

President Bio Highlights Huge Gains In Agriculture, Education, And Health Sectors

By: Zacharia Jalloh

President Julius Maada Bio has highlighted what he described as significant gains across Sierra Leone's economy and key development sectors, including agriculture, education, energy and healthcare.

Speaking at the State Opening of Parliament, President Bio said the country's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 4.6 percent in 2024 and 4.8 percent in 2025, while inflation fell sharply from 9.4 percent in April 2025 to 4.4 percent by December, its lowest level in nearly two decades.

He noted, however, that rising global oil prices subsequently pushed inflation to 10.8 percent by April 2026. In response,

Government introduced temporary fuel support while maintaining electricity-tariff subsidies.

President Bio said the exchange rate depreciated by less than one percent in 2025, while Treasury bill rates fell from 41.2 percent in

Contd. page 15



Parliament Passes Bipartisan Historic Constitutional Amendments As Some APC MPs Walk Out



The Parliament of Sierra Leone has passed the long-debated Constitutional Amendment Bill, paving the way for significant changes to the country's electoral and governance framework. The Bill, which has undergone extensive consultations and consideration through the parliamentary committee and Third Reading stages, was put to a vote on

Monday, August 10, 2026.

The legislation was passed following a series of votes in Parliament, with the opposition All People's Congress (APC) staging a walkout after an earlier vote that resulted in a 97-46 defeat.

According to parliamentary sources, different provisions of the constitutional amendments required different voting thresholds, with a simple majority applying to certain provisions

Contd. page 13

Editorial

Why Constitutional Reform And Proportional Representation Deserve Serious National Consideration

A Constitution is not a monument to the past. It is the living framework through which a nation governs itself, protects its citizens, distributes power and confronts the challenges of each generation. For Sierra Leone, this principle is particularly important as the country considers proposals to review and modernise the Constitution of 1991.

The Constitution of Sierra Leone Act No. 6 of 1991 has itself undergone several amendments over the past three decades. Parliament has amended constitutional provisions in response to extraordinary electoral circumstances during the civil conflict, strengthened the fight against corruption, modernised qualifications for parliamentary leadership, provided for continuity of parliamentary representation through timely bye-elections, expanded the Electoral Commission to reflect changing administrative realities and reformed the constitutional framework governing political parties. Each of these amendments responded to a practical national need at a particular point in Sierra Leone's democratic development. The historical lesson is therefore clear: the 1991 Constitution has never been treated as an immutable document. It has evolved because Sierra Leone has evolved. Section 108 provides constitutional mechanisms for lawful amendment, including rigorous parliamentary procedures and, where entrenched provisions are concerned, direct participation by the people through constitutional procedures such as referenda. The framers of the Constitution understood that future generations would face circumstances different from those confronting the country in 1991. They consequently created mechanisms through which the nation could adapt without abandoning constitutional democracy.

It is against this historical background that the present constitutional review should be approached. Constitutional reform should not automatically be regarded with suspicion simply because it proposes change. The appropriate question is whether the proposed changes strengthen democratic governance, protect citizens' rights, improve accountability, modernise institutions and better equip the Republic to respond to contemporary national challenges. The Government's proposals, as presented in the material before us, touch upon many of these fundamental questions and deserve serious, informed and constructive national consideration.

The proposed expansion of the Bill of Rights is particularly significant. Modern constitutional democracy increasingly recognises that freedom is not limited to protection from arbitrary government action. It also requires effective safeguards against discrimination and meaningful protection for women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons and other vulnerable members of society. Strengthening constitutional guarantees of equality and recognising additional social and economic rights would reinforce the fundamental proposition that the Constitution exists to protect every citizen and ensure that no Sierra Leonean is left behind in the nation's democratic development.

Education deserves similar constitutional attention. For generations, education has been one of the principal instruments through which Sierra Leoneans acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to participate meaningfully in national development. Recognising education as a constitutional right would therefore elevate it beyond the status of a mere social service and affirm it as a foundation for democratic participation, economic opportunity and national prosperity. A country that constitutionally guarantees education is not merely investing in its children; it is investing in the future of the Republic itself.

Land governance is another area in which constitutional clarity can have profound national consequences. Land occupies a central place in Sierra Leone's economic, political and cultural life, encompassing customary tenure systems as well as statutory arrangements. Clearer constitutional principles governing land ownership, stronger recognition of customary land rights and transparent rules for land administration and investment can provide greater legal certainty, reduce conflict and promote sustainable economic development while respecting the legitimate interests of local communities.

