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[OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT]

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1. PRAYERS

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

[The Speaker, Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, read the Prayers]

[The Speaker in the Chair]

The Assembly was called to Order

2. Correction and Approval of Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday, 10th March, 2026.

THE SPEAKER [DEPUTY SPEAKER IN CHAIR]: Honourable Members the Record of Votes and Proceedings of the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday, 10th March 2026 is before us for correction and approval. Can any Honourable Member please move a motion for the Correction and Approval of the said record of votes and proceedings? Member for Sanimentereng.

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

THE SPEAKER: Any seconder. Member for Foni Brefet.

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BREFET]: Honourable Speaker, I so second the motion

THE SPEAKER:

[Question Proposed]

Honourable Members, you may offer any comments or raise observations on any matter regarding the said record of votes by showing your tags, and we will, of course, proceed to review it page by page, starting from Page 1, Page 2. Anything on Page 3, Page 4, and Page 5. Member for Wuli East.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, just on the motion, the Member for Sanimentereng, look at the spelling of 'Sanimentereng'.

THE SPEAKER: All right. The Member for Sanimentereng is wrongly spelled on Page 5. Any other on Page 6? Page 7, Member for Sami.

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. For consistency purpose, where you have number 24, the ensuing debate. Honourable Alhagie S. Darbo in bracket [Minority Leader] should be there and wherever it applies. When you look at the end of the debate, Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay Member for Old Yundum in bracket [Deputy Majority Leader].

THE SPEAKER: All right, number 24 on top, the Minority Leader is missing, right? And wherever it appears, okay.

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: And also, Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay, Deputy Majority Leader. Member for Sanimentereng, you have the floor.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Honourable Speaker, if we are to amend that particular sentence at the invitation of the Honourable Speaker, Honourable Abdoulie Ceesay, Member for Old Yundum and Deputy Minority Leader, it means we will have to do a little amendment with regards to this, and it cannot continue with 'and' again; it should not be connected that way. So, I think we will have to amend the sentence again.

THE SPEAKER: And Deputy Majority Leader.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: You cannot say "and Deputy Majority Leader and mover of the motion" again. We either have to put brackets or let us see how best we can amend it. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, Sami.

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Yes, I am saying that when you say Member for Old Yundum in bracket [Deputy Majority Leader] that is what I said.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, that is correct.

[Question Proposed, Put and Agreed to]

[That the National Assembly Sitting of Tuesday, 10th March, 2026 be approved with amendments]

THE SPEAKER: Member for Upper Saloum.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you, Speaker. Yesterday, we agreed by way of a motion to allow the Special Committee as

an oversight body to take charge of the resolutions and also to be oversight for the implementation of the resolutions, but the Special Select Committee's mandate actually has ended, so the committee does not exist anymore.

So, we need to find a way to do that because once it is time-bound and once the time expires, the committee does not exist anymore. So, the committee, as we speak, does not exist. So, we need to find a way to go around it; otherwise, we are trying to give something that does not exist right now. So, we need to find out, but it does not exist anymore.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order! Honourable Members, let us not debate that today. Of course, the Office of the Clerk and our office will do the needful, and when the need arises, then we will come back to the chamber and do the needful. Clerk, may we proceed?

3. QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on your behalf, I want to welcome the Honourable Ministers who are here present this morning to answer to their businesses. We have the Minister of Environment, Parks, Wildlife, and Climate Change, Rohey John Manjang; we have the Minister of Basic and Secondary Education, Dr. Abibatou Drammeh; and of course, we have the Minister of Energy and Petroleum, Nani Juwara, my good friend; and we also have the Minister for Works and Infrastructure, Mr. Ebrima Sillah. I am sure everybody wants to welcome you today here to know how their roads are faring. And of course, we have permanent secretaries down there. I can see that of Trade and others, and of course, technicians. You are all welcome.

Also, the MD for NRA, Ports, and of course NCCE. And is that PS for Trade? No, that is not PS for Trade. You are most welcome.

Honourable Members, as per the Order Paper and Order 41(1) of the Standing Orders, today is questions for oral answer. Furthermore, as a reminder, Order 43 of the Standing Orders limits supplementary questions to 7 in total: 2 for the Honourable Member asking the question, and 5 among other Members. Therefore, we will proceed with the Honourable Ministers' schedule today to give their oral answers. I want to thank you sincerely. Clerk, we may proceed.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

HON MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure, you may take the podium. Questions for which due notice was given to the Honourable Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure by Honourable Members for oral reply. Question No. 037 of 2026 [By: The Hon Member for Latrikunda Sabiji].

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure inform this Assembly of all the road construction projects that have not met contractual obligations, specifications, or timelines, and the contractors involved, and the reasons for these deficiencies and delays? Thank you.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. A number of ongoing road projects have experienced delays in meeting their contractual timelines. These delays affect certain EPC lots as well as selected urban and secondary road projects. The contractors involved vary by project and include both local and international firms. In all cases, performance securities and other contractual safeguards are in place. The affected projects are as follows:

- Construction of Baddibu Salikenni to Njaba Kunda road, which is being constructed by Bajam Enterprise, a Gambian construction company.
- The construction of Jaliba Junction Access Road, which is being constructed by Jula Engineering and Mining Group, which is also a Gambian construction company.
- The construction of Kiang West roads project by Gai Construction Enterprise, a Gambian company.
- The EPC Lot 2 Nationwide Roads, which is being constructed by Cornerstone Construction Company, a Gambian company.
- The EPC Lot 4 Nationwide Roads construction project, which is by Samajeh, and this is in Foni.
- Lot 6 Nationwide Roads, which is X-Jump, in the West Coast Region.

- Lot 8 Nationwide Roads, Green Vision International, which is the Gunjur road.
- Lot 9 Nationwide Roads, which is ZEM Construction, Sanyang.
- Then we have the construction of Gunjur Access Road, which is the inside road in Gunjur, by Bajam Enterprise, and then the construction of a 50-kilometre urban road, Lots 1 and 2.

The Principal Causes of Delay Include;

- Delayed mobilization by contractors.
- Utility relocation and right-of-way constraints.
- Variations arising from unforeseen site conditions.
- Adverse weather conditions.
- Delays in funding disbursements.
- Availability of materials such as cement, basalt, and sand.

Where necessary, Honourable Speaker, government has issued formal notices and invoked appropriate contractual remedies, including the imposition of liquidated damages, the scoping of works, novation of contracts, and the strengthening of supervision and monitoring mechanisms.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much. I have no supplementary question.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you mentioned the causes of delays. My concern is about when the cause of delay is due to the disbursement of funds. What are the results with regard to the project extending over time?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you so much, Honourable Member for Jeshwang. The delays in disbursement are on two fronts. For example, for internationally funded projects, when the interim payment certificates are raised and verified, they have to be sent to the donors through the Ministry of Finance. The donors, who are not based in this country, will also have to go through their verification mechanisms, and then funds are transferred.

So, in some cases, although under the contracts, we have no more than 45 days for payments to be made to the contractors, in all cases, payments are delayed because of the bureaucracies involved. That is one side. On the side of local contracts, which are coming from the GLF, the problem is that the Ministry depends solely on allocation from the Ministry of Finance. Sometimes invoices can exceed D800 million at a go, and of course, the government has other competing priorities. So, it is sometimes difficult to pay all those invoices at the same time. Therefore, we are forced to prioritize.

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 the case of the Jaliba Junction Road construction, can you explain how the contractor did not meet the contractual specifications or timelines, and what specific action was taken for that default?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS &

INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The contractor for the Jaliba Junction actually had an issue with the partners that were partnering on the project; I think it was a Chinese firm. As a result, there was a prolonged delay. The Ministry and the NRA took a decision to discuss certain aspects, and now the NRA is working with the contractor to finalize the works. However, the NRA is actually leading the project because there are different ways to dispose of the project or to take the project from the contractor. Either, you remove them completely from the contract which would mean that you have to retender again, or you do an innovation where you come in and take certain aspects of the project from the contractor and then look at what needs to be settled in terms of bills.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Sanimentereng, you have the floor. Honourable Minister, a supplementary question cannot be more than two minutes. When answering, you must be brief.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS &

INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, in the event of a contractor's default, in normal circumstances, how long does it take for you to finalize? I would not say the court cases, but with regard to either summoning him for liquidation damages if he has caused delays. Thank you.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: We have different options available to the Ministry. First, because we have our own monitoring teams, they will monitor the projects and inform us about the challenges and also the risks associated with the project. So, the summoning of contractors is always regular. However, when it comes to the issue of taking the decision to either take the contract from the contractor, that requires looking at the contract itself to avoid any legal issues that could bring complications for the government.

That is why sometimes we apply delay liquidated damages. This means that if you do not deliver as specified and on time, every day, we might charge you D10,000 or D20,000 until the day you finish. So, when you issue your certificate, we deduct what we charge you, and that continues. So, we have different options that we have been applying.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Question No. 038 of 2026 by the Honourable Member for Banjul Central.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure inform this Assembly of the current status of the concession agreement between The

Gambia Ports Authority and Albayrak, and the reasons for any delays in its implementation.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and thank you to the Honourable Member for Banjul Central. Honourable Speaker, the concession between The Gambia Ports Authority and Albayrak is progressing, with the rehabilitation of the Port of Banjul completed within the time frame originally set for the said works to be achieved within one year from the effective date, which was 14th February 2025.

The construction of the new container terminal within the properties acquired in Half-Die has been completed, and the new area is being utilized. New equipment has also been delivered to the port, and the rehabilitation of the existing terminal is progressing. The pre-construction activities in Sanyang were delayed, but the parties have now agreed on new timelines to regain momentum. The actual geotechnical studies and necessary Environmental and Social Impact Assessments are being pursued, after which construction works will start in earnest.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. It is very good that the technical issues regarding the grounding areas are done. However, Honourable Speaker, with regard to this particular issue, there was an indication that Albayrak were seeking a loan. I would want to know if it is a lack of sufficient capital to meet the

obligations because this will expose Gambian taxpayers to financial risk. So, we would want to know why the delay occurred.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Banjul Central.

[Point of Order]

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Point of order, Honourable Speaker, from the Member for Lower Saloum.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Yes. Rule 43(4): A supplementary question shall not be in order if it introduces matters not included in the original question. Honourable Speaker, the original question does not include the loan of Albayrak. Furthermore, the response of the Minister also does not indicate a loan component as to what he asked.

THE SPEAKER: No, Banjul Central, you cannot do that. Honourable Members, order Sustained. The supplementary question is ruled out. Honourable Member, do not do that, please.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: There is a key word in my question, which is "delay."

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, wait. I have made my ruling on that. You have one more supplementary question.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Minister, a key word in my parent question was the issue of delay because we have been hearing that there has been delay in some parts of the implementation process. As public representatives, we have heard that there have been issues of a loan, and I would want to know...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Banjul Central.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Yes, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: I have made my ruling on that. You cannot go with that.

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

THE SPEAKER: No, you cannot do that.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: But my question was not answered properly.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot ask a question based on my ruling.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: I have asked my question, and I do not know what he is indicating.

THE SPEAKER: I have made a ruling on that. You cannot go back to that anymore.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Minister, my question would be: we have had issues of delay when it comes to some parts of the implementation process, and we have had that part of the delay was based on some loan issues with Albayrak. We would want to know what indications you have for it.

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

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, with all these controversies around Albayrak Port, is the Government planning to review the contract at one point?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: As far as I am concerned, there is no controversy. I think there is a severe lack of understanding, and this needs to be properly explained in context. The delay is on both sides, right? On the side of the Gambia Government, as part of our conditions' precedent, we were supposed to provide the leased land in Sanyang to enable the concessionaire to have access to the land to conduct the geotechnical studies and all other studies necessary, including the Environmental Impact Assessment Study. Until Monday, we have not been able to provide the lease. No contractor of this magnitude will take the risk to go and start investing in land where ownership is not clear. That is one delay.

The second one was as a result of our inability as a government to provide lease documents to the concessionaire to start studies or gain access to the Kaur and Basse logistic platforms. That is on the side of the Gambia Government as a result of the issues that I have said. They have also triggered other challenges on the part of the concessionaire. Because by this time, studies should have started, and as a result, we missed those timelines, and we were bound to negotiate to extend the timelines for those studies to be done.

[Point of Order]

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

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

HON SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: I think there is a rule governing this Assembly, 43(3). The time taken to ask a supplementary question shall be no longer than one minute, and an answer to a supplementary question shall be no longer than two minutes. There is a procedure, Honourable Speaker. In this Assembly, we have to follow that procedure, and the Minister is taking more time in answering this question.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order.

HON. SAINEY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, you even reminded the Minister about it earlier.

THE SPEAKER: Order, Honourable Members. Order sustained. Earlier on, I informed the Honourable Minister. Honourable Minister, order, please. Honourable Minister, it takes two minutes to answer supplementary questions. Honourable Minister, please conclude. You have concluded? Alright. The Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader, you have the floor.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Honourable Minister, regarding the work at Sanyang, you mentioned that a new timeline has been agreed. Specifically, can you break it down? Tell us what that new timeline is; we want to know.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Well, now that the lease is assigned to the Gambia Ports Authority, we have almost one year now to do all the necessary studies.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, based on the Albayrak agreement, the dredging of the Gambia ports area is to be done by Albayrak, but currently, it seems it is being done by GPA. Why is Albayrak not doing the work?

THE SPEAKER: What is that?

[Point of Order]

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Point of order, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, Order 43(4): "A supplementary question shall not be in order if it introduces matters not included in the original question and the answers provided." So, the Honourable Member asked a question that is not included in the original question. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order! The supplementary question asked by the Member for Jeshwang is about the dredging of the Banjul ports. Now that the Minister talks about the delay in the implementation of the Sanyang project, is the dredging part of the Albayrak concession? Order, Honourable Members.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KAINING WEST]: Honourable Speaker, point of order.

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order that I am yet to rule on.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KAINING WEST]: Okay, hurry up and rule. I will rise on an order, please.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order sustained.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, we have to be very honest and fair to each other. These people who are claiming to raise points of order are out of order. The dredging is part of the agreement; go and read it. The parent question is about the agreement between the Gambia Port Authority and Albayrak. It is already inside there. This will come to the

PEC committee, and they will respond to questions. Allow him to respond to me. They are out of order.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order, please. Under our Standing Orders and rules of procedure, you might ask a valid question, but that does not mean the question is not valid. However, because it is not part of the original question and also not part of the answers provided, based on the rules, it will be out of order. But that does not mean one's question is not out of order. Honourable Members, order, please. So, that question is ruled out. The Member for Sanimentereng, you have the floor.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you again, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you have made mention of some of the causes of the delay of Sanyang port as... *[Interrupted]*

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Point of order, Honourable Speaker.

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

[Point of Order]

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, content of speech, 29(5): "No member shall impute improper motive to any other member." The Honourable Member for Jeshwang... *[interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Nianija, Lower Saloum and Jeshwang. Yes, Member for Upper Niumi, I can't hear you.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, I am rising on Order 29(5), content of speech. 'No member shall impute improper motive to any other member'. The Honourable Member for Jeshwang is telling the Honourable Speaker that you are not fair and also telling me that I don't know, which is very improper.

THE SPEAKER: Upper Niumi, I did not hear the last part.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Member for Jeshwang is imputing improper motive on the Speaker, calling you unfair, and telling me that I don't know the Albayrak agreements.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Upper Niumi, do not do that. He has denied it already; I know him. The Member for Sanimentereng, please continue.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. But before asking my supplementary question, with all due respect, Honourable Speaker, Honourable Member for Upper Niumi is a joke.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Sanimentereng, withdraw that.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Honourable Speaker, I repeat, he is a joke.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Sanimentereng, can you withdraw that?

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Honourable Speaker, I repeat, Honourable Member for Upper Niumi is a joke.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, can you withdraw that? You must withdraw that. Take your seat. Order! Take your seat, Member for Sanimentereng, please. Honourable Members, order! Member for Sanimentereng, you must withdraw that. It is a must.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Honourable Speaker, with all due respect, I said I did. Maybe you were not listening.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member Sanimentereng, I said you must withdraw that, and now, without condition.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: I have withdrawn that, unless you want me to repeat it.

THE SPEAKER: No, take your seat, please. Honourable Members, order! The Member for Sanimentereng, you must withdraw that unconditionally. Withdraw it.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: With all due respect, Honourable Speaker, I said I humbly withdraw, and please stop pointing fingers at me. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, you must withdraw that unconditionally. No, you must withdraw that unconditionally. Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, withdraw that word. Honourable Members, order! Sanimentereng, you must withdraw without any condition.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: With all due respect to the nation and this Parliament, I humbly withdraw, and with all due respect to the Speaker of the Parliament. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Member for Serrekunda, you have the floor. Sanimentereng, now you can ask your question.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you have made mention of some of the causes of the delay of Sanyang port. It was clearly stated in the report of the Special Committee that was read before Parliament yesterday that the land in Sanyang was on a website for sale. Could this also be part of the delays caused? Thank you.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: I did not hear the other part. You said the land in Sanyang was what?

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: It was stated in the report of the Special Select Committee for former President Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh that the land for Sanyang, I stand to be corrected, but that particular land where Sanyang Port is supposed to be constructed was up for sale. Could this also be part of the delay caused?

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

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, with all these controversies

around Albayrak Port, is the Government planning to review the contract at one point?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: As far as I am concerned, there is no controversy. I think there is a severe lack of understanding, and this needs to be properly explained in context. The delay is on both sides, right? On the side of the Gambia Government, as part of our conditions' precedent, we were supposed to provide the leased land in Sanyang to enable the concessionaire to have access to the land to conduct the geotechnical studies and all other studies necessary, including the Environmental Impact Assessment Study.

Until Monday, we have not been able to provide the lease. No contractor of this magnitude will take the risk to go and start investing in land where ownership is not clear. That is one delay.

The second one was as a result of our inability as a government to provide lease documents to the concessionaire to start studies or gain access to the Kaur and Basse logistic platforms. That is on the side of the Gambia Government as a result of the issues that I have said. They have also triggered other challenges on the part of the concessionaire. Because by this time, studies should have started, and as a result, we missed those timelines, and we were bound to negotiate to extend the timelines for those studies to be done.

[Point of Order]

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

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

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: I think there is a rule governing this Assembly, Order 43(3). The time taken to ask a supplementary question shall be no longer than one minute, and an answer to a supplementary question shall be no longer than two minutes. There is a procedure, Honourable Speaker. In this Parliament, we have to follow that procedure, and the Minister is taking more time in answering this question.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, you even reminded the Minister about it earlier.

THE SPEAKER: Order, Honourable Members. Order sustained. Earlier on, I informed the Honourable Minister. Honourable Minister, order, please. Honourable Minister, it takes two minutes to answer supplementary questions. Honourable Minister, please conclude. You have concluded? Alright. The Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader, you have the floor.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Honourable Minister, regarding the work at Sanyang, you mentioned that a new timeline has been agreed. Specifically, can you break it down? Tell us what that new timeline is; we want to know.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Well, now that the lease is assigned to the Gambia Ports Authority, we have almost one year now to do all the necessary studies.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, based on the Albayrak agreement, the dredging of the Gambia ports area is to be done by Albayrak, but currently, it seems it is being done by GPA. Why is Albayrak not doing the work?

The SPEAKER: What's that?

[Point of Order]

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Point of order, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by the member for Upper Niumi.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, Order 43(4): "A supplementary question shall not be in order if it introduces matters not included in the original question and the answers provided." So, the Honourable Member asked a question that is not included in the original question. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order! The supplementary question asked by the member for Jeshwang is about the dredging of the Banjul ports. Now that the Minister talks about the delay in the implementation of the

Sanyang project, is the dredging part of the Albayrak concession? Order, Honourable Members.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KAINING WEST]: Honourable Speaker, point of order.

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order that I am yet to rule on.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KAINING WEST]: Okay, hurry up and rule. I will rise on an order, please.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order sustained.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, we have to be very honest and fair to each other. These people who are claiming to raise points of order are out of order. The dredging is part of the agreement; go and read it. The parent question is about the agreement between the Gambia Port Authority and Albayrak. It is already inside there. This will come to the PEC committee, and they will respond to questions. Allow him to respond to me. They are out of order.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order, please. Under our Standing Orders and rules of procedure, you might ask a valid question, but that does not mean the question is not valid.

