [1]: "*The person in charge of a bill may make in a motion with notice for withdrawal of a bill at any stage before it has been read the third time, except when the Bill is before a Committee."*

And already the Bill is now under consideration of the Committee. It means the Minister's procedure is not committed at this Assembly. It is a fraud. Procedurally, I mean.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. Member for Basse, please take your seat. Honourable Members, order, please. Can you take your seat,

please? Those at the gallery there, please. Honourable Members, I will deliver a ruling on that on Wednesday. Yes.

Now, Honourable Members, the Member for Kantora moved a motion. Any seconder, please? Yes, Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: I so second the motion.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we have two motions on the floor. I will first ask that we vote on the first motion that is the secondment of the Bill then on the second motion moved by the Majority Leader.

Honourable Members, I am reminded that when the motion is seconded, usually we do not put a vote. we should go straight and debate, but the seconder moved a motion for us to commit it to the ABC without debate.

So, in the circumstances, I will ask a question on the second motion; that is without debate.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the "Intellectual Property Bill, 2025" be committed to the ABC without debate.]

THE SPEAKER: Now, naturally, I will invite the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, of course, to respond to issues and wind up the debate on normal circumstances, but this is strange. Maybe, he will thank Members. Honourable Attorney General.

HON DAWDA A. JALLOW [ATTORNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Anyway, for those that are still a bit lost, the objects remain the same, as I said in my statement, and those objects were debated when the Bill was tabled for the first time. So, that is the reason it has been proposed for it to be moved, and I commend you for that. Thank you for allowing it to proceed to the ABC for referral without debate. Thank you, Honourable Members.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Attorney General. Honourable Members, it has been moved and seconded that the Bill entitled "Intellectual Property Bill, 2025" be read a second time.

THE SPEAKER: Clerk, can we proceed?

The Intellectual Property Bill, 2025

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, in accordance with order 68(1) of the Standing Orders, the Bill is hereby referred to the Assembly Business Committee for committal to either a Committee or Committee of the Whole Assembly. Thank you.

Clerk, we may proceed. Attorney General, you may leave now.

iii. **Second Reading of "The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency [Amendment] Bill, 2025" in accordance**

with Standing Order 66 *[by the Hon. Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration & Employment]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I have been informed by my aids that the Honourable Minister of Trade is not present, and I hereby, in the circumstances, … I am not sure whether I should vary the Order Paper or to move to the next item on the agenda?

Clerk, we are now moving into the next item of the Order Paper. The Honourable Minister of Trade is not present, and we have not received any communication to that effect as to why he is not here.

Clerk, we may proceed to the next item on the Order Paper.

iv. **Second Reading of the "Communications Bill, 2025" in accordance with Standing Order** *66 [By the Hon. Minister of Communications & Digital Economy]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you would recall that the First Reading of the "Communication Bill, 2025" was done on Wednesday, 19th November 2025, and today is appointed for the Second Reading in accordance with Standing Order 66[2].

Therefore, pursuant to Order 67 of the Standing Orders, I now invite the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy to move a motion for the Second Reading of the Bill entitled "Communication Bill, 2025".

Honourable Minister, you may take the podium.

HON LAMIN JABBI [MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS & DIGITAL ECONOMY]: Honourable Speaker, Ramadan Mubarak and Ramadan Kareem to you and to the Honourable Members. To those observing Lent, we pray that you have a blessed Lent period.

Honourable Speaker, I beg to move that the bill entitled "Communication Bill, 2025" be read for the second time. The objectives and reasons for this particular Bill are to establish a framework for rapid, efficient and comprehensive electronic communications, information, media broadcasting and electronic commerce services in The Gambia for promoting competition and investment, ensure consumer protection and privacy, and facilitate the optimal use of national communication resources like radio frequencies.

The Bill is designed to ensure affordability and access, upholding standards for equipment, information, broadcasts and media services. Ultimately, it is to promote the establishment of the needs of digital economy and new approaches for providing information, media and broadcasting services in the age of digitization as well as the creation of an enhanced ecosystem in the face of technological innovations for national defence and public safety through secure and reliable communication infrastructure.

