

National Assembly, New Assembly Building, Reginald Pye Lane, Banjul, The Gambia

[OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT]

3RD SITTING OF THE 1ST ORDINARY SESSION OF THE 6TH LEGISLATURE

National Assembly Proceedings of

Wednesday, 4th March 2026

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

NUMBER: 1

VOLUME: 3

2026 LEGISLATIVE YEAR

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1. Prayers

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

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

[The Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

The Assembly was called to Order.

2. Corrections and approval of the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday, 3rd March 2026

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, good morning. I welcome, on your behalf, His Excellency, the Vice President of the Republic, Mr. Muhammad B.S. Jallow and Cabinet Ministers of course, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad, and that of Interior for joining us to attend to our business of the day.

Honourable Members, order, please. Honourable Members, the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday, 3rd March 2026, is before us for corrections and approval. Can any Honourable Member please move a motion for corrections and approval of the said Record of Votes and Proceedings? Member for Niani, you have the floor.

HON OMAR JOBE [NIANI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I rise to move the motion.

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

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

THE SPEAKER:

[Question Proposed]

Any issues or observations from Honourable Members, of course, you may do so by show of your Constituency tags, and we will go through the Records of Votes and Proceedings page by page beginning with Page 1.

In the absence of any tag, can we move to Pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed To]

[That the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday, 3rd March 2026, be approved without amendment.]

3. Speaker's Ruling on the Point of Order Raised by the Honourable for Lower Saloum during the Previous Sitting, Monday 2nd March 2026

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, be reminded that during our Monday's sitting, there was a Point of Order raised by the Member for Lower Saloum which I promised to deliver a ruling on this morning. So, as promised, I intend to deliver my ruling.

Honourable Members, I wish to deliver my ruling on the Point of Order raised by the Honourable Member for Lower Saloum during the Sitting of Monday, 2nd March 2026, pertaining to the request by the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Justice to withdraw the Vetting Bill, 2023.

The Point of Order raised on the interpretation of Order 76[1] of the Standing Orders, and where given, the Bill had been referred to a committee, it may lawfully be withdrawn at this stage. This matter requires clarity, constitutional perspective and firm guidance from the Chair.

Order 76[1] of the Standing Orders provides and I read: "*The person in charge of a bill may make 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."*

The person in charge of a bill may make a motion with notice for withdrawal. There is no dispute on:

- the Attorney General and Minister of Justice being the person in charge of the Bill;
- the Bill not been read a third time;
- notice of withdrawal was duly given.

The contention of the Honourable Member only rests on the phrase, and I quote*, "except when the bill is before a Committee".*

Honourable Members, the National Assembly derives its authority from the Constitution. The Assembly is the master of its own proceedings subject only to the Constitution itself. Committees are creations of the

Assembly. They exercise delegated authority. They do not surpass the Plenary authority of the Assembly.

To interpret Order 76[1] … Majority Leader, please take your seat.

To interpret Order 76[1] in a manner that permanently removes from the Assembly the power to withdraw a bill once it has been referred to a Committee would elevate Committee procedures above Plenary authority, restrict the constitutional control of the Assembly over its own legislative agenda, and create procedural rigidity inconsistent with National Assembly sovereignty. Such an interpretation would be inconsistent with constitutional principle. The Assembly retains ultimate control over every stage of a bill until it is passed or rejected.

Honourable Members, the phrase I quote: *"except when the bill is before a Committee"* must be read purposively. The prohibition is intended to prevent disruption of active committee proceedings, meet deliberations without formal notice or procedural order. It cannot reasonably be interpreted to mean that once a bill is referred to a committee, the sponsoring authority loses all ability to seek withdrawal until the Committee completes its work.

If that were the case, the Assembly would be compelled to allow Committees to expend time and public resources, conduct hearings and deliberations, and prepare reports even where the Government has formally indicated that it no longer intends to proceed with the bill. That would be legislative inefficiency elevated into procedural doctrine. Standing Orders are designed to facilitate orderly business, not to compel the continuation of processes that serve no legislative purpose.

Honourable Members, Committee proceedings involve administrative expenditures, technical consultations, public hearings and staff time and public resources. Where the sponsor of a bill formally notifies the Assembly of withdrawal, insisting that the Committee constitute continued deliberations merely because the bill thus referred would amount to a misuse of Assembly time and public funds. This Assembly must not allow its procedures to become instruments of waste or obstruction. Legislative efficiency is a constitutional responsibility.

Honourable Members, the Point of Order raised suggests that the referral of the Bill to a Committee creates an absolute procedural bar to withdrawal. With respect, that interpretation is overly rigid and fails to appreciate:

- the supremacy of Plenary authority;
- the purposive construction of Standing Orders;
- established Assembly practice;
- the Assembly's inherent control over its agenda.

The Standing Orders do not exist to trap the Assembly into procedural paralysis; they exist to ensure order, fairness and efficiency. The Attorney General complied with the requirements of notice; the bill has not reached Third Reading. The Assembly remains seized of the matter. There is, therefore, no procedural impropriety.

Honourable Members, on previous occasions in this Assembly, bills have been withdrawn after Second Reading and referral to Committees. Where notice was given and the Assembly granted leave, that practice affirms that the Assembly retains control at every stage prior to final passage.

Comparative Commonwealth practice similarly recognises that withdrawal is permissible before Third Reading.

Subject to the will of the Assembly and ruling accordingly, I rule as follows:

- Order 76[1] of the Standing Orders permits a person in charge of a bill to move with notice for withdrawal of his or her bill at any stage before Third Reading;
- The phrase 'except when the bill is before a Committee' must be interpreted as preventing procedural disruption of active Committee proceedings, but does not extinguish the Assembly's Plenary authority to permit withdrawal;
- The Assembly retains constitutional supremacy over the business and may determine whether to grant leave for withdrawal;
- The request by the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Justice to withdraw the 'Vetting Bill 2023' is procedurally in order;
- The Point of Order raised by the Honourable Member for Lower Saloum is not sustained;
- Therefore, the 'Vetting Bill 2023' is hereby deemed to have been withdrawn as was already decided by the majority of the Assembly during the Sitting of Monday, 2nd March 2026, in accordance with the Standing Orders.

Honourable Members, the Standing Orders must be interpreted in a manner that upholds constitutional authority, institutional efficiency and practical governance. They must not be weaponised to compel the Assembly to continue legislative proceedings that have ceased to serve a policy purpose. I so ruled.

Clerk, we may proceed.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by the Member for Upper Saloum.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, I think it is unprocedural when Members want to ask a question and then just*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are on a point of order.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Yes, I am on a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Can you refer us to the point of order?

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: I am reading from the precedence of Assembly, not the Standing Order. Whenever Members of National Assembly ask questions, really the Speaker should actually listen, and I think procedurally, we need to look at it. *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: No. Please, just on a point of order and you take a seat.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: It is on Order 8, which says that the Speaker's ruling is final. We understand that. But when the Speaker's ruling is final, based on various sections of the Constitution and of Standing Order and also what we learn from other sections…

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please sit down. Honourable Member, you are out of order.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is another point of order by Member for Central Baddibu.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: I am rising on Order 76. Assemblies all over are governed by rules and Rule 76…

THE SPEAKER: Can you read Rule 76?

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: I am saying Rule 76.

THE SPEAKER: Yes. Read it, please.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: But you cannot force me, please. You have to take your time. You are dealing with a law; you cannot dictate us, please. Let us maintain*... [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: No. please, take your seat.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: I am citing 76. Follow me, please. You cannot force us.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member…

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: 76, *"The person in charge of a bill may make a motion with notice for the withdrawal of a bill at any stage before it has been read the third time, except when the bill is before a Committee."* Now, our issue here*... [Interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order, please. Honourable Member for Central Baddibu, please take your seat. I am not entertaining any… There is no point of order on the ruling because… *[Interrupted]*

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: Can we hear that Point of Order from the Member for Lower Saloum?

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. The Order is 8[c]. I quote: Order ***8[1]*** *"In all case where matters are not expressly provided by these Standing Orders, any questions of procedure or order shall be decided by the Speaker."* ***8[2c]*** *"the precedents, customs, procedures, traditions and practices of the Assembly; and."*

Honourable Speaker, my reference is from Section 108 of the 1997 Constitution. Before going further, you have mentioned the jurisdictions of Commonwealth Parliaments and you have not given us any reference or orders of that jurisdiction. [1] the rule…

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please take your seat. Let me address this first. Honourable Members, order! Central Baddibu, you cannot run there and run here. No, you cannot do that. Please, Central Baddibu, maintain decorum. Order! Honourable Member, switch off your mic, please. Honourable Members, order. Honourable Member, you know very well that you are out of order. No, do not use your mic.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, you will allow me to submit, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Please, take your seat. Honourable Member, please take your seat. You are a ranking Member. Please, do not behave like that. Honourable Members, we all know the point of order you people are rising to; you are out of order. Do not use your mic, please. Order! Honourable Members, order!

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: You should allow me to exhaust my point of order.

THE SPEAKER: No. Wait, let me come. Please, take your seat. Central Baddibu, you are a senior Member. Do not behave like that. Honourable Member, do not disrupt proceedings, my friend. Please, behave.

Honourable Member, you cannot disrupt Assembly, behave. Order! Honourable Member for Central Baddibu, you cannot behave like that. Do you think this is Central Baddibu? No, this is not Central Baddibu. Order! Honourable Members.

They know very well that it is out of order to subject Speaker's ruling to a debate or for questions. No, I am not allowing it. Honourable Members, you know the process to take if you want to challenge this ruling.

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

THE SPEAKER: No, you cannot raise a point of order based on my ruling. No, we are going to proceed.

Clerk, let us proceed.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, as per Order 41[1] … Member for Lower Saloum, take your seat, please. Order, please.

Honourable Members, if you disagree with the ruling, you know what to do. Honourable Members, you can rise on a point of order or let me say you can use your mic on a point of order, and that is automatic. Speaker will give you leave to stand on your point of order, but what you cannot do is to abuse the process.

If the Speaker makes a ruling, you cannot stand on a point of order based on the Speaker's ruling. If you want to challenge the Speaker's ruling, there are processes and procedures that you can take. That is my point. You cannot rise on a point of order based on my ruling, Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana. Member for Lower Saloum, take your seat. No, sit down. You rose to a point of order and you are making a statement.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, I rose on Order 8.

THE SPEAKER: No, take your seat. Put off your mic, please. Take your seat. Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana, take your seat. Honourable Member, you rose to a point of order. You read the point of order and asked the Speaker in his ruling. You said I have not given you example, for I should give example. You cannot be Speaker. You cannot do my work. No. Wait, please.

Honourable Members, if you disagree with the ruling of the Speaker, there are processes and procedures that you need to take. Honourable Members, you are missing the point. When the Speaker ruled and you disagree with the ruling, you cannot raise a point of order on that. You know, there is a process that you need to follow. That is what I am saying.

Now, what is your point of order Member for Lower Saloum?

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: You listen to my point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Lower Saloum, Niamina Dankunku and others, please.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: I rise on Order 8.

THE SPEAKER: Rising on Order 8 on incident and so on and so forth about what you…

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: You will allow me to come. Honourable Speaker, I rise on Order 8[1, 2b and c].

THE SPEAKER: Read them, please.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes. 8[1] says, *"In all cases where matters are not expressly provided for by these Standing Orders, any questions on procedure or order shall be decided by the Speaker."* The Constitution that I will come and read. And 8[2c] says: *"the precedents, customs, procedures, traditions and practices of the Assembly."*

Now, I am going to read the Constitution, Section 108, where you have not given us any provisions in your submissions.

THE SPEAKER: Now, let me help you.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, allow me to come.

THE SPEAKER: Let me help you for order.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: I am on order.

THE SPEAKER: You have finished your order. Let me help you. I want to ask you a question. I…

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No. Allow me to come from there you can. When somebody is on a point of order, you do not observe unless he/she is done.

THE SPEAKER: No, let me ask you a question.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, you should not ask me. Allow me to continue my point of order if I exhausted, then you can do whatever you want to do.

8[2c] says that the precedents, customs, procedures, traditions and practices of other jurisdictions to the extent that they are applicable to the Assembly.

And Section 108 of the Constitution, Regulation in the National Assembly, [1] *"Subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the National Assembly may regulate its own procedures, and in particular may make any standing orders for the conduct of its own proceedings."*

[2] *"Notwithstanding, anything to the contrary in this Constitution or in any other law, no decision, order or direction of the National Assembly or any of its Committees, or the Speaker relating to the Standing Orders of the National Assembly, or to the application or interpretation of the Standing Orders, or any act done by the National Assembly or the Speaker under any Standing Orders, shall be enquired into by any court."*

Honourable Speaker, my submission is that in your ruling, you stated that there is a constitutional provision which you did not mention. You have referred to other jurisdictions. You could have told us the procedures that in this jurisdiction, these orders are applicable, and this provision in the Constitution is applicable. That is how we would understand.

This is my submission, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are out of order. Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana, you have the floor.

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED MEMBER]: Honourable Speaker, let us proceed because what I was going to propose is exactly what he did.

THE SPEAKER: It is out of order.

Clerk, let us proceed.

4. Questions for Oral Answers in accordance with Standing Order 41[1]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, as per the Order Paper and Order 41[1] of the Standing Orders, today is questions for oral answers.

Furthermore, as a reminder, Order 43 of the Standing Orders limits Supplementary Questions to 7 in total: 2 from the Honourable Member asking the question and 5 from other Members.

Therefore, we will proceed with His Excellency the Vice President, Mr. Muhammad B.S. Jallow, and the Honourable Ministers scheduled today to give their oral answers. Thank you.

Clerk, we may proceed, please.

i. **Questions for Which Due Notices Were Given to His Excellency the Vice President for Oral Answers**

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Your Excellency the Vice President, please, you may proceed to the podium to answer questions for which due notices were given to you by Honourable Members for oral replies beginning with ***Question No. 001*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Sami Constituency.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, the culvert constructed by the Office of the Vice President between Sami Suruwa Kunda and Pachonki were destroyed during the last rainy season. Could His Excellency the Vice President inform this August Assembly whether his office is aware of this, and what measures have been taken to fix them before the next rainy season?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform this august Assembly that the culvert constructed between Sami Suruwa Kunda and Pachonki was not destroyed per se. There were two culverts constructed. This particular culvert has two pipe cells, which covered the span of the gully at the time.