However, because it is not part of the original question and also not part of the answers provided, based on the rules, it will be out of order. But that

does not mean one's question is not out of order. Honourable Members, order, please. So, that question is ruled out. The Member for Sanimentereng, you have the floor.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you again, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you have made mention of some of the causes of the delay of Sanyang port as... [Interrupted]

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Point of order, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by the member for Upper Niumi.

[Point of Order]

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, content of speech, 29(5): "No member shall impute improper motive to any other member." The Honourable Member of Jeshwang... [interrupted]

THE SPEAKER: Nianija, Lower Saloum and Jeshwang. Yes, Member for Upper Niumi, I can't hear you.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, I am rising on Order 29(5), content of speech. 'No Member shall impute improper motive to any other Member'. The Honourable Member for Jeshwang is telling the Honourable Speaker that you are not fair and also telling me that I don't know, which is very improper.

THE SPEAKER: Upper Niumi, I did not hear the last part.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Member for Jeshwang is imputing improper motive on the Speaker, calling you unfair, and telling me that I do not know the Albayrak agreements.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Upper Niumi, do not do that. He has denied it already; I know him. The Member for Sanimentereng, please continue.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. But before asking my supplementary question, with all due respect, Honourable Speaker, Honourable Member for Upper Niumi is a joke.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Sanimentereng, withdraw that.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Honourable Speaker, I repeat, he is a joke.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Sanimentereng, can you withdraw that?

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Honourable Speaker, I repeat, Honourable Member for Upper Niumi is a joke.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, can you withdraw that? You must withdraw that. Take your seat. Order! Take your seat, Member for Sanimentereng, please. Honourable Members, order! Member for Sanimentereng, you must withdraw that. It is a must.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Honourable Speaker, with all due respect, I said I did. Maybe you were not listening.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member Sanimentereng, I said you must withdraw that, and now, without condition.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: I have withdrawn that, unless you want me to repeat it.

THE SPEAKER: No, take your seat, please. Honourable Members, order! The Member for Sanimentereng, you must withdraw that unconditionally. Withdraw it.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: With all due respect, Honourable Speaker, I said I humbly withdraw, and please stop pointing fingers at me. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, you must withdraw that unconditionally. No, you must withdraw that unconditionally. Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, withdraw that word. Honourable Members, order! Sanimentereng, you must withdraw without any condition.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: With all due respect to the nation and this Assembly, I humbly withdraw, and with all due respect to the Speaker of the Parliament. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Member for Serrekunda, you have the floor. Sanimentereng, now you can ask your question.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you have made mention of some of the causes of the delay of Sanyang port. It was clearly stated in the report of the Special Select Committee that was read before Parliament yesterday that the land in Sanyang was on a website for sale. Could this also be part of the delays caused? Thank you.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: I did not hear the other part. You said the land in Sanyang was what?

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: It was stated in the report of the Special Select Committee for former President Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh that the land for Sanyang, I stand to be corrected, but that particular land where Sanyang Port is supposed to be constructed was up for sale. Could this also be part of the delay caused

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

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Honourable Minister, in your response, you mentioned that the said road construction will start in 2026. Can you be specific which month in 2026?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Honourable Speaker, I cannot be very specific because it involves a lot of issues in terms of procurement and then award of contract mobilization and then start of work.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Yes, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, interestingly, you made mention about the bypass from Jeshwang that connect to the said road that they are referring to. When are you expecting to start both the feasibility and the main project itself?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Well, currently the NRA and the consultants that were hired to do the work are in discussion, and they are looking at the studies and the report and the BOQs and the cost itself. So, hopefully when those details are finalized, we will come to the market.

THE SPEAKER: Minister, I can tell you the Member for Jeshwang, I am sure when he breaks his fast today, he will pray for the Member for Brikama North and those who ask the supplementary question leading to the bypass and Jeshwang, it is a music to his ears.

Question No. 040 of 2026 [By: The Hon Member for Brikama North & Minority Leader].

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH AND MINORITY LEADER]: Thank you very much again, Honourable Minister. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure inform this Assembly of the Ministry's plans for the construction of the road linking Makumbaya, Kubuneh and Kunkujang Jattaya?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The road linking

Makumbaya, Kubaneh and Kunkujang Jattaya is included in the government's 2026 Pre-Financing Roads Programme. The feasibility studies for the identified roads are currently ongoing. Honourable Speaker, upon the conclusion of the requisite studies, the project will proceed to the next stage of procurement, followed by its subsequent commencement.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Latrikunda Sabiji.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, when you say government pre-finance approach to this project, do you mean government will contract a contractor to do the pre-financing, then later pay them? can you please explain to the National Assembly?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Pre-financing, as it is known, government will do proper procurement and then have contractors that have the capacity and the financial muscle to do the roads and then under agreed terms, which the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Works will agree, then payment plans will be put in place, as always, in the case around the world. However, there can be other options on the table that can help us avert even pre-financing.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Lower Fulladu West.

HON GIBBI MBALLOW [LOWER FULLADU WEST]: Thank you very much. Honourable Minister, a lot of roads have been put before you for construction. Are you allocated the required funds to be able to construct these roads?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Well, funds have always been a challenge, but government is becoming too bold and too innovative. Definitely, whatever we have, we hope that Parliament will provide the necessary resources for us to do the roads.

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

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, can you elaborate on this pre-finance arrangement? Is it that the contractors will bear the burden to pre-finance the work or the government? We need to be clear.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Well, of course Honourable Member, the contractors will bear the burden of bringing the financing. It is a very good acceptable standard around the world on infrastructure project financing and then, government will put in place mechanisms to ensure that a payment structure is in place to recover. Probably what we are thinking is for the contractors to do the works in 3 years, and then after 3 years, government start paying for another 3 years, which means that we have 6 years to prepare for the payments.

THE SPEAKER: Question: No. 041 of 2026 [By: The Hon Member for Jeshwang].

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Transport,

Works and Infrastructure tell this august Assembly, if the Ministry has any plans to install traffic lights along the OIC road especially at critical locations?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Member for Jeshwang. Honourable Speaker, there were plans to install traffic lights along the OIC highway, especially at the Sukuta Jabang intersection. Plans are still in place to install traffic lights on Bijilo roundabout and also Senegambia roundabout. However, since an overpass is being built at the Sukuta Jabang, there would now be no need for a traffic light at that particular location.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Minister, thank you very much. Honourable Minister, looking at the danger along the zebra crossing, it is not going to be ideal to put traffic lights within the zebra crossing?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Well, you have to also understand that these are not zebra crossings per se. We have humps, I mean, I do not know of any zebra crossing on the Bertil Harding that does not have a hump before it because this is meant to ensure the safety of pedestrians that are crossing.

So, these are safety measures that we put on Bertil Harding and then we have seen that since the installation of these humps, they have reduced risk associated with accidents, especially related to vehicles hitting pedestrians. But for traffic lights, yes, we have a plan for them to be installed at the roundabout, not at the pedestrian crossings.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Minister, yes, you are right. There are humps before the zebra crossing, but the question here is immediately after the humps you have the zebra crossing and from the humps, it is very sloppy. Number two, you see riders crossing along the zebra crossing. My concern here is...*[interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member?

HON SHRIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: Supplementary question is not a debate or exchanges between you and the Minister. The rule is, when you ask a supplementary question and he answered it, that is it.

HON MUSA CHAM [SERREKUNDA]: Honourable Speaker, point of order.

[Point of Order]

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

HON MUSA CHAM [SERREKUNDA]: Point of Order 26 [4], *the Speaker shall not take part in any debate before the National Assembly*. If you want, I can read you the functions of the Speaker at the National Assembly as well. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order, please. Let us accord him the rights he so desire. Honourable Member for Serrekunda, can you tell this august Assembly as to when Speaker participated in the debate, please? Before I make ruling on your order. Please, use your mic.

HON MUSA CHAM [SERREKUNDA]: Just right now, you could have either ruled or allow his question to be accepted but what you are doing, you are participating in the debate here.

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED MEMBER]: Point of order.

THE SPEAKER: No, let me deal with him first, then you can come. Honourable Member for Serrekunda, I want us to read our Standing Orders and also to distinguish between debate and Speakers taking charge, doing his duty as Presiding Officer. We must not bring sentiment and emotion to these chambers. You know you are out of order and you know that you are wasting the time of the Assembly. Do not do that, please. When you ask a supplementary question to the Minister and he answered, you have one more left. You cannot use it again to disagree with the Minister and start to explain your point, what you want the Minister to do? No, that question is gone, by our law, you cannot ask that same question again. The Standing Order is against that.

In this instance, the Member for Jeshwang has a very valid question about street light and the pedestrian and the Minister responded, and he indicated that they are not planned because there are humps that are geared towards reducing, in fact, they have drastically reduced issue of accidents with pedestrians crossing.

Now, if that is the case, the Member cannot use his mic again to talk about that answer, trying to explain telling the Minister, no, you know what I am saying. That is out of order. And I said no, Member, you are out of order. You cannot exchange debate with the Minister and you said I am debating. You are wrong, do not do that again. Do not use your mic, if you use it, I will sanction you. The Member for Jeshwang, you have your final question. Member for Jeshwang please go-ahead sir.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much.

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED MEMBER]: Honourable Speaker, I am on a point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, sorry, I forgot. There is a point of order by nominated Member Fatou K. Jawara. Sorry about that.

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED MEMBER]: Thank you very much Honourable Speaker, I wanted to put the Honourable Member for Serrekunda into order but hence you have already made a ruling on it, I am just going to read the Standing Order 26 [5]; *'In the event that the Speaker wishes to take part in the debate, he or she shall vacate his or her chair for the Deputy Speaker or any other Member elected as Speaker for that purpose.* So, the Speaker have all right to take part in the debate if he wishes so, and allow somebody to be chairing the session. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order sustained. Honourable Member for Jeshwang, please continue.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, is it me wasting time or who? You are even wasting time. Honourable Minister, they are newly coming through the OIC conference Hall, are there any plans to put traffic lights in that newly created junction or crossing point or an area within that? In case there are movements around the area.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: You mean the median that we cut?

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Yes, to get access to the OIC conference hall.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: No, that is basically for emergency exit in case when president or some VIPs are coming, that is created for that, not for traffic light.

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

HON YAHYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, when the Honourable Member for Jeshwang asked about the issue of traffic lights, you said plans are there. Are these plans part of the original scope of the work or the revised scope of the work?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Well, they were part of the original scope, but government thought it necessary to put the humps first to test to do trial runs and they have been proven to be very successful. And that is why we said there have been plans, and hopefully, when the third phase is complete, then this plan will be looked at again to see whether it is even necessary to put the traffic lights there.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Bundung-ka Kunda

HON SULAYMAN JAMMEH [BUNDUNGKA KUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister. I just want to know part of the plan in terms of installing streetlight. Do you have an extra plan to cover some major highways like Westfield? Tabokoto, and Churchills town.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Bundungka Kunda, order Honourable Members. Member for Bundungka Kunda, I heard all the Members enjoying you but you know who laughed the most and the loudest, the Member for Wuli East, because he knew you are dragging the Minister so that he will also include Wuli. Member for Sannimentereng, you have the floor.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANNIMENTERENG]: Thank you, once again Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you have stated in your response that I still stand to be corrected that it would not be necessary to put traffic light at Sukuta Jabang junction, hence, you are putting a crossover. Would it be ideal to put a single traffic light? Traffic lights come in different sizes; you have the smaller ones. Then would it be proper if you put the smaller ones at roads that connect other roads for ease of traffic.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. There is a point of order by the Member for Wuli East.

[Point of Order]

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

Order 32; Permissible Interruptions.

[1]; *No Member except Speaker, shall interrupt another Member, except on a point of order.* The Member for Fulladu is shouting there about asking questions, interrupting the questioner. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members. Order sustained. And I want all Members to please uphold that. And the Member for Wuli East should also explain to his neighbour. Thank you very much for that. I am interested in this question because I do not know what is civilized traffic light. I heard the Member for Sannimentereng, talked about civilized traffic light. Oh, single traffic light, okay. Honourable Members, order. The Member for Sannimentereng is my MP. So, I will always give an opportunity. Please order.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANNIMENTERENG]: Because that is your area. What I am trying to explain, traffic lights are in different sizes. You have the bigger ones and of course the smaller ones. So, what I am telling him is; would it be possible to have the smaller traffic lights at junctions that connect the other areas? Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, please answer.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, as far as the current designs are concerned, we do not intend to put traffic lights at the Sukuta overpass.

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

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, do you have other safety measures to put in place apart from the street lights to limit the over speeding in the highway?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Well, apart from the traffic lights, we have speed bumps, but we also have the road furniture, For example, if you are approaching any of those sections, the signals would actually direct you as to what you are approaching, whether a popular crossing point by young people or workers or something like that.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, we will move to the next questions, and I was expecting Members to ask the Minister about street cameras or traffic, whatever you may call them, digitalization of the streets, especially the beautiful roads.

Question: No. 042 of 2026 [BY: The Honourable Member for Jeshwang].

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, the Oga-Man street in the Kanifing South that is the backway that commercial vehicles usually commute to Bakau was surveyed, and tenders were issued for construction at the said Road. Could the Honourable Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure tell this august Assembly, what is still holding up commencement of the project? Thank you.

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Honourable Member for Jeshwang, Honourable Speaker, the Oga-Man Street in Kanifing South was indeed surveyed and the tender process undertaken. However, commencement of the project has been delayed due to funding constraints. Notwithstanding this, the government intends to implement the project under the 2026 pre-finance Programme, subject to the finalization of the feasibility studies, contractor recruitment and financing arrangement negotiations.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, Honourable Minister, you made mention about feasibility studies before tendering feasibility studies were done. You want to repeat it again or are you planning to extend the area not only on the Oga-Man street?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. What we are doing in the Kanifing Municipality is to do interconnecting roads, and this also affects the Oga-Man Road that he talks about. So definitely, we need to have a full feasibility study and detailed designs for this particular road.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you.

THE SPEAKER:

Question: No. 043 of 2026 [BY: The Hon Member for Jeshwang]

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure tell this august Assembly, if his Ministry has any plans to construct the Baboon Fatty Road that connects to Tallinding concrete road?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Regarding the question raised by the Member for Jeshwang, the Ministry is aware of the Baboon Fatty Road linking to Tallinding concrete road. This road has been identified as an important urban access corridor due to its traffic volume and connectivity.

Government has plans to improve the road which has been considered under the ongoing infrastructural development and pre-financing programme, subject to the completion of the necessary technical assessments. Once the designs and financing arrangements are concluded, Honourable Speaker, the Assembly will be duly informed of the implementation timeline.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Minister, thank you very much for that. Honourable Minister, on the same studies that you refer to, is the Sankung Sillah road part of it?

THE SPEAKER: No, I did not get that. No, Honourable Members, please order.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, it is very clear, Baboon Fatty Road connects to Sankung Sillah road, is it part of this feasibility study?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Member. The Sankung Sillah road is actually part of the current extension of the OIC roads, although, there have been funding gaps but it is being considered for construction and right now the constructor is being told to mobilize around that area.

THE SPEAKER: Order! Honourable Members. I told the Minister before he took the podium. I told him Members were looking for him to appear and they always like to dribble as if they are in a football field. This is just an example of that. Yes, Member for Brikama South.

HON LAMIN J. SANNEH [BRIKAMA SOUTH]: Which of the Baboons are they talking about? Look at the spelling of the Baboon here. So, I am worried, anyway.

THE SPEAKER: Order, Honourable Member, No, just one, please. Honourable Members, it is just the sound of a name, those listening, they do not even know the letters that are used to spell the name Baboon.

Question: No. 044 of 2026 [BY: The Hon Member for Old Yundum & Deputy Majority Leader].

There is a typo error there.

HON ABDOULIE CEESAY [OLD YUNDUM & DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER]: That is the Secretariat. Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure, kindly inform this august Assembly whether the Ministry

has developed any plans to install street lights along the newly constructed coastal road, stretching from Old Yundum to Tabokoto?

HON EBRIMA SILLAH [MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, WORKS & INFRASTRUCTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Member for Old Yundum. Honourable Speaker, the Ministry recognizes the importance of adequate street lighting along the newly constructed coastal road from Old Yundum to Tabokoto, to enhance road safety and visibility. The installation of street lighting and appropriate traffic control measures, including signalization at the intersection, are currently under consideration, subject to technical design review and availability of funds.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on your behalf, I want to thank the Honourable Minister for Transport, Works and Infrastructure for those answers provided. Honourable Minister, you may go now, and Ramadan Mubarak to you. I do not hear them talk about Nianija; this one today is all about Greater Banjul Area. Thank you.

THE HON MINISTER OF BASIC AND SECONDARY EDUCATION.

THE SPEAKER: Please, Honourable Members and guests, quietly leave the chambers. Honourable Minister for Basic and Secondary Education, please take the podium. Questions for which due notices were given to the Honourable Minister for Basic and Secondary Education by Honourable Members for oral reply.

Question No. 025 of 2026 [BY: The Hon Member for Bakau].

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, in light of persistent challenges facing Senior Secondary Schools, could the Honourable Minister for Basic and Secondary Education inform this august Assembly what reforms the Ministry is undertaking to improve the quality and accessibility of Basic and Secondary Education nationwide?

HON DR. ABIBATOU DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF BASIC & SECONDARY EDUCATION]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker and thank you Honourable Member for Bakau for the question. While the persistent challenges you are referring to have not been detailed in your question, I am happy to report the many reforms the Ministry is undertaking to enhance the quality and access to Basic and Secondary Education across the country. So, I will approach this in two folds.

First, I will talk about the reforms that we are undertaking to strengthen quality of the services that we deliver, to ensure adequate access to Basic and Secondary Education across the country.

So, to begin with quality, the Ministry is implementing many reforms which align with the National Education Policy 2016, 2030, with a particular focus on improving foundational learning outcomes. In this regard, we have made significant progress in terms of our initiatives, and this includes:

Firstly, the mainstreaming of effective intervention strategy in schools, we call it the maze, and now we have the structured pedagogy that is accompanying the maze. These two reforms aim to enhance educational quality at the foundational level. The maze targets improvements in the

learning outcomes at the primary education level through tailored interventions and promotes inclusivity, and this is why you see a lot of initiatives at the moment that are happening to enhance inclusivity.

The Structured Pedagogy Initiative introduces evidence-based practices, and this we are doing in partnership with a consultant from Ghana, Effective Intervention and Women's Network for Development and Educational Resources [WONDER], a non-governmental organization which tries to initiate structured lesson plans, emphasizing the use of national languages in our early grades to enhance comprehension and engagement within the classroom. Together, these initiatives are creating an effective educational environment, ensuring every child in our country has access to quality education that prepares them for success at the upper levels.

The second reform that we, as a sector, have undertaken to strengthen quality is the ongoing teacher competency and professional training. The teacher competency assessment has been introduced and is now a mandatory requirement and criteria for all our pre-service teachers graduating from Diploma and Advanced Diploma programmes. This is to ensure that the best and the most suitable candidates enter the education sector. The TCA, which is the Teacher Competency Assessment, is also being administered to In-service Teacher Trainees, meaning teachers already in the system, to identify capacity gaps and develop tailored training programmes to address those gaps, so that education services can be delivered much more effectively. We also, as a sector, continue our professional development programmes for teachers to promote quality in the system, and we do this through the issuance of scholarships and other training initiatives.

The third reform that the sector is undertaking to ensure quality is improving our teaching and learning materials generally. There is a committee we call the National Committee, which comprises stakeholders such as the Conference of Principals, our Curriculum Directorate, the Gambia Teachers Union, the GPPC (the Printing and Publishing Corporation), and our Standard and Quality Assurance Directorate. They are working together to establish a review team to approve textbooks for Senior Secondary Schools across the country, just to ensure that the textbooks used at the Senior Secondary Level are those that respond to the curriculum requirements of the Senior Secondary Schools.

Clear textbook review criteria have been established to ensure compliance with curriculum standards. A framework agreement is also in place for the timely printing and distribution of these learning materials. As reforms are ongoing to strengthen quality within the education system, the sector, through the engagement of the Learning Mastermind, is strengthening its capacity as a system.

As part of these reforms, the consultant is assessing the capacity of the sector to ensure that we are able to sustain all these reforms, especially the structured pedagogy reforms. This involves developing a framework for capacity needs assessment, ensuring long-term sustainability of all our reforms, particularly the foundational learning reforms.

We are also, as a sector, strengthening our data systems to ensure that our decisions are based on evidence. In this regard, we are improving our

monitoring, evaluation, and learning system to use data effectively. This involves creating strong assessment frameworks and setting up digital platforms for better data use.