This Bill is expected to:

a) Establish a legal framework for electronic transactions, information, media and broadcasting services promoting national and regional competitiveness, ensuring the security of ICT [Information, Communications, Technology] infrastructure and protecting personal data and privacy;

b) Enable e-government services by promoting innovation and addressing computer misuse and cybercrime to protect individuals and organizations;
c) Provide legal recognition for electronic signatures, contracts and other electronic communications to enable electronic commerce;
d) Foster innovation and the development of a knowledge-based economy, by encouraging the use of information communication technologies in various sectors of the economy;
e) Enhance efficiency and effectiveness in businesses and public sectors by optimising processes through ICT;
f) Ensure the provision of rapid, efficient, and national electronic communication, information, media and broadcasting services to all people at reasonable charges as well as promoting affordable access to high quality network;
g) Foster a competitive communication and broadcasting sector by removing licensing barriers to entry, attracting investment, and encouraging the deployment and adoption of new technologies and services;
h) Safeguard consumer interests by addressing issues like privacy, ensuring truth in advertising and protecting consumer data from misuse;
i) Protect and facilitate national defence and public safety through the use of electronic communication, information, media, and broadcasting services, including ensuring emergency services;
j) Promote the purposeful and just allocation and use of scarce resources such as radio frequencies and numbers;

k) Establish standards for communication equipment and regulate broadcasting services, including setting decency standards through a flexible, clear, and efficient licensing regime;
l) Create the necessary conditions for the development and use of electronic communications networks and services for the creation of the digital economy.

I submit.

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder? Yes, Member for Upper Saloum.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, here we have a bill that is very critical in the digital ecosystem and in general, it also provides the foundation or the framework where our country, The Gambia, can effectively implement policies as well as laws that would guide us in this information age.

Honourable Speaker, the Bill seeks to, in fact, change the current trajectory in terms of information and communication and the current act, which is the Communication Act, 2009. There are lot of gaps in terms of the licensing regime and what type of licenses do we need to give among other things. And I think it is important that we update the current laws to match the current realities of the country.

Honourable Speaker, it is equally important for us to clearly highlight, no matter how important this Bill is, to also ensure that we have a very clear

boundary in terms of regulation and operations as well. That is the Ministry and other regulatory agencies.

You know, we also have the PURA Act, which is the main regulator. It is also equally important for that act to be reviewed because there are a lot of things that are really outdated as well. If you look at this agency itself, they are going to look at the petroleum sector, utilities and the telecom sector as well yet still they only have five board members that look at all these issues.

I think, in general, even though the Bill is very good, we also need to look further just to ensure that all the other institutions… What I am trying to say, Honourable Speaker, is that it is very important that we have such a bill that is going to clearly indicate the responsibility of all the agencies, the Ministry, and the regulator.

Above all, the Act of the regulator, PURA itself, also needs to be updated because now they are also responsible for petroleum utilities and telecom sector, so we really need to take a review of that.

Otherwise, when this Bill passes, we may have some structural issues because part of the requirement is that the regulator must also have a board that aligns their understanding with this industry to have a five-member board to look at petroleum, utilities, and telecom sectors. We are really stretching that too far, and it is important that we look at that.

Honourable Speaker, I also need to remind ourselves that in 2022, the National Assembly also passed a bill here, which was an amendment to the issue of the security agencies as far as the communication sector is

concerned. In fact, on the current act before it was updated, they can do surveillance; they can do wiretaps. But when we came in 2022, there were amendments where the authority of the High Court would be sought up before the security agencies can do that.

But when you look at the current bill, it is kind of like silence on that. And in this day and age, we must not do anything that may suppress the investigative powers of the security forces. We need to look at that. However, in the current bill, I see that it is almost silent on it. But, as a nation, we need to ensure that we give the security agencies the power that they need to be able to keep this country safe.

Not to take too long, Honourable Speaker, the only thing I will touch on is the issue of the digital economy that the Bill also intends to address, and one aspect is digital addressing system and the digital IDs. The Bill is very silent on those, and those are fundamental and critical in our digital economy.

Considering the importance of this Bill, Honourable Speaker, and considering the fact that it is a very technical bill, I would urge us to refer to this to the ABC. I am sure they can refer it to the appropriate committee to look at it because this is a very critical bill, and it has a lot of technicalities that we really need to study further to ensure that we align ourselves with the latest.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, in accordance with Order 67[1] of the Standing Orders, I will now open the floor for debate on the general

merits and principles of the Bill. Any Honourable Member who wishes to participate in the debate may do so now by show of tag. In the absence of… I now invite the… Honourable Member for Foni Kansala, you have the floor.

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I thank the Minister of Digital Economy for bringing this important bill, Communication Bill, 2025.

Honourable Speaker, in the age of technology, national defence and safety also matters which this Bill will address by coming up with the framework of electronic communication. We are in the digital age. The Bill also intends to address affordability and accessibility. Having accessibility in the digital age is also very important.

I believe that what the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum said is critically very important. We do not need to rush this Bill because there are a lot of overlaps in various acts that have already been passed, so referring it to the ABC for committal to the relevant Committee will do the needful whereby a lot of stakeholders will be consulted.

Looking at the e-governance system, it is prudent. However, most Government institutions use Gmail; why? The coming of this Bill will address a lot of issues such as cybercrime and cyber security. We will collaborate with the Minister to support this Bill.