However, due to an increase in the volume of stormwater, part of the flow diverted the culvert, and scouring eventually created another gully next to the culvert, thereby disconnecting the culvert on the other side. Therefore, a bigger culvert is required to connect the two sides, which is currently under consideration.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, as you have put it, you are quite right that there are two culverts. But the first one, the bigger one, is somehow not completed, I can say, although people are crossing. The second one is already destroyed; nobody can cross that. After the completion, did you receive any information from your office?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, as I said, my office informed me, and I know the Honourable Member knows that I also visited the place. My office informed me that it is not the culvert itself; it is because of the amount of rain, the volume of water that came in, that actually created the side channel, not the culvert itself. But notwithstanding, they are currently trying to construct another culvert to solve the problem.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Kantora and Majority Leader.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Your Excellency the Vice President. Prior to constructing this new culvert, was there a proper study to really understand the challenges that occurred before this exercise was conducted?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Yes, Honourable Speaker. There was a study done. And like I said, I have also visited the place. I think the amount of rain that came was not expected. And secondly, the place is also sandy. And I think that is part of the problem.

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

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Yea, I withdraw. My question is very similar to what the Honourable Majority Leader asked.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker and Your Excellency the Vice President. Could you inform this august Assembly about the last time you physically visited the site? Thank you.

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, the last time I physically visited was about 12 months ago. Yes. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Your Excellency. In your response, you did indicate that the bigger culvert which is required to connect the two sides is under consideration. What is the prospect of the state of the consideration? How soon?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, as we speak, they are looking at it.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, the question is not answered. Not the prospect of the state of the culvert, but may I say "looking at it". There is no prospect in that.

THE SPEAKER: Minority Leader, you are out of order.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: And I ask how soon?

THE SPEAKER: Yes, but you are out of order. You know that.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: How soon looking at it?

THE SPEAKER: You are out of order, Minority Leader. Member for Brikama South, you have the floor.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, since you mentioned that they are looking at it, is there any possibility of meeting the timeline before the next rainy season for it to be constructed to avoid recurrence of what had happened?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, when I say "they are looking at it," that means how soon that is now. We are already on it. That is what my response meant.

THE SPEAKER: No, you cannot do that. No, please. Order! We now move to ***Question No. 002*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, the President of the Republic recently launched a ***15 million*** Enterprise Fund for the National People's Party [NPP] Women's Wing. Could His Excellency the Vice President inform this august Assembly as to whether public funds, including monies from the Consolidated Fund or any other State-Owned Enterprise, were used to finance the 15 million funds, and provide details of the source of funds?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform this august Assembly that public funds were not used for this initiative.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Your Excellency the Vice President. Every loan attracts interest. Can you inform this Assembly and The Gambia the interest rate?

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order from Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana. Honourable Members, please order. Let us listen to the point of order.

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Honourable Speaker, I rise on Order 43[4], which states:

"A supplementary question shall not be in order if it introduces matters not included in the original question and the answers provided. For the avoidance of doubt**,** whether a supplementary question is within remit shall be determined, on answering, by the Vice President, Minister or Member answering questions on behalf of the Assembly Authority".

Honourable Speaker, the original question is premised on whether the Women Enterprise Fund included public funds, monies from SOEs or other sources. And the response from the Vice President was that no public funds were used. The Honourable Member then posed a supplementary question regarding the interest attracted, which was neither included in the original question nor the answer provided by the Vice President.

It is my proposal, therefore, that you decline this question. Thank you.

[Motion]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Members. Order sustained, and the question is ruled out. One more, both the Member for Kantora and the Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, take your seats. Order, Honourable Members, please. Do you wish to move your motion now? Yes, please.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I wish to move a motion on the grounds that ***Questions 02***, ***03***, ***04***, and ***05*** are all not within the limits of public funds, and should be expunged from the record. Thank you

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order please. Majority Leader, take your seat. You have not come properly. No.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: I said that I am rising on Order 53(c), motion without notice. For the fact that the said funds are not public funds, this Assembly lacks jurisdiction to question them. So, essentially, I am moving a motion to expunge questions 02 through 04 because Assembly can only question funds that have been appropriated by the Assembly as public funds. The fact that these do not fall within the ambit of public funds means you cannot question them here.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. Turn off your microphone, please. The question passed all administrability tests. It was asked by the Member at Plenary and answered. On those bases, I may not allow the motion. You know the question was asked and answered already.

Member for Nianija, you have a point of order.

HON AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much. It is true that it passed all the administrative procedures, but this is Assembly. Nobody dictates what happens here. We dictate ourselves based on the Standing Orders.

Honourable Speaker, Orders 38[h] and [i] are very clear on admissibility of questions. [h] reads: *"a question shall not be asked as to whether statements in the press or of private individuals or private concerns are accurate."* [i] *"a question shall not be asked as to the character or conduct of any person except in his or her official or public capacity."*

And the Vice President has responded. This is a private matter, a party matter. What does it have to do with nationalism? Let us be serious, please.

THE SPEAKER: You are a ranking Member, and you are violating the law.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: No, I am just telling you the procedure.

THE SPEAKER: No, you are violating. There is a point of order.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Before the point of order, there was a motion that you allowed on the floor of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: Please, Honourable Members, order. Honourable Members, you know the duty to administer questions rests on the Speaker solely, and in this instance, the Speaker admitted it a couple of weeks ago.

Honourable Member for Jeshwang, you know. Member for Lower Saloum, you always raise points of order. When the Speaker is responding, you are busy discussing. That is why even when I was ruling on the motion, you could not hear. Now, you want to disturb me on that. No. Do not consult here; consult behind. Go to the lounge and consult there, not here.

Honourable Members, the admissibility of questions solely rests on the Speaker, and the Speaker admitted this question some weeks ago, and it was asked in the Plenary. I agree with Plenary supremacy as I indicated

earlier on, but it was asked and answered by the Vice President. So, order not sustained. Now, you have a last supplementary. Do you have?

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: I have a very… Honourable Speaker for that progressive ruling. Your Excellency the Vice President, we want to know whether these funds attract collateral or guarantees. Thank you very much.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: The Majority Leader, please put off your mic, I said. Point of order. Okay, there is a point of order by the Majority Leader.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: I am citing Order 38 that you cannot ask about private individuals or private business on the floor of the Assembly for the fact that it is not a public forum. Please, let me finish my question.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. Majority Leader, you heard the Member for Nianija. He rose on Order 38, and I ruled it out based on Order 39. Let us proceed. There is a point of order from Honourable Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana. I hope your ruling is not on the same…

[Point of Order]

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Honourable Speaker, I am still rising on Order 43(4) with regard to the supplementary question that is being asked. No, he asked a supplementary question about whether the loans attract collateral, and my point of order is in relation to that.

THE SPEAKER: No, it was sustained. Honourable Member, you are not listening.

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: No, he asked a question.

THE SPEAKER: No, he has two supplementary?

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: He asked one and then the second one? He asked just right now.

THE SPEAKER: No, I did not hear him, please.

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Let him administer his question again. I am waiting. Let him administer it.

THE SPEAKER: Nominated Member Kebba Lang, he asked.

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: My point of order is in advance.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, you have one more supplementary. Can we hear that?

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Honourable Vice President, are these funds disposed to women? I am asking for you to explain to this august gathering whether it attracts any guarantee or collateral. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, you are out of order. Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader, you have the floor.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, the parent question contains two parts. Could His Excellency the Vice President, inform this august Assembly whether public funds, including monies from the Consolidated Fund or any state enterprises, were used to finance the D15 million, and provide details on the source of the funds?

Honourable Speaker, the response given by the Vice President answers only one part of the question, and that response is that public funds are not used for this initiative. How about the other part of the parent question, to provide details on the source of the funds? It could be recalled it was during the "Meet the People's Tour" story. The President—

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order, please. Honourable Members, please maintain decorum. Once Your Excellency the Vice President responded that no public funds have been used or are expected to be used, that is it. He cannot provide any detail because this is not public funds. So, the question is ruled out.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: You did not listen to the end of my question.

THE SPEAKER: No.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: This was launched during the "Meet the People's Tour". We are curious.

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

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by the Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: I am rising on Order 8[2a]. I will read Order 8.

THE SPEAKER: Order 8?

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes, 8[2a]. Then I will read the Constitution. Honourable Speaker, probably the provisions of Section 150[1] of the 1997 Constitution state that: "*There shall be a Consolidated Fund into which shall be paid [a] all revenues or other money raised or received for the purpose of, or on behalf of the Government, and [b] any other money raised or received in trust for, or on behalf of the Government"*.

Honourable Speaker, in his response, he said these are not Government monies, and the charge of the Vice President is to represent the Government, not a political party. He accounts for Government business. Under Section 77[b], he is only charged with Government business, not other political parties. I think you rule out these things, and we continue, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. Member for Lower Saloum, prior to your order and, in fact, the Vice President made it very clear that this is not coming from the public funds. I could not agree more.

Member for Wuli East, you have the floor.

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

[Point of order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by the Member for Nianija.

HON AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Honourable Speaker, Standing Order 43[1]: *"Supplementary questions may be put for the purpose of elucidating an oral answer."* And you have put it that the Vice President has succinctly answered this question. So, why entertain all the supplementary questions? Let us move on, please.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you cannot rule on the point of order. If you ask a point of order, you have to be quiet and allow me to make a ruling. You have, of course, indicated what the Vice President responded, and that is it. But that does not bar Members from asking Supplementary Questions. If the Supplementary Questions are not in line, then they will not be sustained. That is all.

Member for Wuli East, please, you have the floor.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by Nominated Member Kebba Lang Fofana.

HON KEBBA LANG FOFANA [NOMINATED]: Honourable Speaker, Standing Order 38[1i]: *"a questions shall not be asked as to the character or conduct of any person except in his or her official or public capacity."*

Honourable Speaker, the response from the Vice President is that no public funds were used. Any other question that is going to emerge from this floor will be looking at the private dealings of an entity, and this Assembly does not have the jurisdiction to look over that. And all other related questions are going to be on the same thing. So, should we wait for points of order, or should we do the needful?

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I submit.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. You know, we must not pre-empt future questions. My duties and Members are to be guided by the Standing Orders. If a question is asked and it is not in line with the Standing Orders, the Constitution or our procedures, we will definitely do the needful. Let us progress. As we did in the past, I have declined some Supplementary Questions, so let us proceed in the interest of time.

Member for Wuli East, you have the floor.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, the Government is managing the resources of the state. *…[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: We are not hearing you. Can you speak a bit louder, please?

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: I said the Government is managing the resources of the people and if that same Government comes up with a large sum like ***D50 million***, it is in the interest of the Government to come transparently and explain to the people such a large amount. That is why we want the Vice President to be kind enough to

explain the scenario surrounding these D50 million so that we will be able to get rid of all the rumours regarding it. Can you help explain to us what this money is about?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Wuli East, you know very well this is not Government fund. It is not a Government project. You cannot say that the Government came up with a ***D50 million*** Project. You are out of order. No, that is not accurate.

Member for Serekunda, you have the floor.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, for the purpose of clarity, already there exists a fund with the same nomenclature with that of the NPP. So, does this not raise an eyebrow because there is a Women Enterprise Fund that is budgeted for in the 2026 budget which is administered by the Women's Bureau. So, will this not raise eyebrows?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you know the nomenclature is not the same. That is false. You cannot say that. No, this is the name of a party, NPP women money, something, and this one is a national something.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: It is the same nomenclature.

THE SPEAKER: It is not the same. You are out of order. Member for Brikama South, you have the floor.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, I think the other part of the question that we are anticipating is linked to the launching of this particular fund, which is done on a national activity. It was launched during the 'Meet the People's Tour', so that is why we need an explanation to know the source of the money.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you know that is out of order. That question was ruled out. No, this is not public funds. The Vice president said that this is not public funds. No, Honourable Members, the Vice President made it clear that this is not public funds. No, you are out of order.

Member for Busumbala, you have the floor.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, we are talking about the President of the Republic launching the Enterprise fund of D50 million to NPP*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Those are there. Do not enter the order. Honourable Member, please one minute. Honourable Members, you see, those in the public gallery there when you speak, I will not be able to hear you. If Members are engaging you into discussion, ignore them. Pretend you are dumb and you cannot hear. Just ignore them. Yes, can you repeat your question?

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Honourable Speaker, we are talking about the President of the Republic, His Excellency Adama Barrow, who launched this particular sum for women of NPP. Your

Excellency the Vice President, how about the other women that do not fall within the categories of NPP? Did you have any other fund for them?

THE SPEAKER: Order. Honourable Members, order. Member for Busumbala, please. Vice President can invite you to the NPP Bureau and you ask him that question. He will respond there, not here.

We now have ***Question No. 003*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency the Vice president, could you explain to this august Assembly why a 50 million Enterprise Fund was launched specifically for women of a single political party rather than through the existing Women's Enterprises Fund under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform this august Assembly that this question is for the party to answer.

THE SPEAKER: Let us move to ***Question No. 004*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Okay. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency the Vice President, can you inform this Assembly if the disbursement of ***D50 million*** to a political party's wing, spearheaded by the Head of State*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please, take your seat. Honourable Member, he said this question is for the political party, not the Vice President to answer. No, you can go to the party and ask that question there, not here.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Honourable Speaker, I want to ask my final question.

THE SPEAKER: Put off your mic. All right. Your final question, go ahead. Please, you have final compliment if you do not have. Please, can I proceed?