The cluster monitor system has been updated to help with implementation, and there are nationwide training sessions on the use of the DHIS tool, which is supporting our EMIS (Education Management Information System) platform for the annual school census to support a smooth transition to digital management by focusing on data-driven decision-making and monitoring. The Ministry now has a better track record of educational progress and takes informed actions to improve learning outcomes in all our schools.

The sixth point that the Ministry is undertaking to enhance quality is integrating educational technology into our teaching and learning. The sector is proactively integrating EdTech solutions to enhance learning outcomes and streamline educational management systems. A central initiative is the development of a learning management system, which is spearheaded by our consultant and partner, the Learning Mastermind, and this is complemented by comprehensive training on digital tools to elevate instructional delivery.

The Ministry has also digitized scripted lessons from Early Childhood Development to Secondary School levels, enabling both our teachers and students to access these materials through the interactive platform we call Island Gambia, which is open to our students. This platform supports seamless online and offline content access, significantly improving the educational experience and fostering greater engagement in learning. The platform provides both teachers and students with access to digital content

aligned with our national curriculum, available in both online and offline formats.

[Supplementary question (s)]

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I thank you Honourable Minister for giving that wonderful response. In your response, you have indicated that the teacher competency and distribution of learning materials, but specifically, when it comes to distribution of learning materials, this is not done in time. As a ministry, what are you doing to make sure that time is given to...

HON DR. ABIBATOU DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF BASIC & SECONDARY EDUCATION]: Teaching and learning materials as I speak to you are available in all our Lower Basic, Upper Basic as well as the Senior Secondary. Although, we have had a legacy of delay in the provision of the Senior Secondary Textbook, but those gaps have been closed. As we speak now, we have delivered the first batch of Senior Secondary textbooks, which are hugely available in the schools. The second trench is already on the way and the third trench will begin around September.

So, that process has seen a lot of improvement and this is why we have not, as a sector, had a lot of challenges and complaints regarding lack of teaching and learning materials in our schools. Thank you

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

THE SPEAKER: Member for Kiang West. You have the floor.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity. Honourable Minister, I have conflict in my mind as to what question should I ask? I want to ask about teacher training in college. I want to ask about Senior Secondary Schools in Kiang West, but I think I will go for the ones in Kiang West.

Earlier on, with regard to improving teaching and learning in the Senior Secondary School, I have posed a question with respect to science courses at the three Senior Secondary Schools that we have, namely: Nyoro Jataba Senior, Keneba Senior as well as Karantaba Senior, and still this has not yet started and the pace at which construction of those structures is going is very slow. And how far is your monitoring with respect to this construction? How soon will these science courses be able to start at this Senior Secondary Schools?

[Point of Order]

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, Point of Order.

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

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Member for Bakau asked a general question, and the Honourable Member for Kiang West Questions are very specific. Specific in the sense that it is not in order with order 43 [4]; of the Standing Order, which says that; *'A supplementary question should not be in order if it introduced matters not included in the original questions and the answers provided'*. So, the Honourable Member for Bakau asked questions that are very general and

the Honourable Member for Kiang West also asked questions that are very specific. So, it is all the same. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order, please. Honourable Members, the question posed by the Member for Bakau concerns reforms aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of Basic and Secondary Education nationwide; from Kindergarten to Grade 12, from Koina to Kartong, and even beyond. That is the breadth of his open-ended question. Therefore, any matter within the scope of Kindergarten to Grade 12, from Earth to space, may be raised. The point of order is not sustained. Minister, please proceed with your answer.

HON DR. HABIBATOU DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF BASIC & SECONDARY EDUCATION]: Yes. As a sector, we are involved in several school construction projects.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Point of order, Honourable Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: There is a Point of Order by the Member for Kiang West.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, under Order 17(f): "While a member is speaking, all other members shall be silent." The Minister is providing an answer for the people of Kiang West, not for me. The Honourable Member for Upper Niumi is disturbing the proceedings and continues to talk.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the point of order is sustained. In fact, I am applying the order to the Member himself. Please, in subsequent questions and answers, remain silent. Minister, please continue.

HON DR. HABIBATOU DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF BASIC & SECONDARY EDUCATION]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I was about to say that in terms of school infrastructure, as a sector, we have commenced work on many schools, and by the grace of God, all these projects will be completed. In the area of science, we are pursuing extensive reforms to strengthen that field, as it remains a significant challenge for our country, not only due to a lack of facilities but also a shortage of qualified personnel. Over time, we have not had the required number of teachers and educators in this area to deliver these services effectively. However, we are now offering more scholarships and encouraging teachers to specialise in fields such as Biology, Chemistry, and Mathematics, so that we can produce more educators to support this critical area. I want to assure you that any construction project we have commenced in this sector will be completed. We have taken note of your concerns and may consider paying a visit to your region to assess the situation firsthand. Rest assured, any school, whether new classrooms or an entirely new school, that we have begun will be finished, and the necessary support in terms of teaching and learning materials, as well as furniture, will be provided. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Minister, when answering supplementary questions, you are required to summarise and respond within two minutes. The Member for Banjul Central, you have the floor.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you, Honourable Minister, for that comprehensive breakdown. I had questions regarding curriculum standards and teacher competency, but you have already addressed them. My only question, therefore, relates to inclusivity. Despite your policy commitments, which we have followed closely and commend,

what is the Ministry doing to address the barriers faced by teenage mothers and children with disabilities, particularly in terms of enrolment and retention rates for these marginalised groups?

HON DR. HABIBATOU DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF BASIC & SECONDARY EDUCATION]: We now have more students with disabilities attending schools because, as a sector, we are able to provide assistive devices. Currently, if you are monitoring our activities, you will notice that we have a team in the field working to support students with disabilities, including those with visual impairments. We are collaborating with the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the European Union (EU), and medical practitioners to conduct assessments and provide the necessary support. In terms of infrastructure, we have also taken into account the needs of students who may use wheelchairs and require access to floors above the ground level. A great deal of our reform efforts is directed towards ensuring inclusivity in the services we provide.

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

HON YAYA SANYANG [LATRIKUNDA SABIJI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you mentioned two teacher competency tests, one for pre-service and another for in-service teachers. I understand that for pre-service teachers, failure would mean they are not employed. However, for those already in service who take this test and fall below average, what happens to them?

HON DR. HABIBATOU DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF BASIC & SECONDARY EDUCATION]: We support them. The purpose of the test is

to identify teaching gaps so that we can provide targeted and appropriate training to strengthen those areas in which they are weak. This will enable them to deliver more effectively.

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

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, I have visited some schools, particularly Baja Kunda, and I observed that although the MRC builds schools, they often do not provide laboratory equipment for experiments. Does the Ministry have a plan to supply such equipment to enable students to conduct simple scientific experiments? Thank you.

HON DR. HABIBATOU DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF BASIC & SECONDARY EDUCATION]: Yes, in the area of science, last year, through our collaboration with the Kuwaiti Fund, we supplied over \$2 million worth of materials for science, technical subjects, and woodwork, as well as home science. These are part of our ongoing reforms. We are paying close attention to ensuring that schools with science laboratories are well-equipped for practical lessons. The reforms are continuing, and we hope to strengthen all schools with science labs so that students can have a quality learning experience.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. The Nominated Member, Fatou K. Jawara, the floor is yours.

HON FATOU K. JAWARA [NOMINATED MEMBER]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, in Phase One of your reform, you highlighted two key areas: improving quality learning and

reviewing the school curriculum. Is this reform limited to government schools, or will it extend to private schools as well?

HON DR. HABIBATOU DRAMMEH [MINISTER OF BASIC & SECONDARY EDUCATION]: The current reforms, particularly those being undertaken by the Ministry, are focused on public schools. However, we do oversee private schools and ensure that they also deliver the required teaching and learning outcomes and maintain a conducive environment. If they offer programmes, for instance, in the sciences, we encourage them to ensure that the necessary infrastructure and teaching materials are available to help students succeed. Yes, we monitor them closely.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on your behalf, I wish to thank the Honourable Minister for Basic and Secondary Education for the answers provided. Honourable Minister, you may take your leave. Order, Honourable Members, order. Earlier, I recognised senior officials from the government gallery. I can see the Director of Health Services, Dr. Nyassi, and other officials, you are welcome. We are now joined by the Minister for Health Services, Dr. Ahmed Lamin Samateh, you are welcome, Honourable Minister. Clerk, we may proceed, please.

QUESTION TIME: MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources. You may please take the podium.

Honourable Members, we now proceed to questions for which due notice was given to the Honourable Minister for oral reply.

QUESTION NO. 013 OF 2026 [BY: THE HON. MEMBER FOR SAMI]

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, can the Honourable Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources inform this august Assembly of the criteria the Ministry uses to identify new hunting camps and what benefits communities derive from them?

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Thank you, Honourable Member for Sami. The identification of new hunting camps is carried out by the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management, which is duly mandated under the Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation Act, the most recent being the 2003 Act.

Key criteria for consideration include:

1. Demand and supply of resources – that is, the species. This includes complaints from communities about wildlife classified as agricultural vermin and pests that periodically and perpetually threaten farming and community livelihoods.

2. Legal and regulatory compliance – hunting licences and concessions are issued in accordance with the Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation Act of 2003, particularly Part IV, "Control of Hunting and Harvesting." A new camp must operate under a legally recognised tenancy, either with local communities or the state.

3. Ecological and wildlife resource considerations – areas selected must have a sufficient wildlife resource base to support hunting without harming species viability or biodiversity.

4. Human-wildlife conflict assessment – sites are chosen where hunting helps mitigate conflicts and reduce harm to the environment, including controlling vermin species that affect crop productivity.

5. Social and community factors – camps are usually established in districts where there are local support and engagement, and where communities have a stake in wildlife resource management. District authorities and traditional leaders are typically consulted to ensure social and cultural acceptability.

Community benefits derived from hunting camps:

- Employment opportunities – camps create jobs for community members as guards, trackers, hospitality staff, cooks, drivers, security personnel, and maintenance workers. For example, two camps in Sami District, Wellingara

(Hydara) and Karantaba Toro, employ about 60 Gambians, the majority from nearby communities.

- Provision of potable water- businesses often flow benefits back to communities; boreholes have been dug in Wellingara, Hydara, and Karantaba Toro to provide clean water supply.

- Support for local economic growth – camps boost local businesses such as petty trading, transportation, building materials, and other consumables, thereby enhancing the informal sector.

- Community development projects – in some cases, hunting camps contribute to support for schools, local food initiatives, and other projects that foster goodwill and sustainable partnerships with residents, while also mitigating human-wildlife conflict. These are the key points. Thank you.

[SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION]

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. Honourable Minister, as we speak, there are three camps in Sami, yet you mentioned only two. The oldest camp is Madiana. How do you manage the operations of these three camps in Sami?

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: As I said, there must be need assessment and technical consultation to ensure that the law is respected, community interests are observed, and nature is not adversely

affected. If there are three camps, rest assured that the necessary technical basis has been established for their operation. Thank you.

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. Is there any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the operators of these camps and the communities in which they are located?

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: I will need to verify that. However, as far as I know, there would not be a need for an MOU as long as we have the legal framework that guides operations and community consultation. If any MOU exists, we would need to consult with the technical team on the reasons for it.

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

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, is the creation of new camps not contradictory to the Banjul Declaration, which called for the protection and conservation of wildlife, forests, and biodiversity in The Gambia?

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: No, it is not contradictory. The establishment of hunting camps is regulated and done in a manner that ensures sustainability. The Banjul Declaration emphasises

conservation, and our operations are aligned with that principle, balancing community needs, wildlife management, and environmental protection. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Members, that concludes questions to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources. The Minister may take his seat.

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: Thank you. What you have just referenced is a declaration, and what I am referencing is an Act, which supersedes declarations. Therefore, the Act guides how we manage and implement hunting camps in this country. Thank you.

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

HON AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, order, please. Honourable Minister, beyond identifying these new hunting camps as established by law, as you said, could you clarify what monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are in place to ensure that these camps do not contribute to biodiversity loss or illegal hunting, as might be alleged? Additionally, how are these communities

benefiting? You have mentioned something about that, but I really want to know.

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: Thank you. We have stakeholders overseeing the implementation of this, comprising the local people, the community themselves, and our Department of Parks and Wildlife officers, who are also on the ground. So, if any illegality is found, we have the room to ensure that we are able to correct it. If there is any issue, either the committee will report it or our officers will spot it, and adequate measures will be taken.

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

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you very much. Honourable Minister, I think the last time I visited one of those hunting camps was four weeks ago in Sami Madiana, and you could see the visibility in terms of the employment they create for communities. However, in the distribution of benefits to some of these communities, do you actually establish, or do you intend to establish, local structures that would monitor how those benefits are shared across the communities?

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: Thank you again. I did mention that there is a law governing the process of establishing these camps, implementing them, and managing their administration. Therefore, the laws will guide whether the community has to have a structure. But even where the laws are silent, these are basic measures to ensure that at least efficiency is being achieved. So, if the community wishes that this is necessary and it will help the effective and productive running and operation

of these camps, I think it will be required. If they request, we can help them, even if it is not within the laws.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The Member for Banjul Central, you have the floor now.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Minister, yes, you have partly answered; I had a similar question. However, I want to know when it comes to representation for these communities, is it through the Alkalos, through the Ward Development Committees, or VDCs. How does it work?

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: Whatever happens within the community; when we say local community, the Alkalo is the leader in the local community, and the VDC is a very important structure. So, for me, as far as the local community is given that leverage to be engaged and have a say, it must be through the Alkalo and the VDC. Yes.

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

HON AMIE COLLEY [FONI BEREFET]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, apart from the benefits you mentioned here, I want to understand if the hunting camp has any agreement with the VDC in sharing the revenue?

HON ROHEY JOHN MANJANG [MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCES]: Thank you; a similar question was asked. I am saying that the sharing of revenue or whatever governs these hunting camps must be guided by the established law that I mentioned. Anything outside that will be at the leverage of the community or in agreement with the investor. So, in that case, if it is something that will help efficiency and productivity, I think we will encourage it. And if they so request, we can support that. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources, for those answers provided to this august Assembly. I now thank you. You may go, Honourable Minister. Thank you very much. Clerk, you may proceed.

THE HON MINISTER FOR PETROLEUM AND ENERGY

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Members, may I now invite the Honourable Minister for Petroleum and Energy to take the podium. Questions for which due notices were given to the Honourable Minister for Petroleum and Energy by Honourable Members for oral reply.

Question No. 021 of 2026 [By: The Hon Member for Banjul Central]

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Petroleum and Energy inform this august Assembly of the legal or policy basis for replacing electricity meters upon each residential transfer, and indicate whether the Ministry plans to review this practice or consider alternatives?

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, NAWEC confirms that the practice is governed by its approved Electricity Meter Transfer Policy, adopted by the Board of Directors under Board Resolution Number 60 of Quarter 4, 2025, on the 6th of October 2025.

The policy establishes that all electricity meters remain the property of NAWEC and are permanently assigned to the premises of installation. Accordingly, meters are not transferable upon change of tenancy, ownership, or customer status. Customers relocating to new premises are required to apply for a new connection. The policy was submitted to and approved by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). The policy provides for periodic review in line with operational and regulatory developments. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Minister, you have mentioned that this was through an approved policy, but we would want to know the rationale behind forcing a new homeowner, who had no role in the previous occupant's indebtedness, for example, to bear the cost of a new meter. Is that not a bit uncitizenly, given the economic situation?

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: Honourable Member, the rationale for this decision was based on a number of cases where meters were illegally transferred from their current locations

to locations unknown to NAWEC, and they were illegally bypassed, leading to loss of revenue for the utility, which costs all of us.

That is the rationale why NAWEC took the decision, and this was already, as I mentioned, approved by the regulatory authority. So, it is the actions of a few individuals, or a number of people, that has really led to this decision. They illegally moved the meters, not only illegally transferring them but also bypassing them and stealing electricity, which impacts the revenue of the utility and will eventually affect service delivery. So, it is a decision that I think is well thought out. Thank you.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Minister, I want to know whether there were consultations done with consumer protection agencies regarding this before reaching this decision?

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: My comfort with the whole decision is because PURA is involved and approved it. I guess that is the role of the regulator to handle that aspect of the activity. If PURA approved it, I guess they would have done their homework. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Nianija, you have the floor?

HON AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIJA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, I think I will rephrase my supplementary, since you have answered that this is a result of a policy approved by the Board of Directors of NAWEC. But do you not think it would be wise if, before

applying for a new meter, you apply for a transfer to a new location? I think that could have been better, in my opinion. Do you not think that is best?

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: Yes, that has been the norm; people were allowed to transfer their meters legally. They come to NAWEC, apply for transfer of meters, and are issued invoices, pay the transfer fee; meters are relocated, and the new location becomes known to NAWEC. So, there is no issue with that; that is the norm. But what has happened in the past leading to this is because people started illegally transferring meters.

They dismantled the meters, took them to locations unknown to NAWEC, and not only transferred them illegally, but also bypassed them, knowing full well that the address from the initial installation was no longer the new location. When they do that and bypass, NAWEC does not know where the meters are located. So, we keep roaming all over to find those meters, and they are illegally bypassed. That is a serious problem and is causing huge revenue losses to the utility, which is unacceptable.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, people do apply for meters, as you mentioned, to compounds that belong to individuals per se. If in case you apply for a meter, you spend a fortune on it, and now you want to relocate that meter, is there any form of compensation between the previous owner

and the compound that is going to be left with that meter? Is there any plan to negotiate between the two parties?

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: I think what we need to do as a country is to strengthen our rental laws. When you want people to rent your house, these are basic services that you need to provide for your tenants. So, the issue of burden should not be on the utility; it should be on the landlord to ensure those basic services are provided to their tenants. So, I think we should all work together to ensure that those rules or laws are strengthened to protect the interests of our tenants. Thank you.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, can you clarify whether officials have been implicated in facilitating illegal meter transfers? If so, what disciplinary action was taken against those officials involved? Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, we are not talking about illegal transfer by officials here. No, he cannot come and say these members are involved in illegal transfer, and we have done this to them, these staff. No, you cannot do that; you cannot mention staff here who cannot defend themselves.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Honourable Speaker, the illegal transfer was mentioned by the Minister. I just want to confirm whether officials were involved here.

THE SPEAKER: No, the Minister cannot talk about that here. The Member for Janjanbureh, you have the floor.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, it appears that the few who were engaged, or who engaged in illegal transfers of meters have affected the broader society in terms of getting those also doing the legal transfers. What mechanisms are you really putting in place as a Ministry to address this issue in terms of enabling people to legally transfer their meters from one area to the other?

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: Well, for now, we are in agreement with this policy decision taken by NAWEC, and we are monitoring closely with NAWEC. We will be advised in the future, as this is going to be reviewed based on the circumstances. If things improve, I think we can consider rescinding the decision. But for now, it is being monitored and reviewed. If we are advised otherwise, we will take the necessary decision. Thank you.

[Point of Order]

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

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Speaker, I want to bring you to Order 43(4).

THE SPEAKER: Yes, what?

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: I want to bring you to Order 43(4).

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, sit down.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: I said point of order, Order 43(4).

THE SPEAKER: Alright, go ahead.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: 43(4): A supplementary question shall not be in order if it introduces matters not included in the original question and the answers provided. So, the Honourable Member for Sanimentereng asked a question... *[Interrupted]*

THE SPEAKER: Take your seat. You know you are out of order; you cannot do that. Central Baddibu, my friend, the Member for Banjul North, you have the floor.

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, according to your response, you spoke about the issue of bypassing meters, which is indeed a very serious crime. However, what measures has your Ministry or NAWEC

put in place in terms of security to prevent such incidents from recurring, particularly as far as service provision is concerned?

HON NANI JUWARA [MINISTER OF PETROLEUM & ENERGY]: These are meters installed in homes. It is not possible for NAWEC to place physical security in each of those locations. However, we have a task force, a team responsible for revenue protection. On a daily basis, they monitor the purchasing patterns of customer installations and regularly conduct field visits to identify suspected illegal activities. This monitoring is ongoing and carried out daily. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister for Petroleum and Energy, on behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank you for answering the questions posed to this Assembly. You may now go, and Ramadan Mubarak. Clerk, we may proceed.