Nonetheless, I believe we should do what is necessary. That is to refer it to ABC for committal to the relevant committee for a holistic stakeholder engagement to make sure this is apt and running.

Therefore, Honourable Speaker, I submit. 'As-salamu alaikum'.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we will allocate 4 minutes to each Member. Honourable Member for Busumbala, you have the floor.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Thank you very much, Honourable Minister, for tabling this very important bill before us.

I would say this Bill is long overdue because we are now in a digital world. So, having seen most of our Government administrations now going on e-governance, e-commerce and doing other electronic transactions through digital means, it is timely and important that we have this important bill to regulate and protect as well as promote the activities of individuals and Government.

The Honourable Minister has advanced so many points that terms as the merit of this important Bill amongst them is protection of citizens' data and privacy. This is very important. We have seen so many cases now going on social media wherein people's privacy has been intruded, people's privacy has been infringed. And people are taking advantage of that; some in a way to obtain money by doing some of this privacy hackings through internet systems. So, with the advent of these communication bill, such issues will be addressed.

Like he said, it is also going to ensure fairness and transparency. Any Government activity that is done via electronic means, transparency and fairness is ensured. So, there will be a trace for those activities. So, issues

relating to promotion, protection and development of our economy will be traced through electronic and communication means.

On that note, I thank you, and I support this Bill and call Members of this august Assembly to better prepare for an effective scrutiny so that we can have this Bill in place to protect all that the Honourable Minister and his team desired for better Gambia.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Wuli East, you have the floor.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, we need to take this Bill very seriously. It is an important bill at the same time very controversial. There are a lot of pros and cons, so I would also advise that we give it to the appropriate committees to make adequate findings and advise us very well on this.

Honourable Speaker, anything that would endanger the lives and livelihood of the Gambian people should be considered very well because we are in a digital age, and we see the danger that is taking place in some countries. I just given you an example of what is taking place in Iran; how they are using their digital technology to wage war against other countries.

So, but I have seen it in the Bill that one of the objectives is to protect and facilitate national defence and security and public safety. We should look at that area very seriously and ensure that that is adequately captured.

Honourable Speaker, the Communications Bill is a very important one. It is to uphold standards for equipment, what type of equipment would be allowed, what type of information system or information would be circulated. Broadcasting and media are all captured in this bill. It is a very important bill that needs to be considered.

Secondly, if we look at it also, it is meant to boost the digital economy which is number one in the world now. Any country that takes digital economy seriously is progressing. So, we need to really take it seriously and ensure that the objective of the Bill is attained.

On that note, I thank you and urge all Members to read this Bill so that we do the needful to ensure that what is contained there is in the paramount interest of our people.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Sanimentereng, you have the floor.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I will be very much precise regarding my deliberations on this Bill.

Honourable Speaker, this Bill is very timely and important, so Members should consider and pass it. The Bill has already catered for cyber security. Cyber security is very alarming in our communities now. People are being framed for who they are not.

The Bill has also catered for things that will be in security, more especially we the women in various communities. No cyber security, I would say most people would not know the use of a mobile phone. For example, using a mobile phone framing people for who they are not is alarming, and it is destroying a lot of marriages for both women and men. It is also making life difficult for women. So, addressing such things in a bill to be more precise, Honourable Speaker, is very timely.

I, therefore, urge Honourable Members to investigate this properly, and then we will see how best we can pass this Bill.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I now invite the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy to respond to issues raised and wind up the debate. Honourable Minister.

HON LAMIN JABBI [MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS & DIGITAL ECONOMY]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Indeed, I recognise the importance of this Bill and the observations given.

The Honourable Member from Upper Saloum raised two issues. The first is on the power of the High Court vis-à-vis power of the security forces during investigation, these are partially addressed, but we can improve them more. On digital addressing as well, which is the second issue, we understand because we already have a Digital Addressing Policy in place. Of course, the law must cover it. A number of the issues there are partly and sparsely and separately covered in this Bill.

We have been informed by the best practices that some countries would have specific and separate legislation for digital addressing. Some other countries would leave it for secondary legislation that is adopting or using the power of issuing regulations. And then some countries leave it to different respective institutions, how they address it.

But I think as this is going to the Committee Stage that could be looked at. We can look at the legal equivalence of digital addressing, the institutional and governance framework, matters of standardisation, privacy, security, and all other things.

Now, for the comments from the Honourable Member of Foni Kansala on the issue of national defence, accessibility and e-government, we already have our own email policy. We are trying to push through but, of course, this Bill also addresses those areas very significantly. It is a highly improved version of the old legislation; that is the ICT Act.