[Supplementary Question[s]

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency the Vice President, can you inform this august Assembly if the disbursement of D50 million to a political party's women's wing, spearheaded by…*[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, take your seat. Do not engage this Assembly in a futile endeavour. Do not do that. You asked a similar question. No.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Honourable Speaker, I do not understand the proceedings. I have 4 questions for the Vice President. I asked 2 questions, and now I am asking my third question. That is what I am doing.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your 2 Supplementary Questions are ruled out. You have exhausted your time. There is a point of order by the Member for Serekunda.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I am rising on Order 41, Questions for Oral Answers. There is nowhere in this provision that limits questions only to governance. It is open to everything.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you said you are rising on Order 41.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: Can you read it, please?

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Order 41[1], *"Questions for oral answers shall be taken on those Wednesdays on which the Assembly is in Session. Where questions to the Assembly Authority are to be taken, they shall be taken immediately after questions to the Vice President and Ministers."*

THE SPEAKER: Now, what is your point of order?

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: My point of order is that this has been a national discourse. So, it is a question which is valid, and the Standing Order is not limiting us only to governance.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are out of order. I rule that your point of order is not upheld. It is ruled out altogether.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by the Member for Bintang Karanai.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I am rising on Order 43[1] which says: "*Supplementary questions may be put for the purpose of elucidating an oral answer."* [2] says: *"The Member in whose name the question is listed may ask up to two supplementary questions. Up to five other Members may ask one further supplementary question each. In any event, no more than seven supplementary questions may be taken per question listed for oral answer."*

Now, what I am driving at is that the Member for Latrikunda Sabiji asked one question, and in the process of coming up with another question, you interjected. You understand? Now, he wants to talk about it, then you interjected*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: You are out of order.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: So, I am calling you to a point of order, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: You are out of order. Sit down. Yes, Member for Foni Bintang Karanai, you have the floor.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, you are here on behalf of the President, and the President is the leader of the NPP party. On that note, we are putting the question to the President and to the NPP party in this

regard. Our question still remains the same. Why is it singled out that the D50 million is given to only NPP women?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Foni Bintang Karanai, to you and to every other Member, in case anyone of you has questions for various political parties, please go and do that at their political parties or their party headquarters. The Vice President is not here representing political parties; he is representing the President and the Government. Therefore, your question is not entertained, and it is thrown out.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by the Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, Order 36[2], Questions to Vice President, Ministers, and the Assembly authorities. Order 36[2] states: *"A Member may ask questions of – [a] the Vice President or a Minister, on matters relating to their official responsibilities."*

I think this question should not even be entertained because the primary duty of the Vice President is to respond to Government business and official functions, not National People's Party. He is not responsible for disbursement of ***D50 million*** to NPP women.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Member, I think if we had listened to and accepted the ruling of the Speaker and the procedures of this Assembly, we would have now released the Vice President and probably even the second or third Minister because all these

Supplementary Questions directed to the Vice President to respond in respect of political parties have been ruled out. They are not in order. These questions do not pass the test of admissibility by the Speaker in Plenary.

So, whatever happens here, if it is not in line with the Standing Orders and the Constitution, I will not allow it. I have ruled out almost all these Supplementary Questions in respect to these various political parties or political questions.

So, we will just continue. If you minimise your points of order on that, we will exhaust very soon.

Member for Wuli East, you have the floor.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. In the name of transparency, again, an enterprise fund is meant to be a loan to women and to be paid back. So, we now have an NPP Enterprise Fund for the same purpose.

And the National Assembly also has disbursed ***D50 million*** for the same purpose, would these two enterprise funds not to be confused to mean that they should not be paid because they belong to a political party? Because we have done some investigation and we have discovered that some women are not paying as they believed that it was given to them on the basis of political party matter. They do not pay back. So, will this not confuse the two enterprise funds?

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Wuli East, you cannot come to these Chamber and inform us of an investigation that has nothing to do with the subject matter. It is not relevant. No, you can do it at your party level. In this thing, the Vice President told you they are not the same. You cannot ask those questions; you cannot confuse people. People are not confused.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: Member for Wuli East, you are out of order. Yes, Member for Serekunda, can we have your point of order?

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker, 36[2]. If Table Office under your leadership have done the needful, then we… *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Serekunda, please, take your seat.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: No, I am on a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: No, you are making a statement. You cannot pinpoint at my staff.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: What?

THE SPEAKER: You are pointing fingers at my staff. You cannot do that. Make a point of order.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Because you are also equally throwing words on me.

THE SPEAKER: No, please, withdraw that. Do not say that. You cannot say that to the Speaker.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Order 36[2].

THE SPEAKER: No, but you cannot say any word that you want to the Speaker. You cannot say that. You have to choose your words. Please, go ahead.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: My point of order is that if you have done the needful, then this question would have not been admissible.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Serekunda, you cannot insinuate that the Speaker has not done his work. You cannot say that. Just withdraw it.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: When the Member for Wuli*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Withdraw that statement. Honourable Member for Serekunda, can you withdraw that statement? You cannot say the Speaker…*[Interjected]*

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: You are the very one… *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: No. Order, Honourable Members. Honourable Member for Serekunda, take your seat and listen to me.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: You want me to take my seat?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot say that if I have done the needful. You cannot insinuate that the Speaker has not done his work. That is what you said. Honourable Member for Serekunda, did you say that? Use your mic.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Yes, I said that.

THE SPEAKER: Okay, wait. Can you withdraw that?

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: No, I cannot withdraw because it is already admitted.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Serekunda.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Your good office has admitted this question.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Serekunda, can you withdraw?

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: I cannot, how can I and… *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: No, withdraw that. You cannot say that. I am going to send you out. Withdraw that statement.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker, I have a reason not to withdraw. No, why should I withdraw?

THE SPEAKER: You will withdraw that statement.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Already in the question… *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: No, withdraw that.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: The question entails the name of a political party, and according to our Standing Orders, 32[2], if you have done the needful, then this question would have not been admissible. That is exactly my point, and whatever you want to do, you can do it. But you cannot tarnish my image.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order please. Honourable Members, you see, we cannot turn this Chamber into a joke or a laughing stock. The Honourable Member for Serekunda is making very dangerous statements in public. He cannot do that, Honourable Members. Member for Serekunda, you cannot say the Speaker has not done the needful.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: The Honourable Member said 'if'… *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: He said 'if'. There is a qualifier to that statement "if".

THE SPEAKER: Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, please behave. Please, do not do that. Honourable Members, we should not allow Members to make deliberate statements that go to demean people or their offices or their acts, especially in the service of national duty. Honourable Members, order. Do not do that. Honourable Members, order, please.

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Can you give chance to the Vice President to sit down, and we continue arguing till tomorrow? Give him chance to sit down, then we continue.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you see, we do not like hypocritical statements. You are the people disrupting and wasting the time of the Vice President, yet you are making your hypocritical statement.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: You have powers to stop that, but you are not.

THE SPEAKER: Do not use your mic, please.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Of course.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: For the interest of time and we are in Ramadan, I humbly withdraw. Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: Let us have ***Question No. 004*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency the Vice President, can you inform this august Assembly if the disbursement of D50 million to a political party's women's wing, spearheaded by the head of state, complies with the Election Act 2026 and Code of Conduct for public

officers regarding vote buying or unfair use of Executive influence in an election year?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker**,** I wish to inform this august Assembly that, as stated in my response earlier on, the Enterprise Fund of the National People's Party is purely a party affair, and any matter relating to a political party's conduct in relation to the Election Act should be referred to the Independent Electoral Commission.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: I have no supplementary question. Maybe, all other Members do.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. The Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, the issue of compliance with the Election Act and Code of Conduct for public officers regarding vote buying and other related matters are matters for elections, and the IEC is not represented here. The Vice President speaks… *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: No, do not make a statement.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: No, I am coming.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, when I am speaking, please… Okay, sit down.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by the Member for Foni Bintang Karanai.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Honourable Speaker, I am rising on Order 43[3]. It says, *"The time taken to ask a supplementary question shall be no longer than one minute…"* So long as he is within that one minute, he is laying the foundation. You should not interject him, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. Honourable Member for Foni Bintang, were you here on Monday? I told you people that you cannot lay a foundation here because we are not constructing buildings here. No, we are not constructing a building here.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: In court, we lay foundation.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Latrikunda Sabiji, if you continue to disrupt the proceedings, I will send you out of Plenary, 'Belie Walie'. You cannot continue… Do not use your mic. You cannot do that. This is not a Bantaba in Latrikunda. Take your seat. If you continue to disrupt here, I will send you out. Yes. If you continue to disrupt, I will send you out.

Please, Members for Janjanbureh and Busumbala, he is your neighbour. You better warn him if you want to… You know, on that day, I told him and he behaved. Today, if he goes on to misbehave, I will send him out.

Now, Honourable Members, … Member for Foni Bintang Karanai, I told you not to use your mic. If any Member wants to lay a foundation, go and join the engineers, not here. No.

Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader, ask your question.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Yes, the question is, could the Vice President answer the question on compliance with the Election Act and Code of Conduct? The IEC is not represented here. The Vice President should answer whether the party or the President's action was in compliance with the Election Act and Code of Conduct. That is not for the IEC to answer.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. The question was asked and fully answered by the Vice President. Your question is out of order. Member for Sanimentereng, you have the floor.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, and thank you very much, Your Excellency the Vice President. Your Excellency, it was fully clear that when you were launching*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: No, you cannot say that. You cannot say "fully clear" what? Ask your question.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Allow me to land.

THE SPEAKER: No, you are not flying.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Of course, you should allow me to land.

THE SPEAKER: No, no, no.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: You did not know what I wanted to say.

THE SPEAKER: Ask a supplementary question. Do not fly here,

HON FATOU [SANIMENTERENG]: It is a supplementary question.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, go ahead. Do not make a statement.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: You cannot put words in my mouth.

THE SPEAKER: Ask your question.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Your Excellency, when you were launching this fund, was the office of the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Welfare represented? And did they take part in distributing this fund? Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, did you read the parent question and the answer? You are out of order; you know that. No, Honourable Members, please read your Standing Orders. You cannot do that. No, it is not important.

Member for Kiang West, you have the floor.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: I am rising to tell you that you hold this whole Assembly at ransom, and we are not happy. Ministers

leave businesses to come here for us to work. So, we cannot be here and doing something*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot do that. How can you just rise and make that statement? You cannot do that. You are out of order. Do not do that next time.

Member for Wuli East, you have the floor.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for being democratic this morning.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, I cannot hear you.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: I am thanking you very much for being democratic this morning.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, I am happy.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Honourable Speaker, could the Vice President explain if he has advised His Excellency the President regarding the ethical implications of such an enterprise during an election year? Did the Vice President actually advise the President about the ethical implications of this?

THE SPEAKER: Member for Wuli East, you are a senior Member. You cannot say those statements. No, you cannot say that here. You cannot do that. There is no question about "ethical" or whatever. No, you cannot do that. No, Member for Wuli East.

Honourable Members, today, I am really flabbergasted. I do not know why Members are just trying to go out of order. Is this deliberate, or do we not read and understand our Standing Orders? You cannot do that.

Yes, Member for… Supplementary question, no.

Let us now have ***Question No. 005*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much. Your Excellency the Vice President, can you inform this august Assembly whether state resources, including Government vehicles and civil service personnel, were utilised in the planning and execution of the National People's Party fund launched at the party headquarters?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform this august Assembly that I am not aware of any state resource being used.

[Supplementary question(s)]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Wuli East, the floor is yours.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, could His Excellency the Vice President endeavour to find out whether any state resources have been used during this occasion?

THE SPEAKER: No. Honourable Member, you are out of order. He cannot endeavour anything. No, what can he endeavour? He has answered. He said, "no". What do you want him to endeavour? No, he cannot endeavour

on that. No endeavour. No, he cannot. There is no endeavour here. No, he cannot endeavour on that. He has answered the question. There is no reason for you to want him end up with something that he cannot endeavour. No.

Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader, you have the floor.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency the Vice President, in your response, you did indicate that you are not aware of any resources being used. In receipt of this question, did you do any finding to establish this fact?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot be here and be there. No, it is the duty of the Speaker to conduct proceedings in accordance with the law. No. He has answered it clearly. You cannot ask a question that is fully asked and answered. It cannot be asked again. No, you cannot do that. I told you. Do not… We do not have midwives here to deliver babies. No, if you are pregnant, go to the health facilities. You cannot deliver that. Honourable Member, we do not have midwives here to help us deliver. No. Sorry.

Member for Busumbala, you have the floor.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Honourable Speaker, Your Excellency the Vice President, are you aware that the President was using his state vehicle to attend this particular function?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you see, we are going around the same question. The man asked a question and he responded. And now

you are, in fact, doing… In fact, it is worse because you are seeking his personal opinion. He cannot answer that. That is out of order.

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Your Excellency the Vice President, we are putting it to you that the President indeed used his official car to attend this function.

THE SPEAKER: No, Member, you said that you are putting it to him. He said that he has not. That is not a question. It is out of order.

We now move to ***Question No. 006*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Old Yundum & Deputy Majority Leader.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [[OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, could His Excellency the Vice President inform this august Assembly whether the Government will consider exempting persons with disabilities from payinf the D1,000 airport security fee charged on departing and arriving passengers?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform this august Assembly that under the current contract, there is no exemption for persons with disabilities. However, consideration may be given when the current contract is to be reviewed.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Member for Central Baddibu.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, it is not about the disabled alone

or people with disability. Do you plan to do away with this security fee because people are complaining?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, at this point, it is not considered.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, in your response, you indicated that consideration may be given when the contract is to be reviewed. When is the contract due to be reviewed?

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, as far as I know, I stand to be corrected but I think the contract has at least about two years to go.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Your Excellency, with regard to this parent question, how do you intend to classify persons with disabilities? Thank you.

H.E. MUHAMMAD B.S. JALLOW [VICE PRESIDENT]: Honourable Speaker, I think there are already some standard classifications for persons with disabilities. I cannot say at this point, but I know that the Ministry of Gender and others and I think they are with the United Nations in general. There are also some standard definitions because disabilities differ. Thank you.

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

HON BAKARY M. KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Yes, I think I have to withdraw because the Minority Leader asked the question that I wanted to ask.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Busumbala, you have the floor. Member for Busumbala has withdrawn. Okay, Member for Central Baddibu.