THE SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister for Health.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Minister for Health, you may please take the podium. We will now proceed with questions for which due notice was given to the Honourable Minister for Health by Honourable Members for oral reply.

Question No. 01 of 2026 [By: The Hon. Member for Sami].

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the floor. Honourable Speaker, the entire Central River Region North has no major hospital like the one in Bansang. Could the Honourable Minister for Health inform this august Assembly whether the Ministry has any plans to construct or transform a health centre in the region into a major facility?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Distinguished Honourable Speaker and Honourable National Assembly Members, thank you very much. I wish to inform the Honourable Member for Sami Constituency that the Ministry of Health is undertaking massive infrastructural development in CRR North. The Ministry has just renovated and equipped the Kaur Health Centre. Construction of the Njau Major Health Centre is nearing completion and will be inaugurated very soon, with all equipment and hospital beds already in storage awaiting completion. Renovation and construction of new structures are also in progress at the Kuntaur Major Health Centre.

The Ministry handed over a new ambulance in January 2026 to Kuntaur Major Health Centre, funded by the African Development Bank through the National Social Protection Agency. The procurement of an additional tracking vehicle and equipment is also in progress. Once the construction and renovation of these two facilities in CRR North are completed, it will significantly improve health indicators across the entire region, especially in CRR North. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, my question is very clear. For both CRR North

and South, any major cases that occur currently require patients to cross to Bansang, which causes a lot of difficulties for the people of CRR North. I want to be specific: does the Ministry have any plan for us to have a similar major hospital in CRR North?

THE SPEAKER: Order, Honourable Members, please. This is a very important question; you should listen. Order.

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]:

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. The Ministry of Health is very much aware of the challenges the people of CRR, especially CRR North, have faced over the decades. Many health indicators are worse on that side of the country, and for that reason, we have paid particular attention to strengthening and upgrading health facilities there. That is precisely what warranted the construction of the massive health facility in Njau.

Honourable Speaker, I would ask the Honourable Member to kindly pay a visit to the Njau health facility; I am sure he will be impressed. Many of the services he is referring to will be carried out at the Njau Major Health Centre. In addition, we are also upgrading the Kuntaur Health Facility. I was there a couple of weeks ago, and some equipment have already arrived, while renovation work is progressing very well and impressively. We believe that once all these are completed, many patients, most patients, will no longer need to cross the river to the southern bank. Thank you.

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. Our committee monitoring has visited the Njau Health Centre. So, are you saying that the Njau Health Centre is going to replace Bansang?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: It is not going to replace Bansang. It is going to be an addition. In strategizing health facility expansion and development, we look at the major problems. Many of the problems in CRR, especially regarding health services, relate to maternal and child health. You will realize that the maternal and child health aspect of the new Njau facility is even better than that of Bansang. The maternal unit at the new Njau facility has four fully air-conditioned and ensuite delivery rooms with bathrooms and toilets for each woman in labour; that alone will be very helpful.

It also has a theatre, so the same operations performed in Bansang can be done there and will be done there, Insha'Allah. When it comes to maternal health, caesarean sections, and other surgical operations can also be handled there. We are going to strengthen it to such a level that referrals to Bansang will be reduced. Of course, even Bansang refers cases to Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital, as that is the peak of the health service delivery system.

Referrals happen across all levels, and occasionally, Edward Francis is unable to handle a few cases, requiring further referrals. This is the strategy, but I reassure you, with Njau and Kuntaur functioning optimally, the referral rate will be dramatically reduced. Thank you.

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

HON MUSA CHAM [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister equally update us on the proposed transformation of the health centre in Chami, Nianija? Thank you.

HON DR AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Honourable Speaker, I did not see that question as part of...

HON MUSA CHAM [SERREKUNDA]: It is a supplementary question about the region, CRR North. There was a proposal that the Chami Health Centre, one of the oldest health facilities in that area, would be transformed into a state-of-the-art health centre.

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. That health facility is one of those planned for renovation and upgrading, and I am informed that tender processes are now underway. This also includes Brikama, Yoro Bawul, and I believe the fourth is Foday Kunda. These are being funded by the same African Development Bank that is supporting the renovation of Kuntaur Health Centre. After renovation, these facilities will also receive an ambulance and a tracking vehicle. The tracking vehicles are very important because they are used to reach villages without health facilities to deliver maternal and child care. Thank you.

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

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, the question is very specific. With all the attributes you described for Njau and Kuntaur, do you plan to upgrade them

to hospitals in the near future? Because a hospital and a health centre are different. Do you have a plan for that?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]:

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. When we went on tour with the WHO Country Representative currently posted in The Gambia, he told me, "Honourable Minister, why do you call so many of these facilities health centres? These are big hospitals in most parts of the continent." So, very soon we will review the nomenclature of health facilities, because many of these facilities have been upgraded and expanded without a change of name. We will be doing that, but Njau is actually a hospital. Yes.

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

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, what are the requirements that need to be met for a health centre to be upgraded to a hospital? Because it is not only a change of nomenclature; there must be specific requirements in place for that upgrade.

[Point of Order]

THE SPEAKER: There is a point of order by the Member for Upper Niumi. Honourable Member for Upper Niumi, I cannot hear you, please.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: Order 43(4), Honourable Speaker. The supplementary question is not in order if it includes matters not included in the original question and the answer provided. The Honourable Member for Busumbala's question is not based on the original question, nor on the answer provided by the Minister.

THE SPEAKER: What is his question?

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: The criteria in place to indicate whether a particular health facility is a hospital or a health centre. That was not the question he asked.

THE SPEAKER: No, Busumbala is asking the Minister for the criteria or the requirements needed to name one a health centre or a hospital. Is that correct? Minister, please provide an answer. The Minister himself talked about that, and I am not sure whether Members are listening. Honourable Members, order. The Members for Sami and Central Baddibu were pressing on the hospital, and the Minister talked about the facilities in Njau. What is there? In fact, they have a theatre, and the labour ward will have about four delivery rooms, just like that of Jammeh Foundation, and in fact, it is the same design being built in Njau.

So, the Minister said most of the cases referred to Bansang now can be dealt with at that level, at the CRR North level, at Njau and others, including Kuntaur as you mentioned. Then Central Baddibu pressed on the hospital, which I am very happy about, pressing the Minister further. Wait, relax. So,

Central Baddibu pressed him on that, but the Minister said that in fact, many of the facilities, given the investment in terms of equipment, services, and materials provided, are beyond health centres.

They are now coming up with a review to change the nomenclature, and I agree. The Member for Serrekunda also talked about the dispensary in Chamen; it should be upgraded. Even Bansang is not always available there. So, that is what the Minister said. Based on that, the Member for Busumbala is asking the Minister what the criteria will be, even though the Minister has more or less highlighted those criteria already. So, the Member for Busumbala is in order.

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]:

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. It is a long list. You categorize them by what a health post should have, what a minor health centre, a major health centre, a general hospital, a specialist hospital, and a teaching hospital should have. It is a long list, which we can provide for you if you do not mind. It is all geared towards the scope of services, what they should provide and the type of equipment they need. This is how we categorize them.

In the past, we acknowledge that there was sometimes misclassification for various reasons, but we now think they need to be reclassified based on current realities rather than sentiments. We have had information that sometimes proclamations were made without the actual substance of a major health centre being present. That is why we want to review all of them. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Lower Niuni, you understand now? No, it is not about CRR North; what the Minister said is very clear. Order! Honourable Members, there is a lot happening in these newly constructed health facilities, they have improved. To be honest, the materials and quality of service being provided now are not the same as five years ago.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 015 of 2026 [By: The Member for Janjanbureh].

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Minister. Let me seize this opportunity to thank you for making the ambulance in Janjanbureh operational. Thank you and your team. However, I wish you could move the RFH ambulance to another community; I do not think we will need it that much now. Having two ambulances would be costly to the state. Thank you. They will deal with that between them, that is too far from Kaur.

Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Health provide this Assembly with the annual budget allocations and actual expenditure for mental health from 2019 to 2025 and update the Assembly on the status of the draft Mental Health Bill?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform the Honourable Member for Janjanbureh Constituency that the table below shows the annual budget allocations and actual expenditure for mental health from 2019 to 2025:

| **Year** | **Budget Allocation (D)** | **Actual Expenditure (D)** |

|-----|-----|-----

2019	2,150,000	665,314	
2020	2,425,000	0	
2021	1,995,000	230,475	
2022	2,200,000	0	
2023	6,550,000	350,325	
2024	3,740,000	0	
2025	3,700,000	3,300,000	
2026	2,941,000	—	

The draft Mental Health Bill has been submitted by the contracted legal firm and is being reviewed for presentation to Cabinet for approval and subsequent presentation to this august Assembly. Thank you very much.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. I want to believe that the issue of mental health is becoming a daily concern. What is your Ministry's plan to come up with a facility to help rehabilitate those affected by mental health in our societies?

DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. The issue of mental health is a big concern to the Ministry, the government as a whole, and society in general. Mental health issues are not very easy to deal with, especially given the stigma associated with mental illness. It takes a whole-of-society approach, in conjunction with government, to ensure mental health issues come to the fore.

We have one dedicated mental hospital, the Tanka-Tanka Psychiatric Hospital, which itself needs to be upgraded. However, the service quality has improved in the sense that the calibre of mental health professionals there has increased. We now have a Professor of Mental Health there, in addition to consultants providing services and teaching medical students and young doctors. We also have a Gambian specialist there with membership in mental health.

Capacity building and training health workers to identify and deal with mental health issues is very critical, because sometimes poor diagnosis or misdiagnosis worsens the problem. Another aspect is the availability of psychiatric drugs, which has been a challenge, but we are addressing it and expect adequate consignments to prevent relapse.

With regard to rehabilitation, well-established mental health hospitals, which we intend our facility to become, we should have a typical in-house rehabilitation facility where patients are trained in skills as they recover. For those related to substance abuse, we have been working closely with the

National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, which has that mandate. I am aware they are building a rehabilitation centre for those linked to substance abuse. Thank you.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you, Honourable Minister. I will pick it up from where you ended, especially around substance abuse. A few days ago, I was following up on an issue around the Kololi Tavern street area. There is a specific area, formerly built by Kharafi, now occupied by, let's say, substance users.

I am not trying to ignite anything negative, but listening to their submissions is truly heartbreaking. You will realize some of these people want to leave that life of substance use and become part of good society. Is your Ministry making any efforts to visit these sites or directly engage these individuals affected by substance abuse, to see how their lives can be reformed so that they can join society as required?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. This matter is central to our society. It is one of the most sensitive issues we deal with as a government and as a people. Substance use is a big concern and cuts across all corners of the country. When people become dependent on these substances, it becomes very difficult. We are aware that many people who become overly dependent certainly want to stop, but because these substances are addictive, it is a big challenge.

We need a coordinated government response, but also society and communities must be involved. Honourable Members, starting with yourselves as role models. In our Ministry, the Mental Health Programme Unit engages with these individuals. They go around, and we have some

volunteers in society who have formed groups and associations. They delve into those areas to engage them. Certainly, it is not easy to tackle. We need schools, educators, civil society organizations, parents, and certainly Members of Parliament. It is a whole-of-society approach, and we intend to continue strengthening it so that we can provide life-changing experiences for those affected. Thank you.

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

HON SAIKOU BAH [BASSE]: Thank you, Honourable Minister. For decades now, as you mentioned, we have only one mental health facility within the Greater Banjul Area. Could the Honourable Minister indicate whether the Ministry has plans to construct one in the regions or provinces?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much. There is no recent plan to do so due to resource constraints. However, it is a good idea, and we will look into it when resources become available. What we have been doing and intend to strengthen is having qualified health professionals in the provinces, Basse and Bansang, including psychiatrists based there. Not all people with mental illness need to be admitted; some just need early diagnosis and treatment. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. The Member for Lower Saloum, you came in now; you cannot interrupt proceedings. You are out of order. Members for Nianija, Lower Saloum, Upper Saloum, Janjanbureh, and Sami; the Minister made positive statements regarding your region. Central Baddibu, you have the floor.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: My question has been addressed by the Member for Basse.

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

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and Honourable Minister. As the saying goes, there is no health without mental health. Understanding the parent question, it addresses the Draft Mental Health Bill. As we all know, we are currently using what we call the Lunatic and Detention Act as the law governing mental health issues in this country. We also understand this law dates back to 1917, almost 109 years old this year. How soon do you intend to expedite the process of introducing it to the Executive and bringing it to Parliament for us to do the needful, so that we can address the gaps surrounding mental health in this country and ensure our legal framework is up to date? Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, do not deliver a statement here. It is not about that; the Minister has already responded. A question should not go beyond that. Minister, you may repeat what you said earlier.

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I wish to inform the Honourable Member that a lot of work has been done on the Mental Health Bill. He himself participated immensely, and we thank him and other Members. We had an initial draft that required review, which caused the delay. However, we currently have the draft document that will be presented to Cabinet for deliberation. Once it passes, it will come to this Honourable Assembly. We

are hoping that by your next session, the Bill will be here, Insha'Allah. Thank you.

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

HON MUSA CHAM [SERREKUNDA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. The Minister read figures on the budget allocation for mental health. However, we understand that in some years nothing was expended. What could be the reason for not spending those funds?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much. I thank the Honourable Member for that observation. The implementation of programme-based budgeting has quite a number of challenges. Typically, our programme units are allocated budgets, but getting specific allocations for specific programmatic activities is sometimes a challenge.

We have been working with the Ministry of Finance to deal with that bottleneck. It persists, but we are hopeful we will address it. Each month we receive a general allocation, but specific targeted allocations are challenging, and sometimes when requests are made, we do not receive the funds. We are all aware of the limitations when it comes to budget implementation, the availability of resources is very critical. Thank you.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Speaker, my question is similar to the question asked by Serekunda. In his response, I have gotten what I wanted to ask.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 016 of 2026 [By: The Hon. Member for Janjanbureh]. Are you on voice note or what?

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: I am taking reference, but do not worry, these mobile devices are our gadgets. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Health furnish this august Assembly with the official statistics of the Maternal Mortality Ratio per 100,000 live births in The Gambia for the years 2014 to 2025?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform the Honourable Member for Janjanbureh Constituency, one of our top priorities as a sector is the reduction of maternal mortality. I wish to inform you that from January to December 2025, the Ministry of Health recorded 130 maternal mortalities from our health facility statistics out of 80,720 live births. This translates to 129 deaths per 100,000 live births. This is a decline from 289 deaths per 100,000 live births according to the DHS 2019–2020.

Below is the table of our institutional deliveries with corresponding maternal mortality from 2013 to 2025, captured in our DHIS 2. It is worth noting that from 2014 to 2020, the figures given are not fully representative because not all facilities—including Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital, inputted their maternal mortalities into DHIS 2. This has now been corrected.

| Year | Live Births | Maternal Deaths | Ratio (per 100,000) |

Year	Population	Number of Cases	Rate per 100,000
2014	52,565	106	144.6
2015	42,307	65	111.1
2016	49,225	70	115.8
2017	53,846	118	141.0
2018	59,687	78	93.8
2019	64,291	100	99.5
2020	63,660	79	907.4
2021	65,814	135	183.9
2022	75,186	122	121.0
2023	76,477	156	175.0
2024	72,507	125	128.3
2025	80,720	130	128.8

[Note: The figure for 2020 (907.4) appears inconsistent and may require verification. The Minister noted data submission issues for EFSTH prior to 2024.]

However, as I mentioned earlier, because Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital was not submitting data to the DHIS 2, the information from 2024 to 2020 did not include EFSTH, which is a major source of statistics. That is what I said earlier. Thank you very much.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Looking at the figures and statistics provided from 2020 to 2025, for instance, one notices that the numbers decline in some years. For example, in 2019, maternal deaths were recorded at 100, compared to 79 in 2020. However, from 2022 to 2025, the figures have been fluctuating and even increasing, with the exclusion of Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital. What are your Ministry's plans or efforts to reduce these numbers, perhaps to 20 or 50 maternal deaths, or even lower?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I wish to inform the Honourable Member that maternal mortality reduction is a top priority for the Government and, certainly, for our Ministry. There are numerous contributory factors to maternal mortality and morbidity, apart from the direct health-related aspects, socio-economic factors are equally important. However, I must mention that I am sure the Honourable Member has also noticed that the 2019–2020 statistics for The Gambia stood at 289 per 100,000 live births, which is the standard we have been using. By 2025, we had reduced that to 128 per 100,000 live births. This means The Gambia has achieved more than a 50% reduction in maternal mortality over the past two years. I think that is truly phenomenal.

Even though we aspire to bring it to zero because we do not want any mother to be lost during or around childbirth. No country has been able to achieve zero, to my knowledge. There are countries with figures less than ten, and some developed countries are around ten or thereabouts. One country

reported four per 100,000 live births. Nevertheless, I must tell you that The Gambia's figure is probably one of the lowest in the whole of Africa.

As a Ministry, we are taking multiple actions. The care patients receive is greatly dependent on the capacity of the caregivers; what they know, how they detect problems, and what they are able to do after detection. For that reason, we are investing heavily in capacity building. As we speak, at Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital, we are training obstetrician-gynaecologists to fellowship level, to the level that some of us have ourselves.

We have brought in many professors and senior consultants from the subregion to provide services here, to train our doctors who are specialising, and to train our medical students. That is one aspect. We are also training nurses to become midwives at degree level, and we are training nurse anaesthetists. A significant portion of maternal mortality in many parts of Africa, even around caesarean section activities, is due to the lack of competent anaesthetists in large numbers. The Gambia is now training nurses to become nurse anaesthetists; some have already graduated and we have deployed them throughout the country.

We are strengthening our blood banks, and many health facilities now have blood transfusion services, enabling them to provide adequate blood transfusions. However, it is a combination of factors. As roads improve, electricity and water become available, the lives of the people are changing. With good roads and ambulances, people reach health facilities faster, and doctors are able to intervene early enough. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. Okay, you have one more?

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Yes, I have one more.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, your answers are always palatable to the ears of Members of Parliament and our constituents. However, the rule is that answers to supplementary questions must be brief, in accordance with our procedures. Questions, according to our law, are limited to just two minutes. Yes, Member for Janjanbureh, you still have one more.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for allowing him to go beyond the required time. I think the answers were satisfactory. Honourable Minister, from your response, you did say it is a top priority for the Government to work towards reducing mortality at birth. However, will your Ministry be in a position to tell this august Assembly that it can definitely reduce the rate to at least 10 or 15% in the next two to three years?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform the Honourable Member that this is a personal legacy goal for me. What you are saying is sweet to my ears. For me, that is probably one of the biggest things I want

to be able to achieve as Health Minister in this country. So, it is very high on our project list. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister. I now give the floor to the Member for Tallinding Kunjang.

HON MUSA BADJIE [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, and Honourable Minister for that detailed answer. It almost took my first question out of my mouth, but let me just ask this one. You stated that maternal death is due to a combination of factors, both social and medical. I would like to believe that in the data collection, when you assess these figures, you analyse the cause of death. Do you segregate them to know which ones are due to medical issues as opposed to arriving late or other factors? Do you analyse according to data so that it provides adequate information that these deaths are due to specific medical difficulties? Do you segregate them?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you, Honourable Member. Yes, Honourable Speaker, they are categorised, and the information is available. The common causes of maternal mortality relate to hypertension in pregnancy, pre-eclampsia and eclampsia when it worsens. These women experience elevated blood pressure due to various factors during pregnancy. It does not just go up; it leads to complications. Quite a number of them end up with kidney failure, which can lead to death, and some even convulse; we call that eclampsia.

Bleeding has also been a highly prevalent cause, bleeding before birth and after delivery. If bleeding is not arrested in good time, it can become fatal. There are other causes as well. Pregnant women, like any other person, could have had a heart condition before pregnancy, diabetes, malaria in pregnancy, and so on. So, there are multiple factors that lead to maternal mortality. The key is that as we strengthen the health sector and build capacity, we are able to detect these issues early and deal with them appropriately. But of course... [Interrupted]

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Honourable Speaker, I beg for your indulgence; just this last one. If the blood pressure is high and the doctors put the patient on medications, there is sometimes poor compliance, and the blood pressure may not be controlled, potentially leading to worsening of the condition. That is why I say many factors are contributory. Also, some patients are put on medications and when they experience a bitter taste, they stop taking them. So, many contributing factors exist. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister. I now invite the Member for Kiang West.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much. Honourable Minister, you have explicitly dealt with my question, which was about the road to maternal mortality, and the way you have explained it has definitely addressed a lot. I will still take the opportunity to ask about improved antenatal care that would also contribute to reducing maternal mortality in the provinces and rural communities, particularly those far from referral hospitals. Yes. Thank you.