But I agree entirely that we use of these Gmail, Hotmail and Yahoo. It is time we move on but separately. I can gladly inform that we have now started the process of pushing through the e-Cabinet and possibly e-Parliament. All will be within the elements of e-Government. This Bill would still be promoting that.

From the Honourable Member for Busumbala, indeed with an e-Government policy in place, this is also going to complement the enforcement of e-Government, e-transactions as well as e-commerce in the country, more specifically and particularly data protection and privacy.

For the Honourable Member for Wuli East, indeed it is very critical. I do recognise and acknowledge that currently some of the biggest achievements the Government is making and pursuing are infrastructure. If you look at this infrastructure, it is both in the physical infrastructure and digital infrastructure. We recognise the importance of that digital infrastructure in the management of this critical physical infrastructure, especially standards and equipment that are being used. So, this Bill particularly addresses those issues of standards, equipment type approval, and how the infrastructure itself shall be protected and used.

Last but not least, from the Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, it is indeed timely. We are all enjoying a lot of this cyber as we are all in this cyberspace. Unfortunately, when it comes to content creation and utilisation, we are using almost 90% or close to 90% foreign content, and there are risk elements to that. For that reason, cyber security cannot be and must not be a compromising issue.

So, this Bill also addresses the institutional and the governance frameworks for that. And it has laid down procedures and processes as to how this could be equally addressed or controlled. It has taken cognizance of the special legislation that we have been pushing through on matters of cyber security and data protection.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Bill entitled "Communication Bill, 2025" be read a second time.]

Clerk, we may proceed.

Communications Bill, 2025

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, in accordance with Order 68[1] of the Standing Orders. The Bill is hereby referred to the Assembly Business Committee for committal to either a specific committee or Committee of the Whole Assembly. Thank you, Honourable Members.

On that note, I now put the question. Honourable Members*… [Interjected] …* I am informed that the Minister of Trade is here to deal with his business as well. As you are aware earlier on, I inform you that he was not around and we have not been communicated to.

Clerk, we may now move to the earlier item on the agenda that we have, of course, intended to address the Minister of Trade's business.

v. **Second Reading of "The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency [Amendment] Bill, 2025" in accordance with Standing Order 66** *[By the Hon. Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration & Employment]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you would recall that the First Reading of "The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency [Amendment] Bill, 2025" was done on Wednesday, 29th October 2025, and today is appointed for the Second Reading of the Bill in accordance with Standing Order 66[2].

Therefore, pursuant to Order 67 of the Standing Orders, I now invite the Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment to move a motion for the Second Reading of the Bill entitled "The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency [Amendment] Bill, 2025".

Honourable Minister, you may take the podium. Yes, you are welcome. This is your first time. Yes, and we are in Ramadan, so Ramadan Mubarak to you. So, you are welcome. But you have been here observing your colleagues, how they do things. Thank you, I think you are familiar with the procedures. Thank you, you are most welcome.

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: 'As-salamu alaikum wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh'.

Honourable Speaker, it is my profound honour and privilege to stand before you as first timer to attend to the business of the National Assembly. In my new capacity as Minister of Trade, Industry and Employment, I would not only recognise your importance but also take this opportunity to seek your support, prayers and blessing in this Holy Month of Ramadan.

On the subject of the day, Second Reading of the Bill seeks to establish a modern, coherent, and development-oriented investment framework for The Gambia that enables the attraction, retention, and expansion of responsible and sustainable investment.

The Bill, going for its Second Reading, seeks:

a) An alignment with national and regional priorities in order to ensure consistency and Green Recovery-Focus National Development Plan, the African Continental Free Trade Area [AfCFTA] Protocol on Investment, ECOWAS Treaties, and other international best practices in investment, promotion, and facilitation;
b) Promotion of sustainable development to integrate social, economic, and environmental sustainability objectives into investment regulation so as to maximise positive impacts, minimise adverse effects and advance responsible investment practices;
c) Institutional strengthening in order to provide for the establishment and capacity building of key institutions, including The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency [GIEPA], The Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission [GCCPC], The Gambia Standards Bureau [TGSB], to ensure effective implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of investment policy;
d) Balance in investor-state relations in order to safeguard the policy space of the state, while balancing rights and obligations of investors, incorporating principles of corporate social responsibility and ensuring that international investment agreements support national sustainable development objectives;
e) Legal and policy coherence in order to address systemic gaps, overlaps, and inconsistencies within the investment regime, harmonise provisions with related policies in trade, industry, agriculture, labour, entrepreneurship, financial services, and climate change, and establish effective mechanisms for dispute prevention and settlement;

f) Regional and global competitiveness in order to position The Gambia to benefit from emerging opportunities in regional integration and global value chain, and to adapt to technological transformations, including smart agriculture, the Internet of Things, and advanced manufacturing and assembly systems.