Honourable Members, on your behalf, I want to thank His Excellency the Vice President for the answers provided to Honourable Members. Your Excellency, thank you very much. It has been a very good day, and Ramadan Mubarak to you.

Clerk, we may proceed.

ii. **Questions for Which Due Notices Were Given to the Honourable Minister of Fisheries, Water Resources and National Assembly Matters for Oral Answers**

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Members. Honourable Minister of Fisheries, Water Resources and National Assembly Matters, you may please take the podium.

Let us have ***Question No. 052*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Bakau.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Despite ongoing investment in the water sector, many communities still lack access to safe drinking water. Could the Honourable Minister of Fisheries and Water Resources inform this august Assembly

the measures Government is taking to expand potable water supply, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, please go ahead.

HON MUSA DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF FISHERIES, WATER RESOURCES & NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MATTERS]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Before I give the answer, I just want to add something. Peri-urban is not the responsibility of the Ministry of Fisheries, Water Resources and National Assembly Matters but NAWEC, which is under the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy.

However, Honourable Speaker, my Ministry, on behalf of the Government, is and will continue to provide water to rural communities through an annual Government Local Fund [GLF] allocations. In addition, my Ministry, through the Climate Smart WASH Project, provided 68 water systems covering 142 communities funded by the African Development Bank, which were completed and handed over by the President during the last Meet the People's Tour. Relatively, between the 23rd and 27th of March of this month, a team from ADB is expected in the country to discuss the second phase of the project, which is targeting 100 systems.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. No further questions.

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

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, based on the question you

answered, you are not responsible to a certain extent. You said you got 150 borehole supplies; which areas do you have these water supplies, not specifically the villages, but the areas?

HON MUSA DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF FISHERIES, WATER RESOURCES & NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MATTERS]: I said 68 systems covering 142 communities, and it is all over the rural area, including Foni.

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

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you said there is going to be a kind of second phase of this after your reassessment. Do you plan to consider Jinack in the second phase?

HON MUSA DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF FISHERIES, WATER RESOURCES & NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MATTERS]: The technicians will look at it and advise accordingly.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, in your response, you indicated that you are working on or will be working on the second phase. Could you inform this august Assembly the number of communities projected to benefit from the second phase, And does that include communities in Brikama North such as Kembujeh, Kubuneh, Bafuloto Galoya, and Kassa Kunda area? Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have virtually created a substantive question. No, please. You cannot dribble like this. No, you are out of order. Member for Central Baddibu wants something. Member for Brikama North, you also want something?

The Member for Sami, you have the floor.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, thank you for coming up with a new phase. There are boreholes dug for 4 years. What is your office going to do with those boreholes?

HON MUSA DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF FISHERIES, WATER RESOURCES & NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MATTERS]: Yes. Honourable Speaker, there are 42 outstanding, which are part of these 100 sites targeted. They are very much part of it.

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

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, was there any Government counterpart funding in the first phase that was concluded, and how much was this funding?

HON MUSA DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF FISHERIES, WATER RESOURCES & NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MATTERS]: I think that is a new question completely. I have to do some research on it.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on your behalf, I want to thank the Honourable Minister of Fisheries, Water Resources and National Assembly Matters for the answers provided.

Clerk, we may proceed.

iii. Questions for Which Due Notices Were Given to the Honourable Minister of Interior for Oral Answers

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Minister of Interior, you may take the podium to answer questions for which due notices were given to you by Honourable Members for oral replies.

Let us have ***Question No. 007*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Sami.

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister of Interior inform this august Assembly whether the Ministry is aware of livestock theft in Sami and Niani, and what measures have been taken to address the situation?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. A report from communities in regions such as Niani District indicates that a significant number of livestock theft incidents are linked to the transhumance movement of herders from neighbouring Senegal, who frequently cross into The Gambia in search of grazing land.

In response, The Gambia Police Force has intensified patrols in affected communities, working closely with village heads and community watch

groups to monitor and deter criminal activities. Daily visibility patrols and community policing activities have been expanded in the area to strengthen police engagement with citizens.

Despite the increased patrols and inter-agency coordination, operational challenges persist, particularly due to inadequate mobility and limited fuel resources. A recent evaluation of border and security infrastructure noted that the lack of reliable vehicles and patrol equipment significantly hampers the ability of security personnel to conduct comprehensive patrols and respond quickly to incidents in remote areas.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALFUSAINEY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you. Honourable Minister, since you accept that it is common there, would your office prioritise security in Niani and Sami so that they have mobility and can easily monitor these activities?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Okay. Thank you.

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

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: You did not answer the question.

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: I answered.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Central Baddibu, stop it. Honourable Minister of Interior, do not let them engage you. If they engage you on any question, do not answer. Member for Central Baddibu, you have the floor.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much. Honourable Minister, do you plan to have more community policing as far as this theft issue is concerned, community engagement?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Yes. I did mention it in my answer.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Upper Fulladu West, you have the floor?

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Honourable Minister, which of the communities in Sami and Niani are most affected as far as these incidents are concerned?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: I cannot give you that answer now because I do not have those details.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Sanimentereng, you have the floor. Or is it Lower Baddibu? No, you cannot speak after him. I saw your tag. I saw her tag. If she is not talking, then Lower Baddibu, you have the floor.

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, have your men ever made any arrests with regard to animal theft in Niani and Sami?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: They may have, but I do not have the details.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Minister of Interior. I know you might be having challenges as you constantly talk about mobility constraints. Given that this animal theft is alarming in that area, would it be possible or is there any possibility of shifting or taking one vehicle from the urban areas to that area so that the problems could be solved? Thank you.

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: We do not even have enough in the urban areas, so we are just using what we have. But sometimes we do patrol the area.

THE SPEAKER: Nominated Member Fatou K. Jawara, you have the floor.

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, since you have exhausted all the patrol mechanisms and the presence of armed men on the street, do you have any other mechanisms in place to apply apart from these, given your challenges with mobility and others?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: I did say that in my answer. We are doing community policing and consulting with the village heads. We also have youth groups and vigilantes; all of them are doing their jobs.

THE SPEAKER: Let us move to ***Question No. 008*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Banjul North.

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister of Interior inform this august Assembly of the current status of the mortuary facilities

relating to bodies exhumed under the Transitional Justice Process and the Government's capacity to conduct the required forensic examinations?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, may I inform this august Assembly that The Gambia Police Force has trained forensic experts who participated directly in the exhumation exercise conducted during the TRRC hearings. These experts continue to be used in the preservation, documentation and forensic examination of human remains, helping to ensure that all procedures align with international best practices and standards for forensic investigation. However, we will continue to solicit the support of our partners, where necessary.

THE SPEAKER: Let us move to ***Question No. 009*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Bakau.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister of Interior inform this august Assembly concrete measures the Government has put in place to strengthen internal security, border control, and intelligence coordination in light of emerging security threats in the subregion and recent incidents in the country?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, the Government of The Gambia recognises the emerging security challenges, including irregular migration, transnational crimes, smuggling networks, and evolving subregional threats, requiring a comprehensive, coordinated, and forward-looking response. In this regard, our law enforcement agencies and international partners are

implementing a series of measures to strengthen internal security, border control, and inter-agency intelligence coordination.

The department also maintains a centralised biometric database on immigrants and has successfully installed the Migration Information Data Analysis System [MIDAS] at 7 major entry points and an integrated immigration control system at Banjul International Airport. This modern system captures, stores, and analyses travel histories and biometric data in real time enabling authorities to detect fraudulent documents and other illicit activities at ports of entry and exit.

Honourable Speaker, with funding from IOM, 3 state-of-the-art border posts have been constructed and are now operational to facilitate integrated border management for operational efficiency. These modern facilities, equipped for migration processes and surveillance, improve management of national borders. Internal security has also been reinforced through an increased police presence, expanded community policing initiatives, and the deployment of rapid response units, including the Highway Patrol Unit, to consolidate these gains.

Additional resources are essential, particularly to further equip and expand the Border Patrol Unit and enhance its operational capacity. Continuous capacity building in counter-terrorism and cybercrime, strengthening partnerships with international partners, and the review and update of legal frameworks to adequately cater for organised crime offenses demonstrate the Government's commitment to safeguarding national security.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. The response given when it comes to border control is very satisfactory. But when we talk of internal security, we have seen in recent times people have been attacked in their homes. What measures are you taking as a Ministry to minimise those attacks?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: We are only doing street patrols, but we cannot guard the homes.

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

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Yes. Honourable Minister, not only in the homes but even in the streets. And it is constitutional to guard every citizen of this country, whether in their home or outside.

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: I know, Honourable Member. But we can only patrol; we cannot guard homes. I insist.

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

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you very much. Honourable Minister, since you are aware that security is very paramount to life, can you tell this Assembly where our crime rate stands as a country?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: I do not have the data, but we are the lowest in the sub-region.

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

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Yes. Thank you, Honourable Minister. Regarding patrols, you said that you are not guarding homes, but regarding your routine patrols as a Ministry, can you tell this Assembly the significant challenges that the Police Force normally faces? Insinuating inadequate patrols to various vicinities, what are your main challenges that the Patrol Unit normally faces in the execution of their duties?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Resources.

THE SPEAKER: Let us move to ***Question No. 010*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu.

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. A magistrate at the Kanifing Magistrate's Court was recently attacked in court, which led to the suspension of proceedings in that court. Could the Honourable Minister of Interior inform this august Assembly the measures taken to provide adequate protection for the magistrates?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I wish to inform this august Assembly that the Government has taken immediate and decisive action to protect members of the Judiciary following the unfortunate incident at the Magistrate's Court. The magistrate affected by the incident has been provided with armed personnel from the Police Intervention Unit [PIU].

Furthermore, PIU personnel are now deployed to the court premises during trials, ensuring the safety of the Magistrate's Court and the litigants. The Ministry of Interior remains fully committed to working

closely with the Judiciary to strengthen security arrangements, enhance coordination, and uphold the integrity of our justice system.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you. No further questions.

THE SPEAKER: Nominated Member Fatou K. Jawara.

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, apart from providing security for the magistrates, what punishment have you put in place for those perpetrators who obstruct the proceedings of the Judiciary?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Honourable Member, we do not punish. We arrest and prosecute. Punishment is left to the court. So, I think the court will decide what to do with them. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much. Honourable Minister, you indicated that PIU personnel are provided to magistrates as well as armed PIU personnel being provided around the magistrate courts. Is this covering the entire country?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: No, Honourable Member.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Upper Fulladu West.

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Yes. Honourable Minister, in your recent response, you said no. Do you not think other magistrates, especially those in rural areas, may feel segregated?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: I do not think so because normally it is the judges who are given armed security. The magistrates are given Police security. Of recent, I think when I was IGP, we even trained some Police personnel and give them PIU uniform to give them security. I think most of them have it, but not all of them.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Foni Kansala, you have the floor. He is out.

Okay, let us have ***Question No. 011*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu.

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Before I administer my question, there is an error at the tail end of my question. It says "abroad" but it should be "Gambians living in The Gambia." Can I read my question now?

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Okay. With amendments, yes. In fact, I contacted Table Office through Mr. Tony, who promised to rectify it, but nothing has been done about it. Anyway, can I…

THE SPEAKER: This is "Gambians living in The Gambia"?

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Yes, exactly.

THE SPEAKER: Not living abroad?

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Not in abroad, but in The Gambia here.

THE SPEAKER: Therefore, the answer the Minister provided to us is now*… [Interrupted]*

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Sorry. If you read the question, it does not make sense to say "Gambians living abroad." Let me read the question for you so that you can understand.

THE SPEAKER: Okay.

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Honourable Speaker, the Gambian Immigration Department has embarked on the issuance of identification cards to Gambians outside the Gambia, but access to the same document remains a nightmare for ordinary Gambians. Could the Honourable Minister of Interior inform this august Assembly whether the Ministry has any plans to improve access to identification cards for Gambians living in the Gambia?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order! Now, the Member for Lower Baddibu, you told us what you submitted is not what is in the*... [Interjected]*

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Exactly*… [Inaudible]*

THE SPEAKER: So, therefore, there is a fundamental difference. Order!

HON KEMO GASSAMA [LOWER BADDIBU]: Sorry. To allow us to proceed, I am, of course, withdrawing it till the next Session. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. We want to thank you for that.

Let us now move to ***Question No. 012*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Old Yundum.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister of Interior inform this august Assembly whether the Government plans to review and update the Drug Control Act of 2003 to address current challenges related to drug trafficking, abuse, and related offences?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. The Government recognises the need to strengthen our legal framework to effectively address the evolving challenges posed by drug trafficking, abuse, and related offences. The process of overhauling the Drug Control Act of 2003 is ongoing.

A drafted document has already been generated and submitted to the Ministry of Justice for review and legal drafting. Once the Bill is ready and passed, it will enhance effectiveness in our response to emerging trends in drug trafficking and abuse.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Perhaps, the Minister can tell us whether his Ministry will be following the Ministry of Justice to fast track the Bill so that he can have

it on time and submits it to the National Assembly for our consideration. Is that going to be?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: Yes, we will do. We have almost 5 to 6 acts on all the security institutions under my purview.

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

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Yes. Thank you very much. I think, Honourable Minister, this Act needs to be revisited. Do you plan to declassify cannabis sativa as a hard drug?

HON ABDOULIE SANYANG [MINISTER OF INTERIOR]: No.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, thank you. On your behalf, I want to thank the Honourable Minister of Interior for those answers provided. Honourable Minister, you may take your seat.

Clerk, we may proceed.

iv. Questions for Which Due Notices Were Given to the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Security for Oral Answers

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Security, please, take the podium. Honourable Members, we now move to questions for which due notices were given to the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Security for oral replies.

Let us now have ***Question No. 049*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Foni Bondali.

HON PA DEMBO SANNEH [FONI BONDALI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Security inform this Assembly of the current status of the women's gardens in Alla Kunda, Kayabor and Jending?