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Member is very right. Many of these issues are picked up if women attend antenatal services early enough so that health workers can intervene. Unfortunately, one societal aspect is that some women do not want to attend early because they think they will have to be going in and out of health facilities. Sometimes people tell them, "You are starting too early; you have nine months to go." So, they end up coming late, and that affects the care they receive. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister. I now recognise the Member for Jeshwang.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, in your response, you mentioned that the statistics do not cover Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital. Does this cover the private facilities within the country?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]:

Thank you very much. The private facilities also have a reporting obligation to the Ministry. They do send their information to the Ministry for compilation. The Edward Francis challenge, I think, was an inherited problem which were not reported from the beginning, and we thought it was not acceptable. Now they are reporting, and the data is more comprehensive. Thank you.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, the issue of maternal mortality is really heart-touching. Honourable Minister, based on your records as a Ministry, where do you have the highest percentage of maternal deaths? Is it in the urban area or the rural area? Thank you.

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]:

Okay. Thank you very much, Honourable Member. The origin of the patient could be from the rural area, but they end up passing away at Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital. So, when you look at it statistically, it will be captured in the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital statistics, but the origin is from wherever the patient was referred. The information is available, however.

Typically, the biggest challenge we have been having is from the Brikama area and the Brikama Health Facility. We are tackling it. One of the strategies we put in place, especially for the Brikama Health Centre, was to

affiliate its Maternity Unit with Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital. Consultants from Edward Francis now work there on a rotation basis. We provided facilities and very senior doctors, consultants and professors are now overseeing the Brikama Health Facility Maternity Unit, and we can see the trend improving. I must tell you that many things are happening. Facilities that used to report four deaths per month are now reporting zero. That is why we have reached this level, and we are going to strengthen that further. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. I now invite the Member for Nianiya.

HON AMADOU CAMARA [NIANIYA]: Honourable Speaker, thank you very much. Honourable Minister, beyond providing the statistics you have shared on the maternal mortality ratio, could you explain the specific interventions, such as Emergency Obstetric Care, skilled birth attendants, and the referral system being implemented during this period, and how effective they are in reducing maternal mortality?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Many of these interventions involve capacity building. A portion of the training for health workers is geared towards strengthening basic emergency obstetric care and comprehensive emergency obstetric care. We are increasing the number of facilities with such capacity. We have been able to operationalise Soma Health Centre to perform emergency caesarean sections.

We have also operationalised Essau Health Centre for emergency caesarean sections. In the past, a woman with obstructed labour could have been in an ambulance on the northern side of the bank, at the ferry terminal, waiting for the ferry. We recognised that this contributed to increased maternal mortality. So, we operationalised Essau Health Centre, and there is now a doctor providing caesarean sections there. We are doing the same in Kuntaur—strategising and upgrading it to support emergency obstetric care. We intend to do the same for Baja Kunda, ensuring that Baja Kunda also has a theatre that we will expand to enable caesarean sections. When we are able to do this, hopefully women with emergency obstetric conditions will be taken care of. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. Question No. 017 of 2026 [By: The Hon. Member for Banjul North]

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, the frequent re-admission of mentally ill patients at Tanka Tanka Hospital is concerning. Could the Honourable Minister for Health inform this august Assembly what measures the Ministry is taking, in conjunction with Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital Management, to improve security at the hospital?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform the Honourable Member for Banjul North Constituency that the perimeter fence at the hospital has now been raised to a greater height to prevent patients from escaping. The general lighting of the hospital has also been improved, and a standby generator was installed as a backup power source. Additional

security personnel have also been deployed to enhance more efficient 24-hour security coverage. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. Can you kindly share with us what the number of security personnel was before and how many have been added?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Unfortunately, that information is not readily available, but we can provide it subsequently.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 018 of 2026 [By: The Hon. Member for Foni Bondali, authorises Foni Kansala, but he is not seated.]

Question No. 019 of 2026 [By: Hon. Member for Banjul Central]

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: I am here; I was just consulting with the Honourable Member for Jeshwang.

THE SPEAKER: No, Banjul Central, please, you have the floor. I will consider him later.

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Sorry, I said I am in the building. I was consulting with the Honourable Member for Jeshwang.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Health inform this Assembly whether drug shortages persist in public health facilities and, if so, provide the reasons for them?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform the Honourable Member for Banjul Central Constituency that the Ministry does experience shortages of some drugs from time to time due to suppliers not fulfilling their obligations. However, many drugs are currently being delivered, and the Ministry is working on the procurement of sufficient drugs for health facilities. We are equally working on establishing long-term partnerships with reliable entities so that drug shortage issues will become a thing of the past. Thank you.

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

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Honourable Minister, you said sometimes you have issues with your supplier. Who are your suppliers?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]:

There are various suppliers. Suppliers become involved when tenders are floated and they participate. Whatever lots they win, they are required to supply. Unfortunately, I must tell you, disappointingly, the ones who have not been performing are Gambian suppliers. It is disheartening. They submit tenders, participate, win, and provide satisfactory documentation, but when it comes to delivery, they dilly-dally. We go back and forth with them, and we engage the Ministry of Justice for discussions and arbitration. Hopefully, this will become a thing of the past as we strategise for more sustainable ways of procuring drugs. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Tallinding Kunjang, you have the floor.

HON MUSA BADJIE [TALLINDING KUNJANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, just for clarity, when they present the required documents in the tender inquiry, does it involve a check on whether they have the financial muscle?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]:

Thank you very much. Honourable Member, they always claim to have the financial muscle. When they make their submissions, they provide bank guarantees. However, when it comes to delivery, we become suspicious that perhaps they do not have the financial muscle or the capacity. They wait for the 20% advance payment that is required. When they receive that, if they need to order, we believe that for all consignments to be delivered on time, they probably need more than the 20%. But for someone without financial capacity, they are unable to do that. So, that has been a big challenge. Thank you.

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

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Withdrawn.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, what could you do to ensure a steady supply despite the fact that the suppliers are Gambians? The life of Gambians and access to medication is the most important thing. Thank you.

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Member is very right. However, they would have gone through the procurement processes and submitted what is referred to as the most responsive bid. When they submit that and we send it to the Gambia Public Procurement Authority (GPPA), we have no choice but to issue the contract to them. Nevertheless, I want to emphasise that the Government has taken this very seriously. At our request, we had a Cabinet meeting where this was discussed extensively, and currently, a Cabinet subcommittee is helping the Ministry of Health to look at all the possibilities, challenges, and equally proffer solutions so that drug shortages become a thing of the past in this country. Thank you.

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

HON SAIKOU BAH [BASSE]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. Looking at the suppliers' improvements, most of the defaulters are

Gambians, as per your statement, during their submission, do you consider their contract performance certificates from their previous contracts or previous services?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Yes, all those are looked at, although that itself is not a guarantee that they will perform. However, it indicates that if someone has a past history of delivering, then the tendency for them to deliver again is there. But some of them may not have actually handled those volumes of drugs. Probably they never supplied the Ministry of Health, or even if they did, they did not handle that amount or volume. So, when the volumes increase, even though they say they can, we realise they are unable to do so in good time.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you mentioned that contractors are awarded contracts without performance. They do submit performance bonds in case they fail. Do you go for those performance bonds to claim your money back?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Yes, they do submit those, but of course, before we take such actions, we always want to act within the limits of the law. We typically ask the Ministry of Justice for legal advice, and on a number of occasions, the Minister of Justice has called our staff and the contractors to deliberate and look at the details. The challenge is that this is probably what some of them use to the detriment of the system. Drug procurement takes a number of months to quantify, advertise, and evaluate. Meanwhile, we are waiting in our facilities for these

drugs. When they get the tenders, we discover they are delaying, already 4 or 5 months gone when they were supposed to deliver.

At that juncture, the Ministry of Justice, for example, may note that the supplier says they will bring it in two months. But if we cancel that contract, we have to start afresh, another three, four, five months. So, they look at those disadvantages, and I believe they want to beat the system. The last time I was here, we threatened to take one of them to court. Do you remember? And probably because of that, he eventually even took us to court before we could take him to court. So, it is a difficult one, but we are finding solutions for it. Thank you.

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

HON ALIEU BALDEH [JARRA WEST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Minister. The parent question talks about shortage of drugs in health facilities. Honourable Minister, what I want to ask is: are there specific drugs in the community health posts that are for sale and others not for sale? Are they specified as ones that should be sold and others that should be given freely?

THE SPEAKER: At the Public Health Centres.

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much. Honourable Speaker, I am not aware of the existence of drugs in the facilities that need to be sold. All drugs should be issued when people get a prescription. If people are doing that, we need to know, because that is not our policy position. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 020 of 2026 [By: The Hon. Member for Jeshwang].

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, a private health centre facility was constructed on land owned by the community of Ebo Town but was later handed over to the Government to operate. Could the Honourable Minister for Health tell this august Assembly how soon the Ministry intends to keep the facility operational?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform the Honourable Member for Jeshwang Constituency that, in consultation with the Regional Directorate, no official handing over was done. The Village Development Committee (VDC) did express interest to revitalise the facility, and the Regional Director and his team did an assessment and made some recommendations to the VDC. The Ministry's doors are open, and if the VDC still wants to hand over the clinic, we can engage the Regional Director for necessary actions. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Honourable Minister, I was part of the group that went about two years ago to meet the former Director of Health, who was in Kanifing, I cannot recall the name. It was handed over to the Government, and the promise was that they were working on Sanyang, Jeshwang to Ebo Town. So, it was already handed over to the Government, and I do not know when this new information came about.

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]:

Honourable Speaker, probably then they did not do an appropriate internal handover to each other. That is why we are receiving this information. However, we will look into it and regularise the situation so that the facility can be operational for the people. Thank you.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

THE SPEAKER: I hope you will get your people to go to his department and get it sorted for your people. Honourable Members, I will now give the opportunity to the Member for Foni Kansala to read Question 018 on behalf of the Member for Foni Bondali. Members must also endeavour to be on their seats now.

Question No. 018 of 2026 [By: The Hon. Member for Foni Bondali, authorised the Member for Foni Kansala to read on his behalf.]

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister of Health update this august Assembly on the status of Bullenghat Health Centre in Foni Bondali Constituency?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]:

Honourable Speaker, I wish to inform the Honourable Member for Foni

Bondali Constituency that Bullenghat Health Post is one of the eight health posts that our Ministry will be building with the support of Badiyya. The Ministry is awaiting a 'no objection' from Badiyya to proceed with the construction, as there were amendments to the previous proposal. Thank you very much.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Regarding that waiting, how soon would that be? Specifically, would it be within this year, a month, six months, or a year?

HON DR. AHMADOU LAMIN SAMATEH [MINISTER OF HEALTH]: Thank you very much. Honourable Member, the funds are available. The format had to change, but the funds are available. As soon as they give the go-ahead which could even be this week or next week, we will advertise. Once advertised, things will move forward. We are hoping that, Insha'Allah, they will be built and completed before the end of this year. There are eight of them.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Based on your response, Honourable Minister, you

mentioned that Bullenghat is part of the health facilities to be upgraded. Can you kindly mention the remaining seven health facilities?

THE SPEAKER: No, Honourable Member, you cannot open up a debate here. Please do not do that. Honourable Members, on your behalf, I want to thank the Minister of Health for the answers provided to this Assembly. Honourable Minister, you may go now. Thank you very much, and Ramadan Kareem to you.

Clerk, we may proceed, please. Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, please be quiet and maintain decorum. Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, I warn you early in the morning; I do not want to warn you again. No, Member for Tallinding Kunjang, you cannot do that. Order, Honourable Members. Sanimentereng, order there; maintain decorum, I warn you. Clerk, please proceed.

THE HON MINISTER FOR TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE

THE SPEAKER: Please, neighbours of the Member for Sami, I am warning her. Can you hear me? I am warning her. The Honourable Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture, please take the podium. Questions for which due notice was given to the Honourable Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture by Honourable Members, for oral reply.

Question No. 054 of 2026 [By: The Honourable Member for Sami]

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Tourism,

Arts and Culture inform this august Assembly of the status of the Ecologies Project, particularly Mungo Park in Sami?

HON ABDOULIE JOBE [MINISTER OF TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE]:

Thank you very much. Good afternoon. Honourable Speaker, on the Ecologies Project: on the 24th of March 2020, the Gambia Tourism Board (GTBoard), under the former Director General, Mr. Abdoulie Hydera, contracted Lenny Group to construct five eco-lodges at Barra, Kunkilling, Sotuma Samba Koi, Nyana Bantang, and Arafat, at a total cost of D111,690,525, with completion expected by the 30th of September 2021. The payment structure included a 40% advance payment, and D38,000,848.878 was paid on the 6th of April 2020.

In June 2020, the former Director General, Mr. Aboubacar Camara, approved three addendums totaling D6,000,881, increasing the contract sum to D118,571,910. GTBoard has since paid the contractor D72,727,748.26, representing 61% of the contract amount.

However, none of the eco-lodges have been completed, and construction never commenced at Nyana Bantang and Arafat. After my appointment as Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, I directed GTBoard to submit a full report. The review revealed serious contractual management deficiencies, and all payments to Lenny Group were suspended pending an independent assessment by GamWorks, which was submitted in November 2024.

The assessment found that the Barra Eco-Lodge was 44.4% complete but poorly constructed on a waterlogged site; Kunkilling was 30.95% complete

with substandard work; Sotuma Samba Koi was destroyed by a forest fire; and construction never started at Nyanna Bantang and Arafat. The estimated cost by GamWorks to complete the outstanding works at Barra, Sotuma Samba Koi, Kunkilling, and Arafat is D157,000,715 at 2025 prices.

In December 2024, the Ministry received legal advice from the Ministry of Justice, which concluded that the contract was fundamentally flawed and did not demonstrate compliance with the Gambia Public Procurement (GPP) Act. Lenny Group's failure to complete the project constituted material breach and non-performance, and alleged oral variations were invalid under the contract terms. The advisory recommended termination of the contract and legal action to recover funds and damages.

In January 2026, I presented the matter to Cabinet, and Cabinet approved the following actions:

1. Termination of the contract between GTBoard and Lenny Group.
2. Instruction to GTBoard, under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice, to commence legal proceedings against Lenny Group.
3. Discontinuation of the Barra Eco-Lodge project, as it is situated on a waterlogged site.
4. Engagement of GamWorks by GTBoard, under a delegated management contract, to salvage the Kunkilling and Sotuma Samba Koi eco-lodges through redesign, procurement, and supervision.

5. GTBoard to confirm the availability of funds, including monies recovered from legal proceedings, to finance the completion of the salvage works at Kunkilling and Sotuma Samba Koi.

Regarding Mungo Park, this is a project that was started at a cost of D4.039 million, with a duration of six months. Under the terms of the contract, it was awarded to Touray Kunda Construction, and the contractor received an advance payment. Honourable Speaker, according to the National Construction and Services Company (NCSC), the project experienced delays due to late payment for work already completed. NCSC reports that 90% of the works have been completed, including the fence, toilets, solar power, and soakaway. The remaining works such as plumbing, toilet fittings, and painting of the chutes, are expected to be completed shortly. However, according to NCSC, the contractor is owed D850,000, pending payment.

Our assessment, however, is that this project has suffered significant delays and that the quality of work carried out by the contractor is below expectation. Supervision of the construction work was inadequate. Given these challenges, and the fact that NCSC does not have the capacity to manage such contracts effectively and efficiently, the Government of The Gambia has now adopted a policy decision that works of this nature should not be handled by institutions like NCSC but should be given to GamWorks under a delegated management contract.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, are you saying that with regard to Mungo Park, before the end of 2026, everything will be completed?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I know you have a very good interest in ensuring the welfare of your constituents, but the list of questioners is exhausted. We should allow members asking supplementary questions to do so with decorum, so that the Minister will be able to address them properly. Yes, please go ahead. The Minister did not hear you, so he would like you to repeat your question.

HON ALFUSAINY CEESAY [SAMI]: Alright. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you mentioned that the work at Mungo Park is not yet completed because it covers so many areas, as your report indicated. So, are you saying that the work will be completed before the end of 2026?

HON ABDOULIE JOBE [MINISTER OF TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE]: Honourable Member, I have just reported to you that, according to NCSC, under the current contract, 90% of the work is completed, including the construction of the chutes, the perimeter fence, the chain-link fencing, the toilets, the solar-powered borehole, and the soakaway.

Now, there is 10% remaining, and according to the report, there is a balance of D850,000 due to the contractor. They say that it will be paid upon completion of the works. So, if you are now telling me that it is going to be

completed by the end of the year, as the National Assembly Member, perhaps you know something more than I do, which I will take note of.

But what I am saying, in addition to what they have provided, is that the quality of the work is substandard. That is a fact and it is due to the inability and lack of capacity of NCSC as an institution to manage such contracts. So, that is what I said: as a result, the Government has now made a policy decision for institutions that lack such capacities to use GamWorks under a delegated management contract to support them, to ensure that works are done on time and in accordance with the best standards and quality.

THE SPEAKER: Use your mic.

HON MUSA BADJIE [TALINDING KUNJANG]: I am saying the Speaker yesterday did not mention that, by virtue of their positions of leadership, the Majority Leader and Minority Leader should enjoy special privileges from the Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, he is right. That is why, if the Minority or Majority Leaders ask, we always give them special preference and they enjoy that, especially, where there is no expressly stated legal provision or standing order. But where the Standing Orders or the Constitution are very clear, our hands will be tied in allowing them to enjoy those privileges.

In these circumstances, I would want you people to allow me to return home overnight and think about it. When I come back tomorrow, I will probably

decide whether to give him a chance to ask his supplementary question or not. But that will be done tomorrow, not today. The Member for Janjanbureh, you have the floor.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Minister. It is unfortunate that you have inherited failed projects. However, I think the burden lies on you to give us one or two clarities. Honourable Minister, specifically looking at the eco-lodges, 60% has been paid to contractors to develop the five approved ecologies across the country, and today we are here saying that almost all of them have failed in one way or another. Perhaps because the buildings are substandard. Looking at Barra at 44%, Kunkilling at 38.9% and now we are shifting the contracts to GamWorks, have you instituted any legal actions against the contractors that defaulted in the process of implementation?

HON ABDOULIE JOBE [MINISTER OF TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE]: Thank you, Honourable Member. Kunkilling is 30.95%, not 38%. Let me get the records right and the contractor is not contractors, but a single contractor: Lenny Group. Now, I have just informed you that following everything, the whole package was submitted to the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice's legal advice, which I have read, is that the contract between GTBoard and Lenny Group should be terminated, and GTBoard should start legal action against Lenny Group.

That is the recommendation that has been submitted, and Cabinet has approved it. So, we are waiting for the extract of the Cabinet conclusion to kick-start that process. In the meantime, Cabinet also looked at administrative procedures for negligence, and this has been submitted to the Public Service Commission for review in respect of this particular project. I think this also cuts across into the petition, the resolution and report on the petition by GTBoard staff, most of whose recommendations or resolutions have been accepted, and implementation is on course.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, based on the assessment done by GamWorks on Lenny Group, specifically, there is no site that has above 50% of the contract completed; they were all below 50%. Yet the amount paid to him is more than 60% of the contract sum. You mentioned termination. My question is: in every contract, there are performance bonds and advance payment bonds. Yes, it is good to take legal action against them, but did you write to the banks to claim those advance payment bonds?

HON ABDOULIE JOBE [MINISTER OF TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE]: Honourable Member, I have already informed you that following the submission of the entire dossier to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry reviewed it and concluded that the contract was fundamentally flawed. There were so many provisions that are supposed to be in a standard works contract that were missing. That is the fact, and that is why some of our

institutions lack the capacity to manage such contracts or works. As a result of this and so many other issues, the Government has now made this policy decision.

So, the issue is that it was not there, and you can only go for something that is there. This contract metamorphosed, it changed in so many ways to the extent that, as you said, the works are at around 40-something percent, but 61% was paid or spent directly or indirectly on the contract to the contractor. That is the reality; that is what is on the ground. It is not something I have created, fabricated, or manufactured. It is a fact.

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

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you very much. Honourable Minister, you mentioned that GamWorks is now tasked to redesign and manage the procurement process, and we know that legal proceedings can sometimes take months or even years. In the meantime, what mechanisms are in place for the project to recommence?