The amendment of the GIEPA Act will deliver a modernised, predictable and transparent investment framework that enhances investor confidence, increased attraction and retention of sustainable, high-quality investment into The Gambia, stronger institutional capacity to deliver on investment and export promotion mandates, better alignment of The Gambia's legal regime with AfCFTA and ECOWAS obligation, thereby improving regional integration.

The amendment of the GIEPA Act will also improve balance between economic growth and sustainable development imperatives, including environmental protection, gender equity, and youth employment creation.

The proposed amendments to the GIEPA Act 2015 are, therefore, essential to reposition The Gambia as a competitive, resilient, and sustainable investment destination. They will ensure that the national investment regime reflects contemporary realities, strengthens institutional effectiveness, and creates conditions conducive to inclusive economic transformation in line with Vision 2035, the RF-NDP, as well as the broader aspiration of Agenda 2063.

I so submit. Let me repeat that I also move that this Bill be read a second time.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Any seconder? Yes, Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I rise to second the motion.

Honourable Speaker, this Bill is also very important. Anything that deals with trade or which produces wealth for our people is important. I believe investment promotion is the first point of contact for all investors because it provides the necessary information and also explains the procedures to them as well as helps to engage in networking. So, to improve that is a very important initiative.

Export promotion, Honourable Speaker, should support our local entrepreneurs, our local businesses. We should support them so that they will be able to reach international markets. We are too much into imports. If you compare our imports to our exports or income from imports to that of exports, it is 100km away.

So, we need to boost our exports, and any investment promotion should promote more exports. When we say investment in this country, people always focus on foreign direct investment, which is important, but it is not the be all. Foreign direct investment also has a tendency of discouraging local entrepreneurship. We should be promoting exports of our own crops and that cannot also come without value additions.

The Minister has mentioned the issue of AfCFTA [African Continental Free Trade Area]. We will not benefit from that adequately unless we build our own value addition to our crops, and we have so many of them that we can

process and then do trade with our own African countries. The objective of the AfCFTA is to ensure at least 40 to 50% of our external trade should be between us in Africa so that the rest will be done outside.

Honourable Speaker, training, which he mentioned, is also very important. If we want our business people, our entrepreneurs, to really gain as much as possible, they need to be trained. I believe this initiative should also help them to get full training so that they will be able to do their work.

Also, we have to give them incentives. If you want people to progress, you want them to persist in doing something until they become qualified, you need to give them incentives. Our strategic objective, Honourable Speaker, should be to create a conducive environment for those who are exporting our crops. We must give them that environment. Without that, they will just start and they will…

I got a brother who started to send some smoke fish from The Gambia as far as Kenya, but after he started once, twice, then he got discouraged and left. But if we give them the incentives and support them, they will persist and continue.

Honourable Speaker, like I said, investment is not just foreign direct investment. Sometimes that is important for us foreign direct investment. But if we sit in an office and just wait for people who will want to come for foreign direct investment, we may be sitting there for a long time. But if we sit there for the Gambian people, we will receive a lot of visitors because so many youths will want to participate in trade, but they have difficulties.

One, they have difficulties in terms of capital. How do we help them so that they will be able to access capital because we will not be able to do anything without capital? So, we should be thinking about that.

Honourable Speaker, I want to support this bill wholeheartedly and also call on all Members to do the same because this is a very important issue.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Members, in accordance with Order 67[1] of the Standing Orders, I will now open the floor for debate on the general merits and principles of the Bill. Any Honourable Member who wishes to partake in the debate may do so now.

I have a good number of you that made it to my list. We are beginning with the Member for Jarra Central.

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, may I first of all congratulate the Honourable Minister for his new appointment as Minister of Trade. Thank you very much, Honourable Minister, for the new role that you are undertaking now.

Honourable Speaker, the GIEPA Amendment Bill here before us, as the previous speaker, Member for Wuli East just mentioned, cannot be overemphasized. Among the most salient reasons why it is very important for the Ministry of Trade to come up with this amendment or changes in the

draft is the revision and rationalisation of the tax and fiscal incentives, especially those granted through the SICs [Special Investment Certificates].

Honourable Speaker, if you look at what has been put in the Special Investment Certificate Policy, it is very broad to the extent that you would not understand what incentive to give and what to hold. In that dimension, Honourable Speaker, government was losing a lot of revenue. Too much revenue has been lost through ad hoc activities of issuing the SICs to investors.

Honourable Speaker, if you look at the 2015 Act, which is the current Act, it provides very minimal accountability and transparency of issuing the SICs to investors. In that direction, Honourable Speaker, you can see that it is very difficult to account for how many SICs were given…

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, you have the floor.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. I thank the Honourable Minister for bringing this progressive bill before the National Assembly.