HON DR. DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK & FOOD SECURITY]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Member for Foni Bondali. The two villages, namely Alla Kunda and Kayabor, are community-initiated gardens with some support from both the Government and other development partners that enabled them to carry on vegetable production over the years.

The Alla Kunda garden was erected in 2005 by the Saint Joseph's Family Farm in Bwiam, which is an NGO. It had a wire fence with two wells. It is a five-hectare plot. There is no active production due to structural defects as of now. The garden in Kayabor is a one-hectare garden erected in 1994 with two wells and a wire fence. They received support from both the Government and our partners but have since ceased operation due to the same structural defects.

Regarding the third village you mentioned, Jending, they have a three-hectare community land that is documented, but it has never been a garden. It has no fence, no well. I would advise the Honourable Member for Foni Bondali to liaise with our regional directorate in the West Coast

to facilitate assistance from our projects operating in the region, such as the P2P2RS project, GIRAV, GAFSP, and the Roots project.

Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON PA DEMBO SANNEH [FONI BONDALI]: Thank you. Honourable Minister, these villages have applied for both projects you mentioned.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member…

HON PA DEMBO SANNEH [FONI BONDALI]: These villages did apply for those projects that you have mentioned, yet they did not hear any response from the said projects. So, what step do we need again, you know, to*... [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you asked a question, and the Minister answered that you should engage the regional directorate.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: He said they have engaged them, and they have not responded. What can he do next?

THE SPEAKER: You have one more supplementary. That is okay. The Member for Upper Fulladu West, you have the floor.

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Honourable Minister, thank you so much for the good work that you are doing in this country. Anyway, does your Ministry has any plan to assess the situation of other community gardens within Foni Bondali?

THE SPEAKER: No, you are out of order.

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: It is not a new question. It is within the*… [Interjected]*

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

HON BAKARY KORA [UPPER FULLADU WEST]: Where is Alla Kunda? Is Alla Kunda not in Foni Bondali?

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: No, this man is from Bansang. He is a neighbour.

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

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you. Honourable Minister, you responded to my colleague that he could engage the regional officials of the Ministry of Agriculture or the related projects to have support for their community garden, could it be the reverse for your Ministry to engage these regional staff or the projects to work with the community in enhancing vegetable growing? Thank you.

HON DR. DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK & FOOD SECURITY]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Member for Janjanbureh. Yes, that is possible upon request to the Ministry of Agriculture. Thank you.

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

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, in your response, you mentioned that there is a garden supported by Saint Joseph's Family Farm since 2002, and you said there is no active production right now; maybe, the garden is dilapidated.

Honourable Minister, do you have any plan to rehabilitate that garden if the garden is not operational?

HON DR. DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK & FOOD SECURITY]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker**.** This garden, as I mentioned earlier, was a community-initiated garden which lacked sustainability plan built in by the community at the time of its inception in 2005.

Unfortunately, it has been down for over a decade due to structural defects, and it has not come to the notice of the Ministry. So, I think I would advise either you or the Honourable Member for Foni Bondali to notify the Ministry of the defect in your area, and if it falls within our budget, which you people approved here, we will take a look at them. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Foni Bintang Karanai.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, this structural defect has been a major issue in the country, especially in the rural gardens. Most of them have this issue constantly. Is it possible for the Ministry of Agriculture to come up with a plan to actually renovate these gardens or maintain them constantly, please?

HON DR. DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK & FOOD SECURITY]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Member for Foni Bintang Karanai.

I think for sustainability purposes, it would not be prudent for the Ministry of Agriculture to constantly be renovating gardens. I think for sustainability, we will be building gardens, form committees and structures that will oversee these gardens locally, and then be responsible for minor maintenance. Because with most gardens, there will be a dependency syndrome if we have to do maintenance costing even less than ***D1,000***. So, our output, henceforth, is to form committees which we call sustainability committees. That is the way forward.

Thank you.

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

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Yes, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, this is a follow-up on Honourable Member for Foni Bondali's supplementary question. He has confirmed that these people have sent several applications. So, are you ready to re-engage those people to follow up on those applications? And how soon would you do that so that the applications on your table could be given due consideration?

HON DR. DEMBA SABALLY [MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK & FOOD SECURITY]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Member for Kiang West. As far as I am concerned, there is no application on my desk or the desk of the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on your behalf, I wish to thank the Honourable Minister of Agriculture. Honourable Minister, you may leave now.

Clerk, we may proceed.

v. **Question for Which Due Notices Were Given to the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad for Oral answers**

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad. Please, you may take the podium now to answer questions for which due notices were given for oral replies. Let us have ***Question No. 354*** of ***2025*** by the Honourable Member for Old Yundum.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Speaker, considering The Gambia's commendable step in strengthening global nuclear governance, including the ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons 2018, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty 2022, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty 1975, and noting the recent deposit of the instrument of ratification of the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency in January 2023, could the Honourable Minister clarify to this august Assembly whether the Government intends to further its commitment to nuclear and radiological security by acceding to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, its amendment, and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism? What considerations or consultations are currently underway regarding these treaties? And is there any strategic framework guiding The Gambia's engagement with international nuclear security instruments?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I want to thank the Honourable Member for his question.

The Gambia's position on nuclear weapons and our engagement with the International Nuclear Security and Disarmament Framework, I refer to The Gambia's established commitment to the ban on nuclear weapons.

Honourable Speaker, The Gambia has been at the forefront of global efforts to ban nuclear weapons and promote their total elimination. Our country's foreign policy has always been grounded in the promotion of peace and security, non-violence, and respect for international law.

In this regard, The Gambia has ratified the following key global instruments relating to the ban on nuclear weapons: the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [NPT, 1975]; the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons [TPNW, 2018]; and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty [CTBT, 2022].

Furthermore, The Gambia deposited its instrument of ratification of the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency in January 2023, signifying our continued engagement with the international system governing nuclear and radiological safety.

On the National Institutional Framework, Honourable Speaker, it is important to note that The Gambia does not possess any nuclear weapons or nuclear materials. However, recognising the global risks associated with nuclear and radiological substances, the Government has designated the

National Environment Agency [NEA] as the competent national authority for all issues relating to nuclear and radiological safety and security.

The NEA works closely with the IAEA, which provides technical guidance, capacity building, and regulatory support to ensure The Gambia maintains the highest standard of safety and compliance. The NEA is currently well advanced in consultations and negotiations with the IAEA to strengthen our national framework in line with international best practices.

On engagement with additional protocols and instruments, Honourable Speaker, with regard to The Gambia's potential accession to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material [CPPNM] and its amendment, and to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism [ICSANT], consultations are ongoing coordinated by the NEA in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, and other relevant institutions.

On strategic guidance and international cooperation, Honourable Speaker, The Gambia's engagement in nuclear governance is guided by a strategic framework anchored in the National Development Plan, our foreign policy framework, and our obligations under the African nuclear weapon Free Zone Treaty [the Pelindaba Treaty]. These frameworks prioritise peace and disarmament as well as national values, safety and security in the peaceful use of science and technology, and active multilateral cooperation with the IAEA and the African Commission on Nuclear Energy.

Honourable Speaker, in conclusion, The Gambia remains resolute in its commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. While our nation does not possess such weapons, we are actively strengthening our institutional

and legal capacities in line with IAEA standards. Under the leadership of the NEA and with the support of the IAEA, The Gambia will continue to promote nuclear safety, security, and disarmament consistent with our long-standing commitment to peace, environmental protection, and global security.

Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Within the question, my supplementary question was embedded. So, he has responded to that. Thank you.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker and the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs. Honourable Speaker, I just want the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs to inform this august Assembly as to when this information about nuclear security was brought before the National Assembly to be ratified or treated for ratification? How long did it take from that date to now? I am talking about the duration. How long?

THE SPEAKER: How long will it take?

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: I recall that the Honourable Member for Old Yundum brought raised parliamentary question with regard to nuclear security for the Government to take action. So, I am asking the Minister now the period from that date to now. How long since

it was brought before him to now? I just want to know the period. Thank you.

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I think the Honourable Member is trying to refer to ICSANT.

THE SPEAKER: I do not understand what the Member is saying.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Yes. It is ICSANT.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister.

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: The Honourable Member is referring to ICSANT, the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. And exactly as I indicated in my response, the national institution responsible, the national authority, which is the NEA in collaboration with Foreign Affairs and the IAEA are working on this particular protocol. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Foni Bintang Karanai.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, if the international community is not respecting this nuclear treaty, can we also not look at ways of developing those nuclear weapons for our country?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank

you. Honourable Speaker, as we have said, The Gambia remains very committed to a world free of nuclear weapons, and we will continue to shape that policy of a free world without nuclear weapons. Thank you.

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

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, during all these negotiations or engagements that you were having, have you been trying in any way to support the argument that The Gambia should be able to peacefully use nuclear technology to boost energy production? Thank you.

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Member. Very right. We continue to pursue clean nuclear energy in this regard. Thank you.

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

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Old Yundum for bringing up this very important question. As a member of an international delegation, we were tasked to inquire into the level of implementation of such treaties.

So, could the Honourable Minister update this august Assembly on all the treaties and conventions that you have signed with the IAEA and their level of implementation? Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Members from Banjul Central, Janjanbureh, and Upper Saloum, I saw them laughing, enjoying their Ramadan. Honourable Member for Serekunda, you are out of order. Honourable Members, Question Number… *[Interrupted]*

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker, I mean for him to furnish the Assembly, not today.

THE SPEAKER: You see, the Member for Upper Saloum, you cannot be helping them to reframe their question. Do not do that. No. ***Question No. 355***… *[Interrupted]*

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker, this is very important. We want him to furnish us.

THE SPEAKER: But you missed your chance. Your chance comes only once. Question Number… *[Interrupted]*

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: But you have been giving people chances.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. Honourable Minister, please consider updating him after the Session.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Not "consider" updating me. I want him to confirm.

THE SPEAKER: All right. Yes. Please, provide the list, Honourable Minister.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Okay. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Let us move to ***Question No. 355*** of ***2025*** by the Honourable Member for Old Yundum and Deputy Majority Leader.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I am sure there is a slight technical typo error in the way the question is drafted, so I will read it for him to understand.

THE SPEAKER: You read.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: I mean the response because the response was from the Minister and not from you, the Speaker. If you read it, you will see it is as…

THE SPEAKER: No, but read it as it is. Then you can explain.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Okay. Honourable Speaker, in your response to a question to the Honourable Minister dated 9th November, 2022 regarding The Gambia's failure to submit its mandatory national report to the United Nations Security Council 1540 Committee 18 years after the resolution was adopted, you cited a lack of technical capacity and know-how as the primary reason. You further stated that the Ministry would advise the Ministry of Defence, as the line Ministry, to seek the necessary support to prepare the report.

Could the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad explain to this august Assembly what concrete steps have been taken since that commitment to address the technical capacity gap? Has the Ministry of Defence received any external assistance, training, or advisory support to facilitate the drafting of the report? And is there any projected timeline as to when The Gambia will finally submit its national report to the 1540 Committee?

THE SPEAKER: On that one, where it says "Honourable Speaker, in your response to the question to the Honourable Minister," it should be "Honourable Minister, in your response."

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The Ministry of Defence serves as the designated national point of contact for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540.

In this regard, the Ministry has recently engaged the United Nations Security Council's Committee established pursuant to Resolution 1540 in 2004 to formally request sensitisation and capacity-building support aimed at strengthening national implementation and reporting mechanisms. The Committee has already expressed its readiness to provide the requested assistance, and these activities are expected to be conducted before the end of the second quarter of 2026.

Honourable Speaker, I also wish to inform this august Assembly that the Ministry of Defence has already established a National Disarmament Committee comprising key stakeholders and institutions: Defence, Foreign

Affairs, Justice, Environment, and other agencies. The purpose of this Committee is to enhance coordination and address challenges relating to timely, comprehensive, and accurate reporting.

Honourable Speaker, regarding the timeline for the submission of The Gambia's national report, given that the preparation of the national report requires extensive inter-ministerial and inter-agency collaboration, it also involves data collection and the consolidation of resolution-specific information. It is not possible at this stage to provide a definitive timeline for submission.

The Gambia remains committed to fulfilling its international reporting obligations under the resolution, enhancing transparency, and reinforcing its commitment to global disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Thank you

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: Perhaps, Honourable Minister, aside from the UN committee, would the Ministry be willing to seek support from other international organisations that can give some technical advice to the Ministry as to how The Gambia will be able to submit its first report? Will the Ministry be open to that?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Honourable Member, thank you. Honourable Speaker, I think that is a welcome idea, but already the Government, through the Ministry of Defence, is also engaging the United Nations Security Council Committee

for Technical Assistance and Capacity Building in order to be able to prepare these 1540 Committee reports.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you mentioned in your response that you need data collection. What are some of the challenges that you are currently having with regard to data collection? Thank you.

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, the reason The Gambia has requested support from the Committee of the United Nations Security Council Committee is just to build our capacity so that, at least, we can do accurate reporting when it comes to this particular programme. It involves a lot of data collection from different agencies that are involved and that is not a simple thing.

That is why we are still behind in terms of maintaining the timeline for our reporting procedures. With the capacity and also the support from the United Nations Security Council, we should be able to have these capacities built so that reporting can be done on time.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Kantora and Majority Leader, you have the floor.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Honourable Minister, considering that this is a mandatory requirement, I do not know whether it attracts sanction or punitive measures. But knowing that we are still lacking to fulfil an obligation that is mandatory for us and having identified the problem to be one of capacity, have you prioritised these things through budget allocation before outsourcing or looking for support elsewhere? If it is very germane and key, I think measures have to be taken by the Ministry itself to prioritise building the capacity for us to meet the obligation. What measures have you put in place in that regard?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, The Gambia recognises the importance of maintaining and also going according to our international obligations when it comes to the reporting time.

However, this is not part of our budgetary system, but it will be considered to have it placed in our budget so that, at least, it will help us to build that system when we need capacity building because most of this capacity that we are asking for also does go along with cost. So, we will also take note of this initiative and try to make sure we put it in our programme.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, in accordance with Order 13, I hereby suspend the Assembly for 30 seconds.