HON ABDOULIE JOBE [MINISTER OF TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE]: No, I cannot give you any definite answer because I do not know, number one. Number two, GamWorks has not been contracted, I must make that clear. What I said was that GamWorks was contracted by GTBoard to do a comprehensive assessment of the physical aspect of the contract, as well as the contractual management aspect, and they came up with a comprehensive report. What we are saying, in line with Government policy,

is that GTBoard should engage GamWorks under a delegated management contract to try to salvage what is salvageable.

Yes, the legal process takes time. Whether money will be recovered from the contractor anybody has their opinion but the reality is that it is for GTBoard to say whether they have resources to complete the works, because it is their project. So, we have asked them, following this submission, to tell us as a Ministry whether they have the resources to complete these works. But, as I said, the recommendation accepted was that the Barra project which changed to a Sir Dawda Hotel and all that should be abandoned because it is on a waterlogged site, and water runoff from Barra passes through there.

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

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, thank you very much for that honest and genuine reporting. However, I do not have time to comment on that. I will wait for the Adjournment Debate. However, what is the next plan for the... Honourable Speaker, should I resume my seat?

THE SPEAKER: My friend, go ahead. I say, you cannot comment on that now.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: No, I commend the Minister for his work, so I am asking my question.

THE SPEAKER: No, you say you do not have time to comment on the report now. I say, you cannot do that; you will do that on the Adjournment Debate. Two of you, please.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, okay, you may transfer this question to the Minority Leader. Yes, please. I will come on that performance, Minister.

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

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]:

Thank you very much. Honourable Minister, as rightly indicated, this eco-lodge saga is key in the petition filed by some staff of GTBoard, as vividly confirmed, and they have been vindicated. Some of them were administratively penalised for being party to the petition. Now that they have been vindicated, what remedial action has your Ministry taken concerning the fate of those staff of the Board?

THE SPEAKER: No, Minority Leader, you are out of order. Honourable Members, please wait until Monday. He is scheduled to appear on Monday the 16th. The Minister was scheduled last week, but because he was out of the country, he will come on the 16th on that matter. Minister, on the 16th you are scheduled to appear here on that matter. He is out of order. The Member for Bakau, you have the floor.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Honourable Speaker, my concerns have been addressed. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, I am coming. Order, Honourable Members. Central Baddibu, you cannot behave like that, you Chief Whip. The Member for Brikama North and Minority Leader were looking forward to asking a question; I thought he had something very hot on the subject matter, but all he did was go out of order. Okay.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]: Okay. Honourable Minister, you mentioned that the Sotuma Eco-Lodge was destroyed by bushfire. Did you conduct any investigation? If so, what action has been taken on the outcome of that investigation?

HON ABDOULIE JOBE [MINISTER OF TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE]: Thank you very much. You will be pleased on the 16th, when I come back here with respect to the issues because what is right is what is being done by the government, not my Ministry, but by the government. So, all those people that you talked about have been duly and fairly dealt with and provided with all that has been denied of them.

With respect to the Sutuma Samba Koye, that is what was reported and we can all have our different issues but the Fire Rescue Service, have a fire report and it states that, it was a bushfire. So, the site was under the

possession of the contractor and there is a dispute between GTboard and the contractor in respect of whether the site was handed over or not.

With respect to GTboard, there was no formal handing over of the site after the completion of the works before the fire. So, responsibility, is something that we are going to ask the Ministry of Justice to look at because there is no formal handing over certificate issued to the contractor with respect to the site stating that the site has now been referred to GTboard. However, the contractor is saying that there was some staff list that was checked and done and that implied. So, this is something that GTboard has to deal with the contractor. And we will try to help by going to the Ministry of Justice to seek for legal advice to support their position.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister. **Question: No. 055 of 2026 [BY: The Hon Member for Upper Nuimi].**

HON OMAR BARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture inform this Assembly of the status of the Land Reclamation Project at Kunta Kinteh Island and the construction of a Jetty in Albreda. Thank you.

HON ABDOULIE JOBE MINISTER OF TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE]: Thank you very much Honourable. Honourable Speaker, I wish to clarify that the intervention on Kunta Kinteh Island does not involve Land reclamation. It focuses on preservation and erosion control of the existing island and the construction of two jetties, one at the island, and one at Albreda.

These form part of the world Bank funded Tourism Diversification and Resilience Gambia Project, which aims to strengthen under-developed tourism areas. All major studies have been completed, including the feasibility study, preliminary design, hazard and risk assessment, geotechnical study, bathymetric survey and the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment were completed in February 2026.

Detailed design and bidding documents are being finalized and are expected in June 2026. Construction works is anticipated to commence in January 2027. Following a procurement process for a duration of 16 months.

Kunta Kinteh being a UNESCO heritage site, anything that we do there will require the prior clearance and approval of UNESCO, and that is why the preliminary designs were submitted to UNESCO. And it took almost about six months before we received the comments from UNESCO. And those comments have been passed to the contractor, to the consultant who has arranged for a Zoom meeting with UNESCO team to be able to reflect some of their comments on the design.

What we are doing is not only the jetty, but we are also trying to change and give people a more interesting, experience when they visit Kunta Kinteh. Not in addition to the protection, but within the facility so that people will be more interested to visit this facility as part of our improved tourism product.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister for that explicit answer. Honourable Minister, the island's size has been reduced to one sixth of its original size, and if you are

saying that you are now reclaiming, it means that what you said regarding the loss of the island through river erosion will go in vain. So that is why it is important that some of these... Honourable Minister, if the island's size has been reduced to one sixth of its original size now, do you not need to reclaim some of the land that has been lost to the island through river erosion? I am asking, Honourable Minister.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker point of order.

THE SPEAKER: Order. Honourable Member for upper Nuimi, take your seat. Do not do that. Order Honourable Members. There is a point of order from the Member for Upper Saloum.

[Point of Order]

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, I am rising on 43 [1,2 and 3] all qualify. The Honourable Member asked a question and the Minister has responded appropriately. Now, he is trying to give advice to the Minister as to what he needs to do in terms of reclamation. So, he is completely out of order.

THE SPEAKER: Order, Honourable Members. Honourable Member for Upper Saloum, order sustained. And the Honourable Member, you just ask your question, do not advise him.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: Honourable Minister, the contract duration is 16 months according to your answer. The project is phasing out maybe around 2027, 2028. Do you think that the entire project implementation will meet the project deadline?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot ask the Honourable Minister's personal opinion on that.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: I am asking the Minister whether the duration of the project implementation is 16 months and whether it is going to meet the timeline of the project.

THE SPEAKER: No. Honourable Member, take your seat. Sit down. Order! Honourable Members, order. Honourable Member for Upper Nuimi, you cannot seek Minister's opinion.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: Honourable Speaker, I am not doing that.

THE SPEAKER: Sit down, you are out of order. Order! you can ask the duration of the project. He told you the duration of the project, and you are asking him whether that will materialise or not. You cannot do that. Use your mic. there is a point of order for Upper Saloum.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Yes. The Point of Order is on 38[1C] *which states: a question shall not contain arguments, inferences, opinions, imputations, epithets or tendentious, ironical or offensive expressions or hypothetical matters.* In this particular instance, he is asking the opinion of the Minister. He is completely out of order.

HON TAMSIR CHAM [LOWER NIUMI]: Stop fighting my neighbours.

THE SPEAKER: Who is using the mic? Member for Lower Nuimi, you cannot do that this is not Nuimi. This is not a Bantaba in any of the Nuimi villages. This is not Mbollet or Njongon. No, he is out of order. You have one more.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NUIMI]: Honourable Speaker, I have one more.

THE SPEAKER: No. Member for Central Baddibu, you have the floor.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Honourable Speaker, today, I will buy you a small goat. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, the information that is supplied to us is very apt and James Island or Kunta Kinteh Island is dear to our heart. Are you going to consider the baobabs also, they were getting infected during my last visit there, and they are part of the protection.

HON ABDOULIE JOBE [MINISTER OF TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE]:

Thank you. We have taken note and we will look into it.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, please provide an answer. Honourable Members, order. Honourable Members, you remember last week when I threatened to send the Member for Latrikunda out, he said we were in Ramadan and that he was waiting. However, I was happy that he remained silent until the end of that day.

So, the Member for Central Baddibu today promised me on record that he will provide me with a small goat that is what he said. 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 Minister, you did say the issues about preservation and erosion control. In the process of preservation and erosion control, will the construction go beyond the part of the Island that is not eroded?

HON ABDOULIE JOBE [MINISTER OF TOURISM, ARTS & CULTURE]:

Honourable Member, thank you very much. This project is to protect the Island in its totality and that is why all that is required to be done on that Island in terms of protecting it will be done. Like the Honourable Member for Upper Nuimi said that one sixth of the original area of the Island is remaining.

Whatever remains is what we are protecting in its totality. Because what is lost, we cannot bring it back. These are the effects of climate change. So now that we have this project with the support of the World Bank, at least, we are going to take actions to prevent further damage and loss of this important heritage site.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on your behalf, I want to thank the Honourable Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture for those answers provided. And Honourable Minister, you may leave now and Eid Mubarak to you, Honourable Minister. Clerk, we may proceed.

THE HON MINISTER FOR DEFENSE.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I now want to invite the Honourable Minister for Defense to take the podium. Questions for which due notices were given to the Honourable Minister for Defense by Honourable Members for oral reply.

Question: No. 0352 of 2025 [By: The Hon Member for Banjul Central].

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Speaker, given that the Gambian Armed Forces demonstrated capacity to execute technical and infrastructural projects efficiently, and at significantly lower cost than private contractors. Could the Honourable Minister for Defense, tell this august Assembly why are qualified security personnel with certified technical skills not being prioritized or systematically engaged in National Infrastructure Contracts, especially where such involvement could reduce public expenditure?

HON BABOUARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]: Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members of the National Assembly. The Gambian Armed Forces Engineering Corps have consistently demonstrated proven technical capacity and professionalism through their successful execution of various construction and infrastructure projects. Their track record reflects a strong commitment to quality, efficiency and the prudent use of national resources.

In this regard, it is important that both public institutions and private sector actors recognize and utilize this national capacity, encouraging the engagement of GAF engineers in appropriate infrastructure and development projects will not only strengthen national self-reliance, but also optimize the use of existing state capacities. Government policy, therefore, supports a framework in which qualified national institutions, including the GAF Engineering Corps, are given due consideration in the award of contracts in line with established procurement regulations. This approach will contribute to capacity development, cost efficiency and strategic utilization of national expertise in advancing the country's structure or infrastructure and development objectives. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Minister, thank you very much for that answer. However, I would like you to be specific on certain areas whereby opportunities have been given to this particular cohort, and I appreciate the overview. However, it would be prudent to know exactly specific areas or sectors where they have been given opportunities to be able to showcase their expertise.

HON BABOUCARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

Thank you, Honourable Member. At the moment, I am aware of projects within the GAF structure itself, like a project in the Second Infantry Battalion camp in Farafenni. I am also aware of fencing projects happening in Yundum, but beyond that, I am not aware of any other engagement from other government sectors of the engineering corps. Thank you.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]:

Honourable Minister, based on your submission, for those who demonstrate a gap in this particular area, what plans are in place to ensure they are given due recognition and opportunity to apply their expertise moving forward?

HON BABOUCARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members, I have been in the Ministry for a couple of months now, and I can comfortably say that this is one area where we are introducing very radical reforms. We are beginning with the capacity of the Engineering Corps, both in terms of equipment and the skills of the engineers themselves. We are also restructuring the Corps to enable them to take on national projects such as roads, infrastructure, and the

construction of hospitals and schools. If there is a gap, it lies in capacity, and we are addressing that under the guidance of the President and the Security Council

We are even exploring at the moment, a situation where we combine the Police Engineering Corps with the Armed Forces Engineering Corps to strengthen them and to leverage on each other's resources to give them capacity to even access projects or contracts within the available ones in the moment in terms of road construction.

So, we are working on that gap. That is the gap we have. Once we have the capacity addressed, I am sure we will be giving opportunities because we will be bidding like any other company is doing at the moment. Thank you.

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

HON ALMAMEH GIBBA [FONI KANSALA]: Thank you, Honourable Minister. As you have indicated, you are new to the Ministry. We can vividly recall that the construction of the University of Faraba Campus was undertaken by the GAF Engineering Corps, as was the school in Mayork. Additionally, about a month or six months ago, we witnessed significant renovation work carried out by GAF in Basse, and the GRTS building was also completed by them.

In the current status quo, as you have mentioned, these were projects executed by GAF. My question is: have most of those engineers left the service, or why are such contracts no longer being leveraged to GAF? I would appreciate your input on this. Thank you.

HON BABOUCARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

Honourable Speaker, the question I received pertained to the ongoing projects that the GAF is currently engaged in. However, we are aware that they have successfully completed projects in the past. As to why they are not being engaged at the moment, or whether the engineers who worked on those projects have left, I will need to verify and provide you with that information.

But one thing I do know is that within the armed forces, particularly for those with special skills, the engineers would have had the opportunity to receive contract extensions to remain in service, and skills transfer would have been ongoing.

Nevertheless, there is substantial capacity building taking place in terms of personnel, with extensive training being conducted both domestically and abroad. I would therefore assume that we still have such personnel.

However, the capacity required for building roads and schools involves a different set of skills. We are talking about a holistic approach to develop a core unit that is specialised not only in building houses, but also in constructing roads and bridges. We have seen such models successfully implemented in other parts of the world. Thank you.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, thank you very much. You mentioned building the capacity of personnel within the armed forces. My question is: you will

agree with me that after building their capacity, there remains a significant portion of the work that cannot be accomplished without appropriate equipment. What plans do you have to procure that equipment after training these personnel?

HON BABOUARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

As I said, we are working on an approach in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior. The two of us have been tasked with developing this amalgamation of the two-engineering corps, and that includes the provision of equipment. One of the reasons we cannot currently undertake road projects is our lack of certain equipment. We have conducted an assessment of the equipment required to enable us to engage in major infrastructure development.

We have also been working with partners to explore opportunities to bring equipment into the country through a partnership arrangement, and these discussions are at an advanced stage. In fact, hopefully before the middle of this year, we should see some equipment arriving to support this effort, enabling us to begin work on larger projects together with the Ministry of Interior's Engineering Corps. We have initiated work on this; some aspects are not yet mature, and we have not signed any agreements that we can disclose at this time, but we have begun the engagement. Thank you.

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

HON MUHAMMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you are talking about two

institutions with different incentive structures, particularly, regarding their pay scales. How do you plan to reconcile these differences if you bring these two institutions together?

HON BABOUARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

Honourable Speaker, there are numerous ways to bring institutions together. You can form joint ventures, amalgamate, collapse them into one, or use various other approaches. You can maintain the independence of the Police Corps and the GAF Corps, but bring them together in a joint venture to partner with each other, and even with other investors who would provide equipment and financing.

There are many models we can adopt once we reach that stage. Once we secure the partnership for equipment and work on capacity building, having registered both institutions, we can easily form a joint venture. The terms and conditions outlined in that joint venture agreement will accommodate both parties within a single framework. So, that should not present a problem. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The Member for Lower Saloum, you have the floor.

HON SAINE JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, you spoke about merging Defence and Interior. However, are you aware that there is already an institution responsible for this kind of work—namely, the Ministry of Works, under which

the NRA falls? Are you also considering seeking technical advice from the Ministry of Infrastructure?

HON BABOUCARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

We are aware of this, Honourable Member, and we have been in discussions with the National Roads Authority, particularly on matters concerning equipment required for road construction. However, that is the extent of our engagement with them.

What we are doing with the Interior Ministry is about having these two-engineering corps complement each other, as they each possess distinct strengths. We have just been reminded of the projects that the GAF Engineering Corps completed in the past.

Currently, the Police, the Interior Engineering Corps, is undertaking work at the Kairaba Police Station and a few other locations. They each have specific competencies. Bringing them together will create synergy, making it possible for them to tackle larger projects on a national scale, as we really want to see them involved in infrastructure development. We are collaborating with the appropriate institutions as we move forward to finalize this arrangement.

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

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, the armed forces have been engaged in construction for a long time, and your response indicates that they are quite

capable of executing projects. However, is there sufficient promotion of the work done by the armed forces to attract private contractors?

HON BABOUCARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. As I mentioned, the work we are undertaking intends to incorporate a commercial aspect. The engineers are skilled and working, but they have not been commercially oriented, and that is the element we need to introduce. This is precisely what happens in countries in the North; if you visit Egypt, the armed forces are involved in almost everything, and that is because they have been given both the capacity and the opportunity.

The opportunity comes when the government awards them contracts, and we are ready to see that happen. The Commander-in-Chief is with us on this. We are confident that once we build this capacity in terms of equipment, we will be competitive in the market, and the private sector will become aware of us. The forces are disciplined and regimented, so the issues of non-execution of contracts are less likely to occur when they are given the capacity to deliver. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: No, I have a problem with the next substantive question from the Member for Bakau.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: I wish to withdraw the question.

THE SPEAKER: But this question should not be. Okay. Thank you very much, Honourable Member for Bakau, for your foresight. Honourable Members, on your behalf, I wish to thank the Honourable Minister for Defence. Honourable Minister, you may now take your leave.

There is one question from March: Question No. 050 of 2026 [By: The Hon. Member for Brikama North]

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]:

Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. This is a follow-up question. Could the Honourable Minister for Defence inform this Assembly of the status of the demarcation of the land allocated for the Corporal Lamin Bojang Firing Range at Brikama Jamisa, and the government's plans for the construction of a military hospital?

HON BABOUCARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members, the Ministry of Defence, in collaboration with The Gambia Armed Forces, remains committed to the relocation of the Corporal Lamin Bojang Firing Range in Brikama and the eventual construction of a military hospital on that site. Honourable Members may wish to note that there has been increasing encroachment on the existing firing range, which raises significant safety concerns for communities residing in the surrounding areas. The relocation of the range is therefore being considered not only from an operational and security perspective, but also as a necessary measure to safeguard civilian populations living in the general vicinity.

The proposed development of a military hospital on the site forms part of the government's broader policy objectives of strengthening national defence infrastructure, while also contributing to improved access to quality

healthcare services for both members of the armed forces and the civilian population, particularly those in the satellite communities of Brikama and Jamisa.

However, Honourable Members would wish to be informed that the relocation of the firing range and construction of a military hospital constitute a major capital investment. Consequently, implementation of this initiative will commence once the requisite financial resources are secured.

With regard to the demarcation of the proposed site, my Ministry, together with The Gambia Armed Forces, is currently engaging the Ministry of Lands, which is responsible for land management, to ensure that the necessary technical and administrative processes are duly completed. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question (s)]

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]:

Honourable Minister, regarding the issue of relocation, we were earlier informed that it had been done. The firing range is now relocated to somewhere in the Fonis. All along, what I have been pursuing is to have the area specifically mapped out for the firing range, because that demarcation is still not known in the area.

Two years ago, your predecessor informed me that they were working on that. That is why I am asking about the status of that demarcation.

HON BABOUCARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

Honourable Members, I am also privileged to have discussed this matter with my predecessor. The information you are sharing with me now must be referred to him for confirmation of the records. I would have assumed that my technical team would have found that answer if it was a question on the

floor, and that would have been corroborated in the answer given to me today. However, we will dig further to find out if allocation has been done, which I am not aware of. Thank you.

HON ALHAGIE S. DARBO [BRIKAMA NORTH & MINORITY LEADER]:

Yes. He further informed me that he was to work with the Physical Planning Department and even invited me so that we could go to the site. Unfortunately, before the said appointment, he was relieved of his duties, but that was the stage we were at. We were supposed to go to the site together with Physical Planning. Please, find out.

HON BABOUCARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

I will follow that up. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. According to the statement above, the government is planning to construct a Military Hospital. How soon will this happen, Honourable Minister? Because in your submission, you said they start encroaching on the land.

HON BABOUCARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]:

How soon will this happen? I implied in my answer that it depends on a couple of factors, including financial resources that would have to be mobilized one way or the other. The Ministry of Finance, which is responsible for that level, is really at hand to hear this. I am sure they will work with us to mobilize resources in one way or another. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Sanimentereng, you have the floor, please.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, with regards to the source of funding to establish this Military Hospital, could there be any source of funding privately? Maybe support from elsewhere, apart from the Ministry of Finance. Thank you.