I just want to question the Honourable Minister one thing. I do not know why you are not mindful to also amend Section 50 of the GIEPA Act because it restricts the employment of foreign nationals to 20% and what they do now.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order from the Member for Kantora and Majority Leader.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, with your permission, Second Reading of a Bill, reference to Order 67[1]. *"On a motion being moved that a Bill be read a second time, the general merits and principles of the Bill may be debated."*

So, we are not really going into the specific clauses of the Bill per se. It is just to delve into the general merits and principles of the Bill, not to go to specific clauses.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, order sustained. Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, please take note and do not go into*… [Interrupted]*

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Honourable Speaker…

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, sit down. Please, take your seat and do not go into the specific reasons or objects, especially going into provisions of the Bill. Thank you.

Please, Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, continue.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Honourable Speaker, he does not understand what I said, and equally, you did not understand what I said. I am talking about Section 50 of the previous Act*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Latrikunda, take your seat, please. No. please, take your seat. Order, Honourable Members. Honourable Member for Kantora, take your seat.

Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, I made a ruling on that. You cannot go back to that, please. Do not do that. Continue.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: I am going to repeat for records. I am not talking about*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, if you want to repeat, I will… Sit down. No, take your seat. Honourable Member, you must abide by my ruling, if you want to contribute. I have made a ruling, and I do not want you to go back to that. Do not justify why you did that. You are out of order. Do not do that. If you want to continue your deliberation, you must abide by my ruling. You cannot take us back on those things. We will not accept that. Continue.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Honourable Minister, as I said, the Bill is a very progressive one. I looked at the specific intent of the Bill where you mentioned balance the investor-state relationship. This is very important for our investors.

One thing I know, if investors are not protected in the country when they land at the airport, they always want to go to the corridors of power so that they can be protected. But if you are wise enough to bring a law that is going to protect the investors and their investments, they will certainly just go to

the AG Chambers to incorporate their businesses, and then do their businesses because they know they are protected by the law.

So, this is a very important law. I only hope we are going to implement it, whereby investors will not go to the state corridor to look for favours to do their investment. That is number one.

Number two, the particular intent, you mentioned a social corporate responsibility. This is long overdue because I remember I personally wrote to all the companies that have their investments in my constituency to do their social corporate responsibility. None of them replied to my letter. So, when I look at the law, I realised that it is not an obligation on them.

So now, if you are revising a law that is going to make it obligatory on companies to do their social cooperate responsibilities, it is a step in the right direction.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: I am not sure the Member for Latrikunda that social corporate responsibility should be under your constituency and under what authority. But please do not respond.

Member for Kinag West, you have the floor. He is out again. Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana, you have the floor.

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

Due to time constraints, I will be very brief just to congratulate the Minister of Trade and GIEPA as well. Having legal frameworks provides the necessary guarantees and securities for investment. Security is imperative. Without security, it will be very difficult to really secure investments. We all know currently in The Gambia we need investment boosters. So, we congratulate GIEPA for this laudable initiative. We know that once the National Assembly does the needful, this will go a long way in...

Honourable Speaker, I am disturbed here. I am missing my lines. As I was saying, we know that once the National Assembly does the needful, this will go a long way in strengthening the quest of GIEPA in making The Gambia an attractive investment base, which will eventually culminate into the creation of jobs and the growth of capital. Eventually, it will enhance our national development strives.

Honourable Speaker, as I said earlier on, my contribution is to add to all the positive voices that have been said. I will be one of the advocates for this particular Bill. As Honourable Member, I will advocate that. Let us not waste time on this Bill; let us not even commit it to any committee.

These are mere amendments, and the amendments are clear. We can go into them paragraph by paragraph and know what is there. They are not bringing anything new. All they are doing is changing and amending certain sections of the law, which are important towards the socio-economic advancement of the industries that we have in The Gambia.

The Chairperson of the Trade Committee highlights the SICs. Laws need to be clear. If at all the provisions there are not clear and are becoming

cumbersome, what do you expect at the end of the day? Investors will shy away.

So, I strongly believe that we should lay this Bill and make sure that we all give it the needful, if at all there is any fast-track lane in the National Assembly.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana. I now invite the Member for Sanimentereng.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Of course, I will have to join colleagues in congratulating the newly appointed Minister of Trade, so congratulations on your new appointment.

Of course, congratulations to GIEPA for bringing before us this very important Bill. It is timely and very important as alluded to by other Members. This Bill also tries to address some of the challenges that our people outside or our other investors who might have built interest to come and invest in The Gambia are facing. So, it is very important we have such a Bill. We have such a law that will also encourage even our citizens outside who would like to come and invest in The Gambia and of course, other external investors.