Assembly Sitting Suspended

Assembly Resumed

THE SPEAKER: We will, of course, continue from where we stopped. Honourable Members, let us move to ***Question No. 356*** of ***2025*** by the Honourable Member for Banjul Central.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Speaker, in light of the recent decision by the United States government to impose a non-refundable fee of ***$15,000*** for certain categories of visa applicants, could the Honourable Minister inform this august Assembly what official response or diplomatic engagement the Ministry has so far undertaken regarding this development? And is the Government considering any reciprocal measures or policy review to ensure fairness and protect the dignity and interests of Gambian citizens seeking travel to the United States?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for this question concerning the United States government's recent imposition of a ***$5,000*** to ***15,000*** visa bond on certain categories of Gambian applicants under the ***B1***, ***B2*** visa category, which covers short-term business and also tourist travel.

Honourable Speaker, regarding the nature of the visa bond deposit, the Ministry has been officially informed through diplomatic channels that the ***$5,000*** to ***15,000*** deposit requirement is part of a visa bond pilot programme introduced by the United States government for nationals of specific countries.

The purpose of this measure, as communicated by the United States authorities, is to encourage visa compliance. Meaning that, applicants who are granted the visa must return home before their visas expired. It is important to note that the ***$5,000*** to ***15,000*** bond is refundable once the applicants return to The Gambia within the permitted time frame. The deposit is returned in full. However, if the applicant fails to return, the amount is forfeited.

Regarding The Gambia's official engagement with the United States, Honourable Speaker, the Government of The Gambia, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has taken this matter very seriously. Immediately following the notification of this policy, the Ministry initiated formal diplomatic engagement with the United States Embassy in Banjul and the Gambian Embassy in Washington, D.C., working in coordination with the United States Department of State.

These engagements are ongoing and are being handled through established diplomatic channels to ensure that the concerns of both The Gambia and the United States are properly communicated and addressed in order to protect and promote the interests of Gambian citizens. The Ministry will update this Assembly and the public once a conclusive decision is reached or further guidance is received on this matter.

Honourable Speaker, on reciprocity and policy review, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledges the concern expressed by the public and the National Assembly regarding fairness and reciprocity, it is important to underline that diplomatic relations are governed by mutual respect, dialogue, and prudence.

The Government of The Gambia is not considering any reciprocal measures at this time. Instead, we have chosen to pursue a constructive and diplomatic path through continued dialogue and engagement with United States authorities to ensure fairness and to safeguard the dignity and the interests of Gambian citizens seeking to travel to the United States.

Thank you.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you, Honourable Minister. With regard to the issue of reciprocity, we have seen other smaller countries like The Gambia actually try it, and it actually worked.

I think you understand the space more than us. Most of the time, countries like ours are small and have this tendency of being belittled when it comes to diplomatic issues, and we know that currently there are some larger nations that usually use their status to inflict things of this nature on smaller countries.

So, when I say reciprocity, what I am trying to say is: what other ways of protest are we using? We have seen countries like Mali or Burkina Faso also do the same thing, and we have seen that some restrictions were lifted from their end. So, that is my point of contention, actually.

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. So far, we do not want to take the path of

reciprocity. Meaning, if they impose certain restrictions and we also do the same in diplomacy, perhaps, that is not going to solve the differences.

All what we are saying is that whatever issue being raised, using dialogue and diplomacy can always solve our problems rather than flexing muscles in terms of reciprocity. So, the way we want to approach it is to engage constructively with the United States government for the interest of Gambian citizens.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Wuli East.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: I have a supplementary question.

THE SPEAKER: Please, ask your supplementary question.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Yes, Honourable Minister, I understand where you are coming from. It is always good to take the diplomatic path first, but I would want to know exactly in what capacity are you engaging them? At what level? Is it based on a waiver or the non-refundable issue of the matter at hand? What level are you really engaging them at?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you. We are asking the United States government to reconsider the restrictions in the first place, and also to consider lifting the visa bond policy placed on certain specific countries, including The Gambia. These

are the two approaches that we are using, and the only way we are doing it is through our mission in Washington, D.C., and also from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the United States Embassy here in Banjul.

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

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, this is a very difficult situation. However, I was thinking if The Gambia would influence the AU so that a concerted effort is made in the process of negotiation to really lift this category of visa restriction. Is there any plan to do it at the AU level?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Well, Honourable Speaker, currently this is just a bilateral arrangement, and that is what we are trying to approach. The matter bilaterally is between the United States and specific countries. But if you are suggesting that it can also be approached at the multilateral level through the AU, that is also another suggestion. Thank you.

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

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, from your response, you have indicated one of the reasons for the restriction was the failure of the persons concerned to return upon expiry of their visas. Was there anything part of those reasons for restriction that led to non-compliance of the Government as claimed by the US; therefore, they came up with these restrictions? Is there anything like that as far as your engagement with them is concerned?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. With regard to the latest development on visa restriction, it is all about Gambians being issued the requisite visa and their failure to return home at the expiration of their visas.

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

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: My question is answered, but I have another question here. As The Gambia is a poor and heavily indebted country, what leverage does The Gambia have to offer to the United States in order for them to withdraw from this visa bond?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Well, there are no conditionalities in this, except if the United States would want to request something from The Gambia. Thank you.

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

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Honourable Minister, thank you very much, but I think it is high time that we emancipated our people. In your response, you said diplomacy is about mutual respect. If diplomacy is about mutual respect, why can we not replicate what the American government has done to the citizens of this country by requesting a ***$15,000*** deposit for the acquisition of a visa? I think when they are travelling here, we should also peg a cost.

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Well,

thank you very much. That is why we have decided to use diplomacy, mutual respect, and dialogue rather than trying to reciprocate by asking for the same thing. Instead, constructive dialogue can also solve whatever problem arises. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: We now have ***Question No. 357*** of ***2025*** by the Honourable Member for Janjanbureh.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad provide this august Assembly with a full list, including names of foreign citizens holding Gambian diplomatic passports with their status from 2017 to 2025 issued by the Government, with evidence of their applications?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Honourable Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member. Diplomatic passports are issued to clearly defined categories of persons whose duties, responsibilities or official assignments require them to represent and advance the national interest of the Republic of The Gambia.

In exceptional cases, and strictly where it is evidently in the national interest, foreign nationals who will provide strategic services to The Gambia or who are formally engaged by the Government in an official capacity may be considered for the issuance of diplomatic passports. Such consideration is subject to approval by the President, and applications for diplomatic passports are processed through established institutional channels and guidelines. The process involves multiple institutions,

including the Office of the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Interior [the Gambia Immigration Department].

Honourable Speaker, with regard to the request for a comprehensive list of foreign nationals who have been issued Gambian diplomatic passports between 2017 to 2025, including their status and supporting application documentation, the Ministry, in collaboration with Interior, is currently compiling the relevant information.

Honourable Speaker, I must also caution that matters relating to holders of diplomatic passports, particularly foreign nationals, are inherently sensitive. These involve consideration of diplomatic practice, reciprocity, confidentiality, and national security considerations. The public disclosure of detailed personal data, application documents, and status particulars may risk breaching confidentiality, obligations and undermining established diplomatic norms and potentially affecting the national interest of The Gambia.

In conclusion, Honourable Speaker, I wish to assure this Assembly that the Government remains steadfast in upholding the laws, protecting the integrity and credibility of Gambian travel documents, and ensuring that diplomatic passports are issued strictly in accordance with established criteria and solely in the best interest of the Republic of The Gambia.

Thank you.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Honourable Minister, thank you very much for your response. However, regarding matters related to

confidentiality for Members of the National Assembly, I just want to remind you that it is something that we always consider and also ensure that documents that emerge from the Government are treated with confidentiality.

So, as such, Honourable Minister, I still want to persist with my question. How is it possible for you to serve this Honourable Assembly with a comprehensive list of foreign nationals who are issued diplomatic passports? If you cannot give it to the whole Assembly, I requested it and I definitely have an interest in having that list in hand.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Janjanbureh, he has told us that they do not want to breach diplomatic norms, security, and data protection. So, I rule that question as out of order. You have one more supplementary.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Honourable Speaker, I was going to appreciate it if you did not make a ruling on this. He has given us his part of… *[Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Now, you have one more supplementary question, please.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: No, but before the supplementary question, Honourable Speaker, I have every right to obtain answers as required since my question was admissible. This was an admissible question, so please go back to your records or to the rules that guide this Assembly and correct yourself before telling me he has responded. For me, it is not the way.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat. Honourable Member, you asked the substantive question, and he provided an answer. Honourable Member, you cannot be on the floor and, in fact, be on your mobile phone, my friend. You asked a substantive question, and he answered it. You asked your supplementary question, and then I said no, that is ruled out. You have a final supplementary question. Please, ask that question.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Honourable Speaker, let us get this right, please. My main question was never answered fully. The Honourable Minister, with all due respect, gave us a summary of what is required by the procedures in terms of sharing such information. I stood back to say my question was not fully answered, and I added it in my supplementary question just to ensure that I get my response. But my key question was never answered in relation to the list, and the question was admissible. Why did you admit a question when you think we cannot get answers for it?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat. Honourable Member, you are getting the whole thing wrong. You asked your substantive question, and he provided an answer, in fact, a very long answer. Whether you are satisfied with the answer or not, he has provided an answer. That is why we have supplementary questions for Members to ask with a view to answering for and on behalf of the National Assembly Authority and the Vice President to elucidate on the answer they provided.

You made a follow-up supplementary question, and I said no because the Minister has answered, and as a result of diplomatic norms, data protection, secrecy, and diplomatic relationships, he is unable to provide

it. I said that was asked. You are left with one supplementary question. Please, ask your supplementary question.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Speaker, it is very sad that our own rules are not being adhered to here, but you are telling me to adhere to what the Minister has just told us here in terms of secrecy around diplomacy. No, that is the fact.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are getting it wrong.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: This is what exactly you are…

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are getting it wrong.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: I am not getting it wrong. You are getting it wrong instead.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: No problem.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what I am saying is that the Minister, or a Member, or the Vice President, we do not have control over how they answer our questions. It will not be to our palatability. It is up to them to answer it the way they think is in accordance with the question that you asked, but you are insisting it was not answered. I said you asked a question and he answered it. Now you ask a supplementary question. I said now you are left with one more supplementary question. Please, ask your supplementary question.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Honourable Minister, in your response, you did say your office and other institutions are working together to compile a full list of foreign nationals who hold Gambian diplomatic passport. When will this list be compiled and shared with this august Assembly?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Member. Like I said, the institutions responsible for the issuance of diplomatic passports are working in close collaboration to compile the list.

However, I am saying that providing such information, I mean, the comprehensive list may also warrant breaching diplomatic confidentiality. Remember, we also have Gambians who are issued diplomatic passports from other countries as well, and based on reciprocity, that can also be used against Gambians.

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

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, let me first concur with you on that submission of confidentiality. However, that confidentiality does not mean the list you are coming to submit to us is a wrong list. We are not complaining about why you submitted it to them.

All that we want to confirm is that the National Assembly is also bound by rules that if anybody breaches that and jeopardises the integrity of our country, there is a punishment for you as a National Member. So, when the National Assembly requests a document, there should be enough trust

that there will be security for that document. So, when will you supply the National Assembly with this document?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, you know this is a public place. This National Assembly is a public place; if you bring a list here, it is for the public. Then the confidentiality will be breached by supplying the list to the National Assembly. This is a public 'Bantaba'.

Member for Banjul Central, you have the floor.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister...

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order from the Member for Serekunda.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Yes. Point of order, and as per the Constitution of 1997*... [Interjected]*

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Please, refer us to the point of order you are rising on.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Yes, I am using the Constitution.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: No, it is not point of order. The Constitution cannot be a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Majority Leader, take your seat. Do not do that. No, no, no. Please. No, take your seat, Majority Leader. Order, Honourable Members. Majority Leader, you know you are out of order. No, you cannot

do that. No, no, you are not the Speaker. Order! Honourable Member, yes, please. Can we hear your point of order?

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Point of order, 82.

THE SPEAKER: On the Constitution or what?

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: No, on the Standing Orders. Section 109[3] of the Constitution: "*For the purpose of effectively performing its functions, each of the committees shall have all of the powers, rights, and privileges as are vested in the High Court at a trial in respect of –*" *[b] "compelling the production of documents".* So, what the Member for Janjanbureh is asking is constitutional.

THE SPEAKER: Order! Honourable Members, allow me to rule. Order! Members for Upper Saloum, Lower Saloum, Niamina Dankunku.

Member for Serekunda, you know you are out of order. You cannot do that. You are not in the committee session. Do not do that, my friend. Kiang West, do not do that, please.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: It is the same powers.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order! Kiang West, do not do that, please. The problem is, you people are Members of the National Assembly and exert a high sense of dignity, respect, and honour in society. Do not disrupt proceedings like that because people have high regard for you, but you just want to bully me which is not correct. No, do not do that.

Honourable Members, you all know that you are just being deliberately misleading the National Assembly. The Member for Serekunda, you rose

on a point of order and you are arguing. Do not do that. He who seeks equity must come with clean hands. You cannot do that. You cannot seek for the National Assembly to be in order when you are out of order.

Section 109 of the Constitution deals with immunities, deals with processes of the National Assembly, Assembly committees, and what you read, you yourself said the Committees of Assembly shall have the powers of a High Court during Committee session, productions of documents, witnesses, whatever, the list goes on. That is not about committee plenary. We are in the Chamber on Session.

You cannot do that. You are out of order. And in fact, sometimes when Members are deliberately out of order, they should be charged at least D2,000 for that.

Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader, you have the floor.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, I consider that response was given to the question.

Perhaps, I could see that it was more of a narrative surrounding the procedure that one undertakes to acquire a diplomatic passport rather than the substance of the question, which relies on the full list as well as the status and evidence of applicants.

Yes, we are reliably informed that you are currently compiling the relevant information. The expectation is that it should be provided now. Why the delay in that provision that could not make it possible?