HON BABOUCARR O. JOOF [MINISTER OF DEFENSE & SECURITY]: Honourable Speaker, the Ministry of Finance will not be expected to produce all the finances or resources required for such a hospital to come from the GLF. We are talking about mobilizing opportunities, grants, loans, and PPPs. Other creative forms of financing will come from their end, but we are not expecting such a facility to be financed from the GLF because this is a major financing. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Minister of Defence. I want to thank you sincerely for those answers provided. You may go now, and Ramadan Mubarak. Honourable Members, it is almost past three now. I would want to break for 20 minutes for the prayer break, and we will resume by 3:23.

THE HOUSE WAS SUSPENDED FOR 20 MINUTES.

THE HOUSE RESUMES.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the Assembly now resumes. Honourable Members, I am being informed that we lack quorum. I am now told that the House has quorum. Clerk, you may proceed.

Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please, let us welcome the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs to the podium. Honourable Minister, please, take the podium. Questions for which due notices were given to the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs by Honourable Members for oral reply.

Question No. 026 of 2026 [By: The Hon Member for Upper Saloum].

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs give this august Assembly a comprehensive plan as to what the government intends to do with the Asset Management and Recovery Corporation [AMRC], which was established by an Act of Parliament in 1992?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Good afternoon, Honourable Speaker, August Assembly, and Honourable Member for Upper Saloum. In response to the Honourable Member for Upper Saloum, I would like to inform the Honourable House that the Ministry of Finance has established a liquidation task force for the AMRC. The Task Force has submitted its report, and work is in progress to submit the draft liquidation bill to Cabinet. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much. So essentially, if I understand you correctly, are you saying that you want to do away with AMRC completely? And if so, when are you going to come with a bill to repeal the Act?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much. Yes. The decision has been that AMRC is now selling the land to pay their recurrent expenditure. So, they are not making money on that basis, and these lands belong to the government. That is what informed the government's decision. And now, the draft Liquidation Bill is being prepared for submission to Cabinet. Thank you. As soon as Cabinet approves it, it will be submitted to the National Assembly.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much. Now, with regards to the toxic assets that were from Keystone Bank and given to AMRC to handle, what is the current situation of those toxic assets?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: These are part of the liquidation exercise, and the toxic asset part of the liquidation recommendation will take the necessary recommendation on where to handle this. Thank you.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, with regards to the AMRC's operations, it seems like you are telling me that it has already ceased. But based on their 2022 audited accounts, the performance of AMRC was well. What triggered the issue of putting AMRC to a halt?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, Honourable Member for Jeshwang, what was observed was that AMRC was selling the land, and those lands are capital items, and from there is where they used to make their recurrent expenditures. So, it was not considered useful if they were generating revenue apart from the capital base. The capital base, which formed the assets, is what is being liquidated for their survival. That is what informed this decision. Thank you.

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

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Minister, in your submission, you did mention that AMRC is on the verge of selling their land. Will it be right for AMRC to sell that land without dissolving the institution at the level of the National Assembly?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Member for Janjanbureh, we did not say so. What I said instead was that AMRC was paying its recurrent expenditure from the disposal of landed assets which were put in their custody. So, it was realized that they were not getting money outside the capital item that they were overseeing. So, financially, they are not viable because those landed properties belong to the government. That is what informs the liquidation decision. Thank you.

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

HON MUHAMED KANTEH [BUSUMBALA]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, can you enlighten us about these landed properties that the AMRC is selling? Are they audited state landed properties that fall within their remit for disposal?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Busumbala, the landed assets that were transferred to AMRC were due to the process, and as such, they had the custodian function that was to administer it either for closure or forfeiture as part of the foreclosure procedure of the former commercial bank, like the lands that formed the collateral of the dissolution following the liquidation. So that was it. Thank you.

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

HON NFALLY M. KORA [TUMANA]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, what is the status of the report of the liquidation committee that you have set up, please?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Tumana, I just mentioned that it is going through the process to be submitted to Cabinet, and from there it will be making its way to the National Assembly. Thank you.

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

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, my understanding is that the AMRC is recovering assets on behalf of the state, and if that is their mandate, now they recover properties on behalf of the state and then they resell or sell back those lands. So, who gave them that authority to sell the properties that they have recovered? Is that their Act?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: They have been empowered by the Act to do the sales. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 027 of 2026 [By: The Hon Member for Upper Saloum].

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs give this august Assembly detailed information on people and institutions that owe the Gambia government in and out of the country, and how this debt came about and the current recovery plans?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Upper Saloum. On the institutions, it is mainly the SOEs that have debts or receivables to the State, and the debts result from government on-lending to the SOEs. The total lending to the SOEs amounted to \$331 million, equivalent to D23.78 billion, because there are three categories. There are three categories of dues to government: you have these institutions, you have the imprests, and then the other categories.

For individuals who had outstanding imprests, it amounts to D18.7 million, and the details are given in Table 1[A]. We do have a third category that comprises government-related receivables, principally in the context of favourable court award judgments for the government. These details cannot be shared at this stage because, as part of the negotiation process, a non-disclosure agreement was arrived at, but the Ministry of Justice is handling this file. Those are the categories of receivables, and the details of the table which we have shared in the report.

The loans were extended to various entities, including Civil Aviation and individual borrowers. We came to know about the total of \$331 million. Principal entities are GCAA, Gamtel, NAWEC, and those are the energy SOEs, the Sustainable Energy Service Companies. When you add the total of that, it came to \$331 million, which translates to D23.78 billion.

The list for imprest details as of 2025 are equally given, starting from the year up to 2022, and that came to about D18.7 million. Those are the two categories of lists of receivables due to government. Thank you.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Yes. Thank you. Honourable Speaker, we have not received the figures for the third category. You told us about the figure for the SOEs, which is about \$331 million, equivalent to D23.78 billion, and then the individuals, but the third category, which is as a result of court awards, etc., we have not received that figure. What exactly are we talking about here?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Yes, we have not got the full details of this, as it is a subject of a non-disclosure agreement that the Ministry of Justice is overseeing, but we felt it would not be complete if we did not mention this category. Thank you.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, I think that would actually be incomplete information because if there is a non-disclosure agreement, there should be an idea about what kind of money we are talking about here.

When we have audited accounts, the receivables of government need to be captured in those audited accounts, but what we have realized is that is not the case. So, at this stage, I think the government should have a pretty good idea of what kind of money we are talking about in terms of these court awards.

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much. Court awards are contingent assets, and you do not count them upfront until settlement and agreement have been signed, then you will know the exact amount that you will receive. We cannot put it in government accounts because it is still a subject of negotiation. So, until the negotiation is firmed up and the payment plan is signed off and becomes binding from both parties, then it becomes a receivable. It is a contingent asset. Thank you.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]:

THE SPEAKER: So, are these domestic cases we are referring to here, or are these international cases that we are dealing with?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Both categories could be there, I think.

THE SPEAKER: Honorable Member for Upper Saloum, you cannot do that. I am going to subtract your subsequent supplementary questions.

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: I think my response is that both categories are included. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Wuli East is very happy today. I do not know what is going on, but maybe we will ask a Nominated Member, Fatou K. Jawara, to investigate him. Member for Kiang West, you have the floor.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honorable Speaker, thank you very much. Honorable Minister, some of the institutions that you have mentioned are indebted to the government. Of course, they also have tens of millions as receivables which are due to them from the government, e.g., GNPC as well as Social Security. How do you intend to look at these two? The government is indebted to them; they are equally indebted to the government. How are you trying to ensure that all these things are settled because they are captured in their books as well? These are receivables that

have been alluded to for a longer period of time and still have not been settled. How do you intend to settle these two?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much, Honorable Member for Kiang West. When you have offsetting liabilities, best practice dictates that you do not offset them until otherwise agreed. Only when a settlement is agreed between both parties will you take a net position. But as it stands, we are keeping our numbers as they are, and they are also keeping their numbers as they are, subject to a final negotiation.

The areas where the government owes some of these institutions form part of the overall government arrears for which the government is developing an arrears strategy to resolve. When we arrive at that, we will decide whether we will offset or whether we will service and they service, depending on the negotiation. Thank you.

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

HON ABDOULIE NJIAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Thank you very much. Honorable Minister, there was a recent report by FPAC, I forgot at what time it was, where GCAA was on the verge of being taken in for equity basically, and then you have NAWEC also on the verge of their debt being lifted. So here we are talking about recovery plans. I want to know how come the government is opting for recovery mechanisms while also waiving debts for entities like NAWEC, whose debts are quite high? Yes.

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Well, these are plans, Honourable Member for Banjul Central, and until the plan is finalised, you have to keep your records as they are. Because what happens? The plan for GCAA, even when the transformation happens, the government cannot write off its receivables. In fact, the discussions we are having with them are to convert it into equity so that the government's assets will not be compromised.

Equally, for NAWEC, whatever financial restructuring is happening, we do not have any plans for now to write off anything to NAWEC. But even if we do, as you are very well aware, the power to write off government debts or government receivables only resides with the National Assembly. So, whatever restructuring is done will be subject to that discussion at that time. Thank you.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honorable Speaker. Honorable Minister, if they are owing almost 27.7 billion based on your statement, and we have seen that some of these SOEs are going into PPPs and consistent with other companies, who is going to solve this debt when these agreements are in place?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much, Honorable Member for Jeshwang. When PPP is done, it does not change the shareholding of the entity. So, whether they are on PPP or not, the receivable is there for the company to service until the government chooses to convert it into equity. Concession does not

change the equity structure; the equity structure remains the same. This is simply because some of these entities are not servicing their debt.

The government is the borrower of record; these form part of our national debt. So, I hope it is understood that out of our total debt stock, 23 billion was on-lent to these entities. If they had had the opportunity, they should have been servicing it, and it would not be a liability for government. But because they are not able to service that, the government is servicing it, and it is counting as part of its debt stock. I hope the effective obligation of the core government is that if you back out these entities, you should deduct this amount from the debt stock. Thank you.

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

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you very much, Honorable Speaker. Honorable Minister, these debts that we are talking about, especially from individuals, does the former President form part of those individuals that actually owe the state?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: No, the list is there; it does not include his name. These are imprests. It is basically imprest holders who did not submit the imprest during the former President's time.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 028 of 2026 [By: The Hon. Member for Upper Saloum].

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you. Honorable Speaker, could the Honorable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs give this August Assembly detailed information on all self-raised revenues across

all sectors of the government from 2021 to 2025, giving details of the institution, the amount, and how the revenues were utilized?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honorable Speaker, I think this is Question No. 29?

THE SPEAKER: 028 on the top of your page.

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honorable Speaker, I would like to inform the Honourable Assembly that the IFMIS system currently accounts for revenues for the MDAs financed through the central budget. Hence, not all sectors raised in self-raised revenues are captured in IFMIS, neither are they appropriated to the budget. However, the Ministry recently issued a circular to all self-raised revenue sectors or entities to provide monthly revenue data.

Furthermore, with respect to revenues raised by MDAs, I want to inform the Honorable Member for Upper Saloum that the total amount of revenue raised by MDAs of the Central Government for the period 2021 to 2025 amounted to 12.8 billion. Hence, all these funds were used in funding government operations. Please see Table 2 for details. Table 2 has the breakdown by Ministries from 2021 to 2025, the individual year, which revenue category was received, and the totals for the period.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Would the Honourable Minister tell us how the Ministry of Finance

actually is monitoring this self-raised revenue, which should be part of total government revenue in terms of revenue assurance?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much, Honorable Speaker. We have enhanced oversight in this area, particularly for some of the entities that are subvented and are making some self-raised revenue. It formed part of our reforms that going forward, they will submit to the Ministry of Finance their revenue collections quarterly, and the subvention that will be given to them will now take into account their own self-raised revenues. So that will only give them the net amount. This is one.

Additionally, the Revenue Directorate is actively engaging all MDAs that have revenue-making mandates so that they report promptly, and it forms part of our reporting. We are also reorganizing our Budget Directorate to create a dedicated section for non-tax revenues.

So, when you look at the budget, you do not just look at expenditure; we now have a team that is dedicated to non-tax revenues from the MDAs. They will now follow up with the agencies to find out how they are moving with their targets, and they will be reporting and following up. These are the reforms we are doing in this area. Thank you.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. This is the second or third? Second. Okay, Speaker is concentrating. For those MDAs that actually have balances in their accounts at the end of the year, does the Ministry of Finance actually follow all these amounts into

the Consolidated Revenue Fund at the end of the year, because we still have some substantial amounts in their accounts at the end of the year?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: There are two main categories, Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Upper Saloum. As part of the year-end closing, all MDAs that are linked to IFMIS have their balances swept off. But you have autonomous MDAs that are outside the system; for those ones, they are allowed to carry their balance forward, but before they can spend it, they will seek authority from the Ministry for approval. Thank you.

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

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honorable Speaker, thank you very much. Honorable Minister, I am not too sure if the Member for Upper Saloum has questioned in the supplementary questions as to why those collections are not coming to IFMIS so that you can be able to track them. If there are any plans that you have in place to ensure that all those revenues that are collected and self-generating revenues by all those departments and Ministries come through the IFMIS system so that you can be able to track this, because it will definitely be able to help us reduce our budget stress.

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much. The rollout of IFMIS forms the scope of these reforms. Currently, IFMIS is being rolled out to agencies and MDAs across the board. What we have started, particularly with projects, is to

ensure that all new projects start on IFMIS. For those agencies that are not on IFMIS, the Accountant General is working on a plan to onboard them to IFMIS. It is a work in progress. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 029 of 2026 [By: The Hon. Member for Upper Saloum].

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honorable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs give this August Assembly detailed information on the revenues that are generated from all embassies, by embassy, from 2021 to 2025, and how these funds were utilized?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker and Honorable Member for Upper Saloum, I want to inform the Honourable Member that the total amount of revenues raised by the embassies for the period 2021 to 2025 amounted to D176,781,591.32. These revenues form part of the annual budget appropriation approved by the National Assembly for funding the national budget. Hence, all these funds were used in funding government operations. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you. Is this money collected by the embassy deducted from their allocations, or do they have to remit everything and then you give them back?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Yes, the Accountant General, in remitting funds, takes cognizance of the self-raised revenue and will net off the overall revenue remittances to take into account the revenues raised on site. Thank you.

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

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, thank you very much for that. I want to be sure that you have the list of the embassies and the revenue they generate. Are you in a position to tell this August Assembly which embassy generates the highest amount of revenue and from what source, as far as that revenue is concerned?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Yes, Honourable Speaker. We have already included Table 3 in the document circulated. You do not have that? My apologies. We have already sent a written response. Dakar has performed significantly the best overall. The best performer in the collection is Dakar with D36 million, and this table has the full details. Regarding different sources, we were collecting based on the total; we did not go into the individual sources, but you have attestation, visas, and you have other categories of revenue for each embassy that they are entitled to collect.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Central Baddibu.

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Honourable Minister, I hope this is not on the low side. By looking at the numerous embassies that we have, what are your expectations; is it on the low side or high side?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Well, I think they were within expectations, basically. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 030 of 2026 [By: The Hon. Member for Upper Saloum].

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Yes, and that is the last one. Honourable Speaker, could the Honorable Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs give detailed information on all revenues generated from the mining sector from 2021 to 2025, showing the institution and the contributions to the communities as well as the taxes they have paid?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, in response to the question raised by the Honorable Member for Upper Saloum, I want to inform this august Assembly that from 2021 to 2025, the total amount of revenue generated from the mining sector amounted to D747,300,000. Please see the details in Table 4 below, showing the revenue by licensed mining operator for the reference period, including amounts paid to the communities where these mining activities were undertaken.

On the tax paid by these businesses, this is a subject of a relation with GRA. As of the time of submitting this response, we have not got the details of the taxes by the different concessionaires. However, our request is still

pending with them. As soon as we receive the response, we will give it to the Clerk of the National Assembly. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Here is the proofread and content-maintained version of the parliamentary proceedings, with corrections for grammar, spelling, punctuation, clarity, and formatting while preserving all original meaning.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you very much. Does the Minister of Finance have any monitoring mechanism to ensure that these licensed institutions are actually paying the right taxes to the GRA?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Well, the overall tax compliance regime is strengthened further by the creation of the Tax Directorate, and the Tax Directorate has commenced substantial work in this area, and follow-up has been done certainly. Thank you.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Thank you. How about their contribution to the...

THE SPEAKER: [Inaudible]

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: No, this is the second one. I am okay with Ramadan; yes, it is affecting them there, but how about their contribution to the communities where they operate? Any idea?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much. The total contribution for the three years 2021, 2022, and 2023 amounted to D25.8 million. The amounts for 2024 and 2025 are yet to be distributed, and they will be informed to the National Assembly once that distribution is rolled out. Thank you.

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

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, for giving me the opportunity. Honourable Minister, the Honourable Member asked for revenue generated from the mining sector from 2021 to 2025, and the figure you gave is D447,300,000. I am asking: is this the amount of money they pay in the form of tax? Or is it the contribution they pay to the government?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you know you are not listening to the Minister. The Member for Jeshwang, you have the floor.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I also thank you for taking care of him very seriously today. Thank you so very much, and also congratulations on the hat trick.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, my good friend. Please proceed.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, the question asks about the community contribution and also the tax they pay to the government. My question here is: are they not contributing to the community? Are they tax-varying? Are there charges in taxes, or are they tax-varying?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, and Honourable Member for Jeshwang. The community contribution is part of the revenue-sharing ratio, which is part of the concession, and they are assessed based on their turnover. So, if the community contribution eats into their turnover, automatically, the taxable amount comes down; that is how it works.

The formula is: whatever is collected has congestion. The share belongs to the concessionaire, the share belongs to the government, and the share goes to the community. So, the concessionaire is taxed on the portion that belongs to him. Therefore, the government receives two revenue streams: the share of the upfront revenue as well as the tax on the operating activity of the concessionaire. Thank you.

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

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Question was answered.

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

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, does this include exploration activities? Because mining has different streams. Does this include revenue that is due to the government through exploration?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Yes, Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Kiang West, the question was on the mining of quarrying, dredging, and heavy minerals. It does not include exploration, which I believe will be oil-related or offshore activities. Thank you.

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

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, with the distribution of, let us say, funds, more especially around community benefits, can you guide this august Assembly with regard to the communities that specifically benefit from these mining sites?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much. The communities are the areas where the mining takes place, and these principally relate to onshore mining. What is happening at Saru is deep sand evacuation from the ocean, and that is offshore, and this revenue-sharing ratio does not include offshore activities. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 031 of 2026 [By: The Hon Member for Janjanbureh].

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs inform this August Assembly of the exact amount the government received from the World Bank as budget support in December 2024?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, in response to the Honourable Member for Janjanbureh, the total budget support received from the World Bank in 2024 amounted to \$28.97 million, equivalent to D2,026,293,846. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Honourable Minister, could you guide this August Assembly on how these funds were executed? On what items were they spent?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, as we have elucidated before this August Assembly, budget support is a general pooling of resources that goes to fund government-wide operations. So, they form part of the overall revenue of the government and are part of the overall expenditure of the government. It is not targeted to specific sectors. Thank you.

HON OMAR JAMMEH [JANJANBUREH]: Will that include addressing salaries within the government sector?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Salaries, Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Janjanbureh, form an integral part of government expenditure. So, budget support from the pooling of resources goes to fund salary expenditures as well as other expenditures of government operations. Thank you.

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

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Just clarity from him because you made mention about 28.7 billion equivalent to 2 billion. So, the difference: which one is dalasi and which one is dollar?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: \$28.97 million, equivalent to D2.02 billion.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Kiang West.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, is it feasible to use a budget support component, which is appropriated for a specific purpose, for salary payment?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Kiang West, budget support is not earmarked for any specific activity of government. It forms the general pool of resources for government operations. Thank you.

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

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, what was the highest operational expenditure that was made out of this budget support? Thank you.

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, Honourable Member for Sanimentereng, it is like a pool. You do not identify or earmark to say this will come from the budget support. It forms the basket of the resource envelope that comes in, so it is not earmarked. This is different from project financing. In project financing, specific amounts are earmarked for certain activities on which a project is conceived. So, those amounts are only spendable in that category. But for budget support, it comes with the pool of overall government revenue and is allocated across government-wide expenditure. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: It is supplementary, so it is one go. No, that is what you asked; you asked about the highest expanded budget line on that. So, he said budget support is general; it is full of everything. So, it is not the same as project financing where you want to build the health center for Nianija—this is the amount of money for Nianija, and then it is expended on the Nianija health facility. But budget support is for everything. So, he is not in a position to give the greater chunk of that budget support, whether it is salary, whether it is road, etc.