It is a Bill that would also address the issue of trying to reduce or to increase the employment rate in this country. As we can all see employment is

becoming a challenge because more youths are learning and achieving their goals of having higher educational rates. Of course, because of the population in The Gambia, we cannot be having more youth employment.

So, this Bill is also trying to address how best our youth can be creative because having more businesses or investors coming into our country can also increase the size of employment, especially of our youths in the country.

Honourable Speaker, I would also urge the Honourable Members of this National Assembly to join us as a committee to see how best we can also pass this Bill to become an Act.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Tumana, you have the floor.

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I would like to start my deliberation by congratulating the new Minister of the Ministry of Trade. Honourable Minister, congratulations.

I would again want to thank the Ministry together with GIEPA for coming up with this wonderful Bill which aims to amend the 2015 GIEPA Act. We all know this Act has a lot of weaknesses making it possible for people to misuse the Special Investment Certificate [SIC] in the Act. The SIC is the Special Investment Certificate geared towards attracting investors in this country.

So therefore, we believe some people are misusing it because it is targeting five years plus two, but we know some people are going beyond that and some are even going up over ten years. It is only targeting responsible and

sustainable investors to come to The Gambia and do businesses so that they can enjoy those opportunities.

Honourable Speaker, I believe this Bill is going to position The Gambia to benefit from emerging opportunities as far as the regional integration is concerned. So currently yes, the GIEPA Act that is enforced is also opening to that. But to make it strong and position The Gambia well, I think the country needs this particular Bill. This will attract, retain, and expand the responsible and sustainable investors in the country and also put them on the right track.

With those few remarks, Honourable Speaker, I beg to take my seat. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tumana. I will now invite the Member for Kantora and Majority Leader.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the floor. I would not take much of your time.

I want to join my colleagues to felicitate the right Honourable Minister for winning the trust and confidence of His Excellency the President in appointing him to take the mantle of leadership as far as Trade Ministry is concerned.

This amendment is really long overdue. I am in line with the proposal made by Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana that National Assembly take

everything seriously to make sure we commit this Bill to the Committee of the Whole Assembly to look at the proposed amendments and tidy them up as time is very germane.

Honourable Speaker, I said in my first intervention that The Gambia is a signatory to Africa Free Continental Trade Agreement [AfCFTA], and we are opening up our country to receive inflow of goods. So therefore, the onus lies on us to create the enabling environment to compete with other bigger markets. This is what is expected of the Government, so these deserve a commendation, a standing ovation to tap the Government on the back, for doing the right thing.

Government must make sure that we look at all regulatory frameworks to make sure that we also compete with the wider world. In so doing, you must give, of course, some incentives. But is it forever? No, because it has some revenue implications. So, it is time that GIEPA and Ministry of Trade are thinking in this direction to make sure the key words are 'facilitate and promote trade transactions' in both import and export, which is very key.

So therefore, I think we commend the Minister for that. Of course, taking the bull by the horn that it is not tax holiday forever, there has to be a timeline. You cannot keep on saying that you are a starter; a starter till when? You cannot also abuse that. These decisions are decisive, and they are very much suited at the right place.

So, without further ado, I will call on Members of the National Assembly to really expedite the process of this Bill that we do not really have time; and time is of concern because of our membership to other international

organisations the likes of … *[Inaudible]* … and others. We expect the Government to create an enabling environment to make sure that we look at all these regulatory frameworks to align them so that we can be able to compete with the entire African continent. This is giving us a market of 1.3 billion.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Kiang West, you have the floor.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for giving me an opportunity. Let me first of all thank the Honourable Minister and congratulate him on his appointment as the Minister of Trade.

Honourable Speaker, as a Member of the Trade Committee, these amendments are not coincidence. They are deliberate attempts because we have realities on the ground that require a legislative amendment to our laws that governs investments. During several engagements that we have had with the Ministry as well as GIEPA, they have seen these gaps in the legislation which would ensure that the interest of the country is protected as well as investors.

So, this is why they come up with such important amendments. If you look at all the amendments from 1 to 14, some of these amendments are not stand-alone clauses. They have sub-clauses which required thorough consultation with the business community, investors as well as Government stakeholders.

Of course, the Ministry is the custodian of the Bill, but we have other stakeholders whose inputs matter very well. Of course, consultation is important but incorporating the views of your stakeholders also matters so much and investment is not a simple thing.

Of course, I was not around when my Honourable Chair was deliberating, but he must talk about the Special Investment Certificate. This has been an agenda on the table, and we debated it extensively. And we had a lot of discussions about it with the Ministry as well as GIEPA.

So, I think recently we have passed a Bill that intends to amalgamate the… how to call it? the… Can you please help me, Honourable Chair? … Standards Bureau and Weights and Measures. All of these things are very much…, and we have done thorough consultations.