THE SPEAKER: You see, it is the same question, the same thing. No, it is the same thing. The Member for Brikama North, you know, you were a very good sportsman, so you like to dribble and play these things.

Member for Brikama South, you have the floor. Oh, you have withdrawn.

Let us now have ***Question No. 051*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad provide this august Assembly with a comprehensive list of Gambians who travelled or attempted to travel to Europe through the irregular migration route from February 2017 to January 2026?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Again, with the comprehensive list, Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for the question regarding Gambians who have travelled or attempted to travel to Europe through the irregular migration route, commonly referred to as the "back way", from 2017 to 2026. The Ministry acknowledges the seriousness and the national concerns surrounding the issue.

Honourable Speaker, while compiling a comprehensive list of individuals involved in irregular migration is not feasible due to the clandestine nature of such journeys and the fragmented reporting systems across jurisdictions, available data from the Gambian Immigration Department, the International Organisation for Migration [IOM], and Frontex [the

European Border and Coast Guard Agency for the European Union] provides a clear overview of trends and developments.

The historical trend between 2015 and 2020 is that over 33,000 Gambians reportedly arrived in Europe irregularly. Between January 2017 and March 2018 alone 8,681 Gambians reportedly arrived in Europe. The situation in the year 2025, particularly the fourth quarter, and January 2026 witnessed an intensive migration pressure.

National interceptions in 2025, 77 interception operations were conducted nationwide; 2,297 migrants intercepted; 40 suspected smugglers arrested; 16 boats seized. The profile of intercepted migrants in 2025 is 1,939 males, 358 female, 146 minors, and 21 pregnant women. This confirms that migration remains predominantly male though the increasing number of women and children raises serious protection concerns.

In January 2026, 8 interceptions were also recorded; 781 migrants received at the Tanji reception facilities. It is important to note that The Gambia is both a country of origin and a transit. Senegalese and Guinean nationals form a significant proportion of those intercepted alongside Gambians.

Arrivals and casualties in 2025, approximately 6,173 Gambians reportedly reached Europe irregularly in 2025. Unfortunately, over 893 Gambians reportedly lost their lives. More than 1,254 remain missing, and 46 boats reportedly disappeared without a trace.

Government response to irregular migration, Honourable Speaker, irregular migration remains one of the most pressing national challenges

confronting The Gambia. The Government has adopted a comprehensive, coordinated, and multisectoral response aimed at addressing both the immediate risks and the root causes of irregular migration.

The Government continues to collaborate with national institutions and international partners to:

- Intensify surveillance, coastal patrols, and nationwide interception operations;
- Strengthen border management and law enforcement;
- Address root causes;
- Strengthen data collection systems;
- Combat migrant smuggling networks;
- Support reintegration programmes for returnees;
- Enhance cooperation with the European Union and partners;
- Collaborate with IOM, Frontex and other international agencies to strengthen operational coordination and information sharing;
- Conduct public awareness and community engagement.

Honourable Speaker, in conclusion, irregular migration remains a complex, multidimensional challenge requiring a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach alongside sustained international cooperation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is committed to transparency, engagement with this Assembly, and addressing both the root causes and the consequences of irregular migration.

I thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Kiang West, you do not have a supplementary question?

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST] Honourable Minister, in your response, you have indicated…

THE SPEAKER: Order. The Member for Brikama North asked the question, and then after the Minister, you were quiet for about a… All right. Then, please, ask your supplementary question, sir.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH& MINORITY LEADER]: That is the procedure. You should have asked me if I have any supplementary question.

Honourable Minister, you indicated that it is rather not feasible to provide a comprehensive list. However, your response clearly indicated there were records of arrivals in Europe through irregular migration. Could you provide a list of those that were established to have arrived through irregular migration?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. These are records that are coming from the Gambian Immigration Department in collaboration with IOM and Frontex. However, we will try to make the list available. Thank you.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Furthermore, Honourable Minister, whereas you could not provide such a comprehensive list of those who attempted to travel, you indicated in your response that there were interceptions done along the way. Several years were mentioned that could attest the interceptions.

Could you provide the list of those who attempted to travel? Can you provide that to this august Assembly?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Remember that these are just the information we get through the interceptions that were conducted. However, there are also other journeys that have been conducted by Gambians unbeknown to those organisations that are at those points taking this information. Nevertheless, the list that has been provided can also be submitted to the National Assembly as requested. Thank you.

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

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, you have highlighted several measures the Government has taken to address the issue of illegal migration, and one of them is dealing with the root causes. What are you doing in terms of addressing the root causes of illegal migration, mainly within the youthful community?

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I think it is already known that Government has taken a lot of measures to cut down or to stem the root causes of migration. And I have mentioned a whole lot of measures that have been undertaken by Government to stem the root causes of migration.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Kantora and Majority Leader, you have the floor.

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, indeed, with the Minister's response, this has really demonstrated that this is a big nightmare that we are facing as a nation. Would it not be prudent for the Minister to consider us to have a national dialogue on illegal migration inviting all stakeholders to know the challenges confronting immigration? Thank you.

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

HON BILLAY G. TUNKARA [KANTORA & MAJORITY LEADER]: I want to rephrase it. I am asking for a national dialogue to address the issue of illegal migration if the Minister will see it as an option. Thank you.

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: National dialogue is also a welcomed initiative, and I think Government has been doing that too. Thank you.

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

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, based on your submission, you mentioned taking a multi-sectoral approach, including partners and stakeholders. However, we would want to know your assessment when it comes to the success rate since starting this particular process based on the previous numbers as to date.

As I said, you mentioned, based on your submission that you have taken a multi-sectoral approach by engaging partners like IOM, among other

stakeholders. So, I would want to know based on your assessment from previous numbers whether the issue has increased or decreased.

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: Thank you very much. I think we have been working with our partners: IOM, Frontex, and also the European Union, if you look at the records, from 2025. And that of 2026, I think the numbers are also kind of going down in the fourth quarter of 2025; except at the beginning of the first quarter of 2026, we saw at least an increase in the number of irregular migrations. Yes.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you mentioned in your submission that 31 pregnant women have embarked on this journey, 21 rather. Okay. You made mention of 21 pregnant women who have already embarked on this journey. Was there any follow-up on their medical conditions? And what was the specific support to these women and their babies? Thank you.

HON SERING MODOU NJIE [MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION & GAMBIANS ABROAD]: I am not in a position to provide this answer now, but we will find out from the relevant institutions that have been handling these issues, and then we can provide an answer to your question. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on your behalf, I want to thank the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad for the answers provided to this august Assembly. Honourable Minister, you may leave now.

Clerk, we may proceed.

vi. **Questions for Which Due Notices Were Given to the Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration And Employment for Oral Answers**

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment, please, take the podium to answer questions for which due notices were given to you by Honourable Members for oral replies.

Let us have ***Question No. 022*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Banjul North.

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. But before I ask my question, I would want to congratulate the Honourable Minister on his appointment.

Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment inform this august Assembly whether the Ministry conducted any assessment of the country's capacity to meet the demand for onions and potatoes during the moratorium from 1st March to the end of June or July 2026, and how the Ministry plans to prevent local shortages from affecting prices?

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Honourable Speaker, if you permit me, let me also return compliments to Members of the National Assembly, wishing them Ramadan Kareem, pray for their well-being and that of their families, and pledge that I will be working closely and in the interest of The Gambia.

Honourable Speaker, my Ministry conducted a comprehensive assessment of local production of onions and potatoes against the consumption threshold as well as to determine the country's preparedness to implement the moratorium in mid-January 2026.

The Monitoring Committee embarked on an assessment mission to all commercial farms and selected community women's gardens in all regions across the country to collect data on the expected output and harvest timeline of domestically produced onions and potatoes.

Findings from the assessment revealed that the supply of onions and potatoes will meet local demand to prevent shortages affecting prices. The Ministry has allowed the import of shipments loaded from the port of origin by the 9th February, 2026. This will help stabilise supplies and prices during the moratorium period.

The Monitoring Committee will meet on a regular basis to monitor market conditions and may take appropriate policy actions to address any potential shortages that may affect prices.

THE SPEAKER: Let us move to ***Question No. 023*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Bakau.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. In view of the increasing cost of living and economic hardship faced by ordinary Gambians, could the Honourable Minister inform this august Assembly the interventions the Government has introduced to stabilise prices of basic commodities and support vulnerable households?

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Honourable Speaker, I would like to state that The Gambia maintains a free market policy with a liberal trading environment where prices of goods and services are determined by market forces of demand and supply.

The Government is not implementing a price control regime. We do not share the same view of the question if we go by the CBG's inflation assessment. Notwithstanding, the Ministry monitors the stock and price levels of essential food commodities in the market on a weekly basis to ensure their availability and accessibility as well as mitigating any possible shortage through regular consultation with importers.

By taking appropriate business decisions to minimise the effect of price variability on goods in the domestic market and ensure the availability and affordability of these commodities to Gambians, the Ministry continues to facilitate the importation of essential food commodities. The Ministry has been engaging and will continue to engage Ports to provide priority berthing for vessels carrying essential commodities to avoid demurrage charges that may add to prices of commodities in the market.

The Ministry is also working with partners and businesses to ensure the timely availability of essential commodities as a long-term strategy. The

Ministry will continue to promote domestic production of some essential commodities to minimise food imports and ensure food security. And this, to a large extent, will stabilise the prices of rice and other commodities in the domestic market. The provision of direct support to vulnerable households is directly administered by Government agencies, viz. charities, philanthropists, social welfare, and the Ministry of Gender.

Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Honourable Speaker, if I heard the Minister right, he talked about free market in order to stabilise prices of basic commodities. As a government or ministry, will it not be the responsibility of Government to take leadership to stabilise prices of basic commodities? That is to make sure that prices of basic commodities are being stabilised**.**

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Governments have put in place mechanisms to ensure prices are stable through not only concessions given on the taxes levied but also the incentives provide to farmers and commercial operators to ensure that these products are available at all times.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you, no further questions.

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

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Thank you, Bintang.

THE SPEAKER: I have Bondali**.**

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Yea. Maybe, it is a mistake in writing.

THE SPEAKER: What?

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: I said maybe it is a mistake in writing because Bondali has not been here for a while.

THE SPEAKER: No. please, take your seat. All right, Member for Foni Bintang Karanai, you have the floor.

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Honourable Speaker, it is Ramadan, maybe that is why. Thank you. Okay. Honourable Minister, you spoke about free market policy, but the question was very clear; it was directing you to stabilising the price of food commodities. You went around the line and told us about importation of whatever; that is not the question. Direct the question as it should be answered. Free market policy does not mean people can do whatever they feel like. So, you have not outlined the measures that you are taking to control the price of commodities, and that is the question Honourable Minister.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member,

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: Ask your question, please. If you do not question…

HON BAKARY K. BADJIE [FONI BINTANG KARANAI]: Okay. Now, my question is, does the free-market policy means people can determine any price they want to determine? Honourable Minister, when you talk about free market policy…

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order from the Member for Serekunda.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Standing Order 38(j), *"a question fully answered shall not be asked again during the same session*." His question was answered.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Serekunda, he asked the Minister to explain what he meant by free market policy. Does that mean people can fix their own prices or not? And your point of order is that a question fully answered should not be asked again. Has the Minister answered that question? Please use your mic.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: The Minister has fully answered that question. That is why he raised the issue of free and liberal market.

THE SPEAKER: Was the Minister asked to answer what he meant by free market policy?

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker, I think you should consult with your AD or technicians there. But the Minister has fully answered that question. That is where the issue of the liberal market came about. Otherwise, if you want, you can just grant him the floor.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, it is not about wanting to grant him. Supplementary questions are based on the answer given. Order. Member for Wuli East and Nominated Member Fatou K. Jawara, please, order.

A supplementary question is meant to elucidate more on the answers based on the substantive question and the answer provided. If the Minister talked about free market policy, and the Member asked him what he meant by that, and you said the question was fully answered. The parent question was never on free market policy, and the Minister's answer was never based on that.

In his answer, the Minister talked about free market policy, and the supplementary question to that is: what does the Minister mean by that? Does it mean people are at liberty to fix or set prices of basic commodities at will? That is his supplementary question. It was never asked. So, Minister, please provide an answer to that.

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Honourable Speaker, free market policy simply means prices are determined by demand and supply. It does not mean that everybody is free to charge whatever. In a market functioning very well, that is not even possible. The assumption is that, there is enough demand and supply and the commodity is determined through that mechanism. So, that is what we meant by a free liberal market system.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, thank you very much for that very comprehensive response. But, Honourable Speaker, having given a comprehensive response with regard to price stability in The Gambia, what would be the Ministry's short-term plan to ensure Gambians have stable prices given that we are in the Lent for Christians and of course Ramadan for Muslims? Thank you.

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Thank you, Honourable Member. I want to make reference to the recent statement by the Governor of Central Bank. Contrary to what is being reported and what is assumed here that prices during this time are on an upward trend. The monitoring committee policy reported that actually, prices have come down from somewhere between 60.5% in September 2025 to now about 6.9%. But that does not mean individual commodities and items cannot go up and down.

In some parts, the basic commodities in particular, the general trend is going down except for few items that have being observed to be going up and that includes onion and potatoes. This is also not quite new. It is explainable and the history is that, during this time of the year, this kind of price hike is expected but will do away by the third week of Ramadan.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, whereas you assured us of your Ministry's commitment to upholding liberal market principles, there are internal policies that require levies on imported food commodities which are policy matters. As a Ministry responsible for policy

formulation, you need to look at those levies and duties that are put on basic food commodities. That is where the problem comes in.

Is your Ministry ready to minimise those levies because it ends up affecting the consumers rather than pegging a fixed price? This is to be barred. It is a liberal market, but you can look at those levies that you put on the business communities. Are you ready to look at that, and how soon could that be possible?

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Honourable Speaker, the questioner raised a very important matter, and that is the issue of levies and duties in addition to taxes and other charges.