Question No. 032 of 2026 [By: The Hon Member for Banjul North].

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs inform this August Assembly how many of the last 70 buses allocated to The Gambia Transport Service Corporation have been officially handed over to them, and what is the status of any remaining buses?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, in response to the Honourable Member for Banjul North, I would like to inform the Honourable House that all 70 buses allocated to The Gambia Transport Service Corporation were officially commissioned and handed over. The ceremony was presided over by His Excellency the President on the 12th of April 2023 at MacCarthy Square. Accordingly, there are no outstanding buses pending handover, as all 70 buses were duly delivered and transferred to the GTSC.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. In that regard, can you kindly share with us the details when it comes to the delivery, as far as the buses are concerned, with also their number plates?

THE SPEAKER: What?

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: I want him not today, because I know it is very impossible for him to do it today. But if he can

submit to the Parliament, because I personally need those details; the delivery note that was signed by the head of the GTSC and also the number plates of each bus.

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Point of Order, Honourable Speaker.

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

[Point of Order]

HON SAINY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Speaker, supplementary question 43[4]: A supplementary question shall not be in order if it introduces matters not included in the original question and the answer provided. The Member for Banjul North is asking the Honourable Minister to provide the number plates of those buses, and that is under the Ministry of Interior. We have a body that can issue those ones. I think that should be referred to the Ministry of Interior, the number plates of the buses.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, Order. Let me rule on that point of order. The Member for Lower Saloum is arguing that number plates are under the Ministry of Interior, and I just confirm that here, it is under the Ministry of Interior. But on another note, also, the question may not be admitted because the Honourable Member said himself he personally needed. Honourable Member, maintain decorum. So, on that basis, the question is out of order. You have one more question, or is that all?

HON MODOU LAMIN B. BAH [BANJUL NORTH]: Again, I will still insist to request on behalf of the Parliament, the delivery notes of the buses.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, no. You said you need it personally. No, that is what you said on record. 'Maneh' Central Baddibu and Wuli East, please. The Member for Kiang West, you have the floor. Member for Jeshwang, you have the floor.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Speaker, Honourable Minister, can you...

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I recognize the Member for Jeshwang.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: But you called me.

THE SPEAKER: Yes, but you did not take the floor; you were chatting.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: No, I was never chatting.

THE SPEAKER: Okay. Maybe I have to come back to you later. Member for Jeshwang, you have the floor.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, who funded the procurement of those buses?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: The Government of The Gambia funded the 70 buses.

THE SPEAKER: The Member for Kiang West, now is your turn. I hope this time you will not engage in conversation.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, can you inform the august Assembly under what condition those buses have been handed over to GTSC?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Member for Kiang West, these were part of a government offset between GTSC and the Government of The Gambia. We did a payment plan for GTSC to pay to the government, and we used that to offset the school transport services with the Ministry of Basic and Higher Education. Thank you.

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

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, would you kindly make the delivery note available to the House?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Member for Central Baddibu, we will work on that and submit it to the National Assembly as requested. My Permanent Secretaries will take note, and I think that is where the coordination between the office of the Clerk and the Permanent Secretary as administrative heads needs to really work out. Because when we say we will, of course, I inform the august Assembly, but the action officer is not myself. So, my team is here, so the Clerk can coordinate. Thank you.

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

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Minister, in the parent question, it says that the exact amount the government received from the World Bank. Actually, I thought the amount was derived from a loan from the SSHFC. We would like clarity on that, the Social Security.

THE SPEAKER: Order, Honourable Members, Order.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Yes, it is indicated here in the parent question actually. Just quote the sentence: "the exact amount the government received from the World Bank as a budget support in December 2025." Sorry, I am on track. I mean the 70 buses allocated to The Gambia Transport Service Corporation has been officially handed over to them. What is the current status of the remaining buses? So, my question would be, based on the source actually, was it a loan from the SSHFC?

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Member, the Minister was asked, and he said it is financed by the Government of The Gambia. No. There is no source of funding, my friend.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: My question is not answered.

THE SPEAKER: No, the question and the answer; neither the parent question nor the answer talked about the loan from Social Security.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: No, I am asking based on his answer. Based on his submission.

THE SPEAKER: No, look at the question, Honourable Member. Read the question properly.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: No, I said based on his submission, Honourable Speaker, not the question.

THE SPEAKER: No. He has not made such submission. He has not submitted such. The Member for Sanimentereng, you have the floor.

HON FATOU CHAM [SANIMENTERENG]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, through you on behalf of the Parliament, can we equally request for the copies of the original Bill of Lading of the said buses?

THE SPEAKER: That is not a problem. Honourable Member for Central Baddibu, I do not want to suspend you.

Question No. 033 of 2026 [By: The Hon Member for Bakau].

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Honourable Speaker, could the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs inform this August Assembly what the current debt-to-GDP ratio is and what strategies the government is implementing to manage debt sustainably without compromising essential public services?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. The current estimate for the debt-to-GDP ratio for 2025 is 70%. The government continues to prioritize the mobilization of grants and highly concessional

financing, that is, with a grant element of 35% to mitigate the risk of distress. The government continues to be prudent in terms of domestic borrowing, and as a result, the 2026 overall fiscal deficit is projected to be 1% of GDP. Recent tax policy and administrative reforms have demonstrated, with evidence, the potential of domestic revenue mobilization to drive us towards resilient fiscal sustainability, as showcased by the impressive revenue growth in the past three years.

In ensuring long-term fiscal debt sustainability, domestic resource mobilization reforms on both tax and administration will be prioritized by implementing high-revenue-yield reforms to reach the sub-Saharan African average of a tax-to-GDP ratio of 16% by the end of 2030, as highlighted in the Domestic Resource Mobilisation Strategy aimed at reducing donor and loan dependency. Thank you.

[Supplementary Question(s)]

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable. As a government, what plans are in place to make sure that debts are being minimized?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Bakau, we have explained it in the response. That is, first of all, we do not borrow from the market in the international market. Any of our borrowing activity has to be concessionary. Concessionary means the grant element is 35%. That means if we borrow \$100, the present value of that borrowing is \$65. So, we are effectively servicing, and the 35% is grant.

In our donor engagement, we prioritize grants over loans. That is why all our engagement with the World Bank is on a grant basis. There is no loan transaction between us and the World Bank. Equally with African Development Bank in the ADF replenishments, we are only getting grants. For other multilaterals where we are getting loans, the loans must meet the concessional requirement. What is happening in terms of supporting sustainability? All this investment in infrastructure is growing the economy, and as the economy grows, that is why the revenue grows.

The key ability for sustainability is to service the debts. So, even if you have a relatively elevated debt-to-GDP ratio, if your economy grows and your revenue mobilization efficiency kicks in, you have more capacity to service because you are getting more revenue. That is why we just presented the presentation of the 2025 accounts to the Budget Implementation Report, which shows a remarkable improvement in domestic resource mobilization. For the first time, we have been able to cover 91% of our total domestic expenditure from internal revenues, both tax and non-tax. So, we only borrow when absolutely necessary. We do not borrow non-concessional resources. Thank you.

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

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: Thank you. Honourable Minister, if the amount used to pay for loan repayment is more than what we allocate to, for example, three or four ministries, are you not compromising essential public services?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much, Honourable. We are mindful about the impact of debt service on the budget overall. But as you can see, if you look at the 2026 budget, there was no ministry whose allocation was reduced. In fact, some of the ministries have increments of more than 50%, and part of the expenditure which we are still funding is the subsidy, which should be made known. We are subsidizing the Energy Bill by 1 billion. Allocation to the Energy Ministry includes an element of 1 billion to NAWEC to subsidize the cost of electricity.

Then, when it comes to agriculture, the fertilizer is being subsidized by more than 50%. The groundnut purchase is equally subsidized by more than 50%, and if you come to healthcare, we have expanded the fleet of riders for health, and the road infrastructure is all going on. So, while the debt service has elevated as an absolute number, this has not compromised allocation to sectors, on the backdrop of the allocations that we just saw in last year's budget.

THE SPEAKER: No, Wuli East, do not do that. Member for Kiang West, you have the floor.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, what are the government's strategic policies in financing the debt? Is it anchored on locally mobilized revenue, or is it to invest in the productive sector where you generate revenue and pay the debts? How do you intend, policy-wise, to finance the debt?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: The debt servicing is part of the debt sustainability assessment, and that formed the bedrock of the resource mobilization. If your resource base grows, definitely your ability to service debts grows. Even though the debt-to-GDP ratio is elevated, with the increase in domestic resource mobilization, it has enabled us to service our debts comfortably. What has happened in the debt servicing is as follows: there are some historical antecedents to this.

On the onslaught of COVID, there was a Debt Service Suspension Initiative for four years; we were not servicing the principal of our loans. Meanwhile, the exchange rate deteriorated. So, we get revenue in Dalasi, and for every depreciation in Dalasi, your dollar amount becomes more elevated. So, that tended to elevate the debt stock in terms of the Dalasi amount. These are the measures we are taking.

So, first, that is why we are prioritizing domestic resource mobilization, introducing reforms at the GRA to ensure that revenues are collected promptly. We are doing a lot of reforms in revenue collection. We have the Single Window, the ASYCUDA World, the rental system, the telecom system is also coming on board, and, of course, property and rental taxes. All of these are coming on board. However, this does not mean we are increasing the tax rates. All we are trying to do is to make sure that what is due to government comes to government. What we are also doing: we have closed all cashier positions so that government revenue is no longer paid to a cashier. You go to the bank and you pay, and we have seen an increase in non-tax revenues as well.

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

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please be seated. The House is now in session.

HON SAIKOU BAH [BASSE]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, is the current debt stock a legacy of the previous government, or has it been accrued solely under the current administration?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much. That is a very interesting question, and it is one we have debated over time. However, in examining the debt context, three key factors must be considered when comparing the current debt stock with that of the previous regime.

First, the previous administration benefited from debt forgiveness under the HIPC Initiative, which, as we know, effectively wiped out all multilateral debts in present value terms.

Second, there was a stock of debt floating in the system from the previous regime that had not been recognised. That amounted to nearly D30 billion, including obligations related to NAWEC, the 30-year bond, and other outstanding liabilities. Upon assuming office, this administration, guided by principles of good governance, took the decision to assume and settle those obligations with the banks. Consequently, while the debt stock increased, there was effectively no new borrowing. These were legacy debts.

Third, some debts were contracted when the exchange rate stood at about D10 to the US Dollar. Today, that same amount has multiplied nearly sevenfold due to the depreciation of the Dalasi.

Additionally, another factor affecting the debt stock is the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). As mentioned in an earlier question, the government is currently servicing about D23 billion in SOE-related obligations on their behalf, due to their inability to meet those commitments. These are the core elements that constitute the country's debt stock.

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

HON SULAYMAN SAHO [CENTRAL BADDIBU]: In your response, you mentioned subsidies to NAWEC. Does that also cover rural electrification?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: I think that is a very good question. As a government, we are implementing extensive social interventions, and I do not believe they are fully understood. The subsidy we provide cuts across all expenditures in the electricity sector. As long as a consumer purchases cash power, the government is subsidising that bill to the tune of D1 billion annually, which is what we pay to NAWEC each year. Without that subsidy, and without the full pass-through of energy costs, tariffs would be significantly higher. That is one area, but it is not the only one. Some families have been identified as vulnerable, and the government is also providing direct cash transfers from the budget to those communities as part of our social protection programmes. These are some of the initiatives we are undertaking. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, Order, please. Member for Lower Saloum, you have the floor.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Honourable Minister, in connection with the question raised by the Member for Central Baddibu, do you not think that these social sector expenditures sometimes place a burden on the government? I am referring to NAWEC, GGC, Health, and the financial support that government provides to these institutions.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, Order. Honourable Member for Lower Saloum, please continue. Do not address them directly.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: So, do you not consider this a burden on the government?

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Point of Order, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: There is a Point of Order by the Member for Upper Saloum. *[Point of Order]*. Honourable Member for Upper Saloum, please proceed.

HON ALHAGIE MBOW [UPPER SALOUM]: Under Section 381(c), the Member is seeking the opinion of the Minister on whether it is a burden, and he is completely out of order.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, Order, please. Honourable Member, the Point of Order is sustained. Upper Saloum, you rose on a point of order but are now disturbing the Chamber. We move to Question No. 034 of 2026, by the Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu. Is he not present? Then Question No. 035 of 2026, by the Honourable Member for Upper Niimi.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Honourable Speaker, I was assigned to read the question on his behalf, and the Table Clerk was duly informed.

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs inform this Assembly of the factors responsible for the depreciation of the Dalasi against the CFA franc, and how the one-way transfer of funds through Wave to Senegal affects the economy? Thank you.

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker and Honourable Member for Upper Niumi, the depreciation of the Dalasi against the CFA franc and other major currencies is primarily influenced by macroeconomic and structural factors, rather than by any single transaction channel. Since The Gambia operates a flexible exchange rate regime and imports exceed exports, the demand for foreign currency is high and outpaces supply. This places sustained pressure on the exchange rate and contributes to the depreciation of the Dalasi.

Furthermore, The Gambia imports more from Senegal than it exports to Senegal, thereby putting pressure on the Dalasi against the CFA. Periodic festive events, such as the Gamou and the end-of-year Mawlid, drive up demand for CFA further exacerbating the situation. At the same time, the CFA franc is pegged to the Euro, so movements in the Euro indirectly influence the CFA exchange rate.

Honourable Speaker, with respect to Wave Mobile Money transfers to Senegal, it is important to clarify the settlement structure and its macroeconomic implications. Cross-border Wave settlements are conducted in US Dollars, not CFA francs. This distinction is critical because it means that

the transaction generates US Dollar settlement flows to the recipient country, rather than direct CFA outflows. These settlement Dollar inflows provide additional supply that can be sold in the domestic foreign exchange market.

Therefore, there is no empirical evidence that the one-way nature of Wave transfers is itself a primary driver of the Dalasi's depreciation. Exchange rate movements are more fundamentally linked to structural trade imbalances, import dependencies, and broader macroeconomic conditions. To improve exchange rate market conditions, we should increase our export potential and reduce our demand for imports. Thank you.

[Supplementary Questions]

HON OMAR DARBOE [UPPER NIUMI]: Honourable Minister, if there were bidirectional transfers from Gambia to Senegal and Senegal to Gambia, I believe that would benefit our economy. What are the relative benefits between transferring money from Gambia to Senegal versus from Senegal to Gambia?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: We operate under a flexible exchange rate mechanism driven principally by demand and supply. One key observation is that the CFA is not Senegal's national currency; it is a regional currency. Therefore, exchange rate pressure between the CFA and the Dalasi is driven mainly by demand and supply factors. Currently, there is significant demand for CFA. More goods are purchased from Senegal than Gambia exports to Senegal, so to buy those goods, CFA is required. As demand pressure for the CFA increases, the Dalasi tends to depreciate in line with the supply and demand curve.

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

HON. SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: We know that Gambians primarily use the Dollar for imports and exports. But for re-export, which currency is mainly used—the CFA or the Dollar?

THE SPEAKER: Wuli East, I cannot hear you. I am not sure if Ramadan is affecting you.

HON SUWAIBOU TOURAY [WULI EAST]: When you import, you buy Dollars. Now, when you export, which currency do you use? Is it the CFA or the Dollar? Do you understand now?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: I understand the question concerns re-export. When you re-export, the currency you receive is determined by the market to which you export. If you re-export to Senegal, you should receive CFA as inflows. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Member for Lower Saloum.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Minister, for every transaction on Wave, the company charges a 1% commission. What is the VAT charge on that commission?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: For every transaction, the 1% commission technically represents turnover for Wave as a company. Since Wave is a vatable entity, VAT is applicable at the prescribed rate. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Not on tax or VAT, okay. The Member for Jeshwang, you have the floor.

HON SHERIFF SARR [JESHWANG]: Thank you very much. Honourable Minister, looking at the number of forex bureaus in this country, is that not a contributing factor to the depreciation of the Dalasi?

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: Point of Order. That is not in the original question. Honourable Speaker, under Section 43(4), a supplementary question shall not be in order if it introduces matters not included in the original question or the answers provided. The original question and the Minister's response concerned one-way Wave transfers; forex bureaus were not mentioned. There is nowhere in the original question or the answer that referenced forex bureaus.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please order. Allow the Member to continue on his point of order.

HON SAINÉY JAWARA [LOWER SALOUM]: My point is that the original question did not mention forex bureaus, and the Minister's response also did not address them. It was about one-way Wave transfers.

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, order. I have reviewed the question and the answers. The question was about the depreciation of the Dalasi against the CFA and the one-way transfer of Wave to Senegal. The Minister did not cite forex bureaus as a factor. Since the supplementary question seeks the Minister's opinion rather than a yes-or-no answer on a matter already raised, it is ruled out of order.

Member for Kiang West, you have the floor.

HON LAMIN CEESAY [KIANG WEST]: Honourable Minister, it has long been argued that black-market exchange rates impact the value of the Dalasi. Could the depreciation of the Dalasi against the CFA be attributed to black-market currency exchange?

HON. SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much. What is commonly referred to as the black market is otherwise known as the parallel market, and it operates outside the formal system. Based on supply and demand factors, rates in the parallel market do tend to diverge from the official basket. However, there is no empirical evidence that the parallel market is a causative element in exchange rate depreciation. That said, the ideal situation would be to reduce the parallel market so that all transactions flow through the banking system, as that would create a more robust framework. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 036 of 2026, by the Honourable Member for Banjul Central.

HON ABDOULIE NJAI [BANJUL CENTRAL]: Honourable Speaker, recent reports have raised concerns regarding transparency in government borrowing, particularly loans from the IMF and other foreign bodies. Could the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs inform this August Assembly of the total loans contracted under the Extended Credit Facility and other foreign arrangements, indicate which have not been tabled for parliamentary approval, and provide reasons for any omissions?

HON. SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Currently, The Gambia has arrangements with the IMF under the Extended Credit Facility (ECF) and the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). In addition, previous arrangements under the ECF remain active, with scheduled repayments ongoing. The total amount contracted under both the previous and current ECF totals USD 122 million. Our negotiations with the IMF are fully reflected in the annual budget presented to the National Assembly for approval. Therefore, the activities under the ECF are duly authorised by the National Assembly. The financing presented in the budget has always included the on-lending facility from the ECF, which is part of the approved budget. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Question No. 034 of 2026, by the Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu, to be read on his behalf by the Member for Bakau.

HON ASSAN TOURAY [BAKAU]: Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs inform this August Assembly about the USD 19.93 million grant provided to the government by the African Development Bank for youth and women in rural Gambia, and the current status of its implementation?

HON SEEDY K.M. KEITA [MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS]: Honourable Speaker, in response to the Honourable Member for Lower Baddibu, it is important to clarify that the USD 19.93 million represents additional financing to the original project cost of USD 6.5 million, with a current disbursement rate of 65%, supported by the African Development Bank. This additional funding is intended to scale up existing interventions,

expand project coverage, and ensure that more youth and women, particularly in rural areas, benefit from the opportunities created under the initiative. Regarding the current implementation status of this additional financing, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that project implementation arrangements are in place. The Board approval was granted on 10th July 2025, and the project has begun addressing the conditions precedent to effectiveness and disbursement. Key actions already taken include:

1. The conditions precedent for the first disbursement has been submitted to the African Development Bank, and we are now awaiting clearance on the fulfilment of those conditions.
2. A request has been sent to the Central Bank for the opening of the special account, which is one of the conditions for the upcoming disbursement.

I should emphasise that the funds have not yet arrived. We understand that there is a perception that the money is already here and not being utilised, but we are still in the process of fulfilling all the conditions attached to the grant facility. Thank you.

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

THE SPEAKER: Honourable Members, on your behalf, I wish to thank the Honourable Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs for the comprehensive answers provided to this August Assembly. Honourable Minister, I thank you sincerely and wish you Ramadan Kareem.

Honourable Members, I thank you all, especially those who have stayed up to this hour to complete our business. And of course, we acknowledge our

only female Member, the Honourable Member for Sanimentereng. We thank her and wish her Ramadan Mubarak for staying with us. I trust that someone is at home preparing Iftar for all of us.

[That this Assembly do Stand Adjourned till Thursday 12th March, 2026 @10:00 a.m. prompt

ADJOURNMENT