So, I want to appeal to the Assembly to allow this Bill to be referred to a committee to continue that thorough consultation and report back so that we can enrich the document, because otherwise we cannot just come and pass this Bill. Look at all these amendments; we come to the floor and we want to fast track. But let us try to do the extensive consultation on the Bill. We can enrich the Bill for the Ministry. This is all what we want to do to help the Ministry as well as GIEPA.

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Central Baddibu, you can have the floor.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I also want to thank the Honourable Minister as well as congratulate him on his new appointment.

Honourable Speaker, the objects and the reasons of this Bill are very clear, apt, and timely. The Gambia is not an isolation in terms of trade and promotion of the welfare of investors. We have been seeing situations where investors sometimes are not protected in a country, so this Bill is here to protect both investors and the citizens.

As alluded by the Majority Leader, The Gambia will also be able to participate in other subregional and international organisations. Now, The Gambia is a signatory to the African Continental Free Trade Area. We also have what we call Green Recovery Focus. So, once this Bill is looked at, vetted, improved on, and passed, it will make The Gambia to participate equally as other partners.

Honourable Speaker, it also talks about the promotion of sustainable development in order to integrate social and economic environmental sustainability objective into investment regulations. We cannot have an investment in a country when it is not regulated. There could be an abuse of authority, so we need regulation in place. Our institutions like GIEPA and Gambia Standard Bureau need to be well equipped, and the Bill talks about that.

Now in The Gambia here, most of our agricultural products are not weighed. You put your cabbage or whatever in the basket; they charge for basket.

There should be a standard of measurement in place that is going to make people invest in our agriculture rather than being lost.

Honourable Speaker, it also talks about the legal and policy coherence in order to address systematic gaps, overlaps and inconsistencies within the investment regime.

So, I believe, and I agree with Honourable Member for Kiang West that it has to be referred to a committee. A committee needs to look into this and enrich it, and it becomes an inclusive Bill. It will be a Bill that is going to be citizen friendly and be here for the people.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Foni Bintang Karanai, you have the floor.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. As the Bill entails, investment, export, and promotion, as a nation, most of the time our investment is very weak. Also, exports are an important aspect of a nation as they promote our economy and its growth.

Today, most people will wonder why the Dalasi is constantly depreciating because we are not exporting anything. When I say anything, only few things we export are of no immense value. So, if we invest more in exports, it will promote our economy to the standard that is required on earth. So, that is an important thing.

But also, as Honourable Members noted, it will be important for us to refer it to a committee for the committee to do the needful because the law-making process should be a complex one where people look into it critically and enrich any Bill that is being passed.

As much as we want it as soon as possible, but we must look into it to enrich it so that we have what we want as a nation for us to progress and to actually generate the kind of valuable export we want.

So, on that note, I thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I now invite Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment to respond to issues raised and wind up the debate. Honourable Minister.

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Honourable Speaker, I want to take this opportunity once again to thank all those that have contributed and made valuable suggestions and opinions as well.

I will start with the Honourable Member for Kantora and Majority Leader who indicated that this Bill aligns with the AfCFTA initiatives. I fully agree with that. He gave very important advice on the application of the trade incentive currently as it has been applied. He also suggested valuable changes that we have carefully noted.

Honourable Member for Kiang West, who is also a Member of the Trade Committee, talked about the legislative requirement to adjust better for

public interest and fair-trade competitiveness. Also, he suggested key reforms that he would want to see included in the Bill. We have taken note and as the Bill moves into the next steps, we will be able to make further adjustments and also take into account your statement that has been made here.

Honourable Member for Central Baddibu, I guess there already exists 2022 Investment Regulation supporting and implementing the current Act. If your suggestion is about revisiting the regulation, we could happily do so and adjust accordingly. But so far, the gaps that have been identified were in the area of the Act, which we have presented before you for your endorsement.

With respect to comments coming from my own Chair, the Chairman of the Trade committee, I have noted the call, and we will be happy to be guided whether this thing goes next to the Third Reading or is sufficient for its consideration at this stage. We stand to be guided, and we will comply with whatever suggestion that you make.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the Bill entitled "The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (Amendment) Bill, 2025" be read a second time.]

Honourable Members, in accordance with Order 68[1] of the Standing Orders, the Bill is hereby referred to the Assembly Business Committee for

committal to either a specific committee or Committee of the Whole Assembly.

Thank you.

6. **Adjournment**

Honourable Members, that was it for today. Of course, I wish you a very pleasant day, and Ramadan Mubarak to all of you as well as the Honourable Minister and team.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agree to]

[That the Assembly stands adjourned till Tuesday 3rd March 2026, at 10:00 a.m.]

[The Speaker finally slammed the Gavel against the sound block signalling the end of the day's proceedings.]

THE END