If you look at the tax structure, it is such that there are items that are aimed at reducing Government revenue. However, there are items that are levied to recover services being provided.

In some instances, like levies and duties that he referred to, most of those are in respect of services or cost recovery. I can tell you that the tax structure of The Gambia vis-à-vis essential commodities is such that we are far below the regional average, and that is being done for obvious reasons. We want to use The Gambia as a hub to attract imports, which are then supplied across the region.

With respect to the levies and duties, it serves a different purpose. They are usually for cost recovery, and those services are also*… [Interjected]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, answers to supplementary questions are limited to only 2 minutes.

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: All right.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, yes?

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: I was trying to distinguish between taxes targeted for Government revenue and duties and levies that are also being introduced for services being provided for cost recovery purposes.

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

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Minister, based on the parent question which concerns interventions on basic commodities to support vulnerable households and stabilise prices, I would like to know the actions taken from your end regarding sanctions. We know that many businesses artificially inflate prices around these times. What sanctions are in place to manage this situation?

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Yes. I think the Honourable Member's point is very important. In any market situation, no matter how liberal or regulated, there are instances of cheating and foul play. Sanctions and additional measures are necessary to eliminate these from the market as much as possible.

It is almost an impossible task, but we have put in place enough market participants who are willing and active to ensure such practices are

minimised as much as possible. Where they occur and are caught, they are dealt with in accordance with the law.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Foni Brefet, the floor is yours.

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, the stabilisation of prices for basic commodities covers both price increases and decreases, especially during a market glut. I can say the Honourable Member is asking questions based on price rises and what the Ministry will do.

However, sometimes it affects the market during a glut when farmers harvest goods together. What will your Ministry do to stabilise prices if the market is already glutted, for example, when all farmers harvest at the same time?

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Yes. Price gluts do happen, especially when commodities arrive at the same time, and there is no mechanism to preserve them for longer.

In those instances, under a free market regime, we do not control or fix prices. Prices are usually determined by supply and demand. That is why, in some instances, the Government is even accused of not stepping up to protect farmers, especially regarding local produce, and access to the market when harvests peak.

I think we are increasingly listening to that. Recently, you heard of the onion and potato moratorium. That is exactly for the same reason. So, we

will continue to monitor Gambian produce and give it preference in the market during harvest time.

THE SPEAKER: Let us move to ***Question No. 024*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Jarra Central.

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker and Honourable Minister. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment inform this august Assembly of the monthly consumption rate of the following food products in The Gambia: Irish potatoes, onions, and rice? Thank you.

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Honourable Speaker, please be informed that the Ministry does not have a comprehensive database on the domestic consumption level of essential commodities such as Irish potatoes, onions, and rice due to the re-export component added to these imports.

The Ministry is working with partners, MDAs to compile relevant statistics on these essential commodities and disaggregate them into local domestic use and re-export. But to allay the questioner's concern, what we import is much higher than what is consumed such that a good component of these imports is re-exported to the region.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker and Honourable Minister. If the Ministry does not

have a record of how much Irish potatoes, onions, and rice are consumed in the country, how do you then implement the moratorium effectively and efficiently?

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: As I said, the import structure of The Gambia caters for both domestic consumption and re-export. To allay your initial fear as to whether we are actually producing enough for Gambians, the answer is obvious. The export pattern of The Gambia combines in country's consumption with a significant re-export component.

Now, back to your question, whether what we are importing or producing is enough and whether we have the statistics, I have already answered that. I indicated that we conducted a survey of what is being produced and what local market demand is. We have consistently indicated that it is adequate and sufficient to supply the market for three to four months.

HON KEBBA JALLOW [JARRA CENTRAL]: Thank you, Honourable Minister. How prepared is your Ministry to compile a list or organised data on what we consume, particularly basic commodities like rice, sugar, and potatoes?

THE SPEAKER: You do not have sugar in your question or answer, and you are meandering. Your supplementary is already answered by him. Member for Wuli East, you may have the floor.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. The issue is about the consumption rate of these commodities: potatoes, onions, rice. I would have thought the Ministry

would know how much is imported and how much is re-exported. That way, we would know the difference. So, will you or the Ministry endeavour to find out the import and export figures so that we can know how much is consumed?

THE SPEAKER: Member for Wuli East, can I ask you a question? Were you out, or are you here?

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: I am here.

THE SPEAKER: But he answered. He said they do not have the figures, but what is imported is more than what is consumed, and they believe it is re-exported to the region. And because of the import and export complexities, they do not have all those details yet, but they are looking into it. He said all those things, and you are asking again.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Yes, Honourable Speaker. He said he does not know that because of… *[Inaudible]*

THE SPEAKER: He said because of this and that.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: What are we going to do now? He said they are going to look for those figures.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Then get back to us, okay. Thank you. I am asking him to endeavour to give us the details. Did you ask him to do that?

THE SPEAKER: No.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: You are the one who is sleeping.

THE SPEAKER: No, I understand. I think, you know, in the morning, all of you had good energy, but now the energy is exhausted due to lack of water. So, we are dehydrated. Members for Serekunda and Wuli East are my friends. Yes, they are today. Member for Banjul Central, you have the floor.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Minister, my question was partly answered based on your last submission. However, do you know what our national consumption rate is currently and does there exist an evidence-based policy that would give us accurate numerals when it comes to our national consumption rate as a country?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Banjul Central, the Honourable Member for Serekunda rose on Order 38[j], which states: "*a question fully answered shall not be asked again during the same Session*". It was asked in the substantive question, and he answered. He said that he does not have the percentage of the national consumption rate for these items. He responded to it.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: No, Honourable Speaker. My question is about policy. Is there a policy guide that will determine that? That is my question.

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Honourable Member, there is a policy guide, but I want to assure and re-echo what the Speaker has just said. What I am saying is, our primary concern was not about

imports for domestic market because we know we are always importing in addition to the re-export component that is always added.

So, with respect to the local market, that has never been our primary occupation because as a region, we import plus. Now, if you want to know exactly how much we import, we have said we assessed the market for potatoes and onions, and they are more than enough to supply for three to four months. But if you want the numbers, we can also look at them and share with you.

THE SPEAKER: Maybe, we will allow the Honourable Members from Lower Saloum, Niamina Dankunku, Nianija, Serekunda, and Wuli East. When they finish with their conclave, they will report to Plenary. Tell us, what you are meeting on.

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes. We are consulting on the ruling that you have made. We want to deal with you.

THE SPEAKER: …*[laughter]…* The Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader, you have the floor.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you indicated that a survey or assessment was conducted on local products. However, without statistics on consumption rates, how do you determine with scientific facts that production will be sufficient during the moratorium period?

HON MOD K. CEESAY [MINISTER OF TRADE, INDUSTRY, REGIONAL INTEGRATION & EMPLOYMENT]: Good question. As I

said, we have done a survey and an assessment. Based on what we gathered from local farms, both commercial farms and gardens, we have determined that what will be produced in terms of onions and potatoes is more than enough for three to four months. Now, if you want the disaggregation of that, we can also endeavour to share it.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on your behalf, I want to thank the Honourable Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment for the answers provided. Honourable Minister, you may leave now.

Clerk, we may proceed.

vii. **Questions for Which Due Notice Was Given to the Honourable Minister of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs for Oral Answers**

THE SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs, please take the podium to answer questions for which due notices were given to you by Honourable Members for oral replies.

We begin with ***Question No. 046*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Janjanbureh.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker and Honourable Minister. Deputy Clerk, your mic. I think the Ramadan is dealing with you.

Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs provide this august Assembly with the investigative report on Kamalo and any related files, including master file showing plot allocations to individuals and companies?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to inform this august Assembly that the investigative report of the Kamalo Task Force was completed and presented to Cabinet for approval with the recommendations. The report contains all the allottees and their plot numbers and will be made available as requested.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you, Honourable Minister. If I may ask, on the basis of a timeline, when do you think this august Assembly could lay hand on the report?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: As soon as possible.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: As soon as possible, could that be tomorrow or Friday?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: It depends on the possibility and where the files are laid.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Honourable Minister, you indicated that the report is completed and presented to Cabinet for approval. When actually was the said report presented to Cabinet?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: The report was discussed since last year. I cannot remember the exact date, but it was last year.

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

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you. I want to know what you mean by it depends on where the files are laid. We want clarity on that.

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: The files were undergoing police investigation. They have been returned. We have to collect them, compile, and then give information.

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

HON SHERRIF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. I love your colour. Honourable Minister, did you start acting on these recommendations?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: Yes. We started acting on the recommendations of the report.

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

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you. Honourable Minister, as per what you have said about the report compilation and the answer you just given that you have started acting on the recommendations. The Assembly also needs to be aware of the details in the report. Can you give us a specific date, day and time for submission of this report to the Assembly?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, I want to inform the Honourable Member that I have already answered that question in my response to the question asked by the Member for Janjanbureh.

THE SPEAKER: That is correct. Let us move to ***Question No. 047*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Banjul Central.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Speaker, in view. Oh, sorry*... [Interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Member for Banjul Central, are you withdrawing your question? I will move to the next question.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: I thought you gave him permission. That is why.

THE SPEAKER: Oh, okay.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Speaker, in view of the rapid rise in real estate scams, could the Honourable Minister of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs inform this august

Assembly the interim measures being taken to protect citizens pending enactment of the Real Estate Bill?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to inform this august Assembly that the Real Estate Bill [Draft] is soon to be validated. Regarding the protection of citizens against scammers, the Ministry is sensitising the public to utilise its technical department for verification and appropriate advice before entering into any form of agreements on purchase of land, pending the enactment of the Real Estate Bill.

Additionally, my humble self and my senior management team met with my counterpart, the Honourable Minister of Interior, and his team on this matter of utmost concern to the Gambian people. We discussed and devised ways of mitigating such scams by ensuring that The Gambia Police Force bring to book perpetrators of such scams.

Further, since my assumption of duty as Minister of Lands, I have initiated a weekly Senior Management Team Meeting, where aggrieved persons regrading scams have been coming forward to lodge complaints. Consequently, we have realised such meetings have seen a drastically decline land-related scamming.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. It answered almost 75% of my supplementary questions. However, we have seen that a lot of proposed real estate scammers usually go scot-free using certain measure to feed on

vulnerabilities of citizens. What current measures have you done or have you apprehended anyone yet that is found to be a scammer?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, let me inform the Honourable Member for Banjul Central that I am not the Minister responsible of law enforcement. I took it upon myself to engage the Minister of Interior. So, those who are arrested, not arrested or released is not within my purview.

THE SPEAKER: Any further question? Yes, Member for Serekunda.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, land scammers normally work with insiders in your technical departments. So, has your Ministry conducted any investigation about this?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Serekunda, you cannot substantiate those allegations. Honourable Members, order, please. Honourable Member, you cannot allege individuals who cannot come here to defend themselves.

HON MUSA CHAM [SEREKUNDA]: I withdraw. But what I am saying is that…

THE SPEAKER: Please, take your seat. Nominated Member Maimuna Ceesay, you have the floor.

HON MAIMUNA CEESAY [NOMINATED]: Honourable Members, allow me, please.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please, order. Nominated Member Maimuna Ceesay, you have the floor.

HON MAIMUNA CEESAY [NOMINATED]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, the real estate scammers are real in this country. Does the Ministry have any plan to set up a special tribunal court for land allocations in this country because victims are working in pain while scammers are working freely? Thank you.

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, I want to inform the Nominated Member that my Ministry is not responsible for judicial processes of that nature.

However, we have reached out to the Chief Justice based on the outcome of the discussion related to the land policy. The Chief Justice and the Minister of Justice have agreed there will be a special court dealing with lands, and that process is ongoing as we speak. And I think that court will be operational as soon as possible.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader, you have the floor.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, in your response, you indicated that your Ministry had discussed and devised ways in mitigating the scam. Could you inform this august Assembly your assessment on the impact of the mitigating devices that your Ministry discussed?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: We are seeing positive results in it.

THE SPEAKER: Let us move to ***Question No. 048*** of ***2026*** by the Honourable Member for Jeshwang.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, an embargo was placed on the construction of the Kamalo Site, yet construction of the said site is still happening. Could the Honourable Minister of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs shed light on this matter?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: Thank you. Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to inform this august Assembly that during the investigatory period, the Ministry had placed an embargo on construction works at the Kamalo Industrial Layout.

However, after receipt of the investigative report, the recommendation dictated the administrative process of Kamalo Layout, which led to the up lifting of the embargo. I want to inform the Honourable Member that the embargo has been lifted since, and construction work is ongoing at the site.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Minister, based on the recommendations from the investigation, were there any re-entries of these lands?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: There were re-entries, but I cannot tell you how many of them as we speak. But I do know, yes, based on the recommendation there were re-entries.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Minister, yes. There were re-entries. Are you aware that people were given lands from those lists, and those people have started investing in those projects but were asked to stop because the previous owners are reclaiming those lands again?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: I am not aware. I would love to have that information in writing to my office, and we will deal with it.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Brikama North and the Minority Leader.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, the recommendation of the investigating report warranted the lifting of the embargo. We were earlier on informed that the said report was presented to Cabinet, waiting for approval. I stand to be corrected but that was the earlier information.

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: You are not correct. … *[Inaudible]*

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: It is before Cabinet for its approval. If it is before Cabinet for approval, it means the report is yet to be approved by Cabinet. How can the said report be implemented when Cabinet is yet to approve it?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, let me inform the Honourable Member for Brikama North that the report was approved and being implemented based on the recommendations in the report.

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

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, when was the embargo lifted?

HON HAMAT N.K. BAH [MINISTER OF LANDS, REGIONAL GOVERNMENT & RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS]: It was lifted last year when the report was adopted and approved.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on your behalf, I wish to thank the Minister of Lands, Regional Government and Religious Affairs for those answers provided to the Assembly. Honourable Minister, thank you. You may go.

5. **Adjournment**

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That this Assembly do stand adjourned until Thursday 5th March, 2026 at 10 a.m. Prompt]

[The Speaker slammed the Gavel to signal the end of the day's proceedings.]

THE END