The proposed entrenchment of decentralisation also merits serious consideration. Local councils have brought government closer to citizens by creating greater opportunities for participation in decision-making and improving service delivery. Giving decentralisation stronger constitutional protection, while clarifying the powers and functions of local councils and strengthening their financial autonomy, can ensure that local government remains a durable feature of democratic governance rather

than a policy dependent solely upon ordinary legislation. Effective local government is not a threat to national unity; properly designed, it can strengthen national unity by giving citizens in every district a meaningful stake in their own development.

Sierra Leone's natural resources likewise demand constitutional responsibility. Our minerals, fisheries and other natural resources constitute a significant national inheritance. Constitutional principles requiring transparency, accountability and equitable benefit-sharing would reinforce the idea that the country's natural wealth must ultimately serve the common good and the interests of present and future generations. Resource governance cannot be left to short-term considerations when the consequences of today's decisions may extend for generations.

A democratic society also depends upon public confidence in the administration of justice. Proposals designed to strengthen the independence, efficiency and effectiveness of judicial and related institutions therefore deserve attention. Citizens must be able to trust that their constitutional rights will be protected, that the rule of law will prevail and that access to justice will not depend upon social status, wealth or political influence. Strong and independent institutions are indispensable to a functioning constitutional democracy.

The same principle applies to independent constitutional institutions. Bodies responsible for accountability, transparency and oversight must possess sufficient independence and institutional capacity to discharge their responsibilities effectively. Modernising appointment procedures, strengthening institutional independence and improving oversight mechanisms can contribute significantly to public confidence in the institutions of the State. Constitutional democracy is ultimately only as strong as the institutions entrusted with its protection.

Electoral and political governance occupy a special place in this constitutional conversation. Electoral systems must command public confidence; political parties must operate within a clear constitutional framework; and democratic institutions must remain capable of responding to changing political realities. The constitutional review also provides an opportunity to build upon recommendations emerging from the Tripartite Committee process and to demonstrate that democratic reform can be pursued through dialogue, consensus-building and national engagement. Constitutional review should be an instrument for deepening national cohesion, not another arena for political division.

It is within this broader constitutional context that the proposal to move from the First-Past-the-Post electoral system towards Proportional Representation deserves particular attention.

There is a compelling Sierra Leonean case for considering proportional representation. The argument is not simply that PR is used in other democracies. The stronger argument is that a properly designed proportional system may better reflect Sierra Leone's diversity and advance the constitutional objectives of peace, democracy, good governance, national unity and political inclusion. The Constitutional Review Commission, following extensive national consultations, recommended that proportional representation be incorporated into the revised Constitution.

Sierra Leone is a diverse nation. Our people differ in regional, cultural, ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds, yet all belong to one Republic. An electoral system should therefore strive to ensure that this diversity is reflected in the institutions of national governance. Under First-Past-the-Post, a constituency normally returns one winner, and the votes cast for unsuccessful candidates do not directly translate into parliamentary representation. A significant portion of the electorate can therefore participate in an election and yet find that its preferred political choice has no representation in Parliament.

This is the central weakness of the winner-takes-all principle. If one party receives 40 percent of the votes in a constituency, another receives 35 percent and a third receives 25 percent, the first party takes the entire seat despite receiving less than half of the votes. Sixty percent of the voters have supported other candidates, yet none of those votes produces a parliamentary seat. Proportional representation begins from a different democratic premise: where a political party has secured significant public support, that support should have a reasonable opportunity to be reflected in the composition of Parliament. The issue, therefore, is not merely mathematical. It is about political inclusion.

This consideration becomes especially important where

political support is geographically dispersed. A political community may constitute a substantial proportion of the national electorate but remain a minority in individual constituencies and consequently fail repeatedly to win seats. In such circumstances, the problem is not necessarily that the community lacks democratic support; it may simply lack the geographical concentration required by FPTP. Proportional representation can reduce this form of political exclusion by allowing significant national support to translate into parliamentary representation even where a party does not come first in individual constituencies.

The principle that every vote should count is therefore central to the debate. Democracy means more than the ability to cast a ballot. It also means that citizens should have a reasonable opportunity for their political preferences to influence representation. The Constitutional Review Commission's nationwide consultation process-covering all 14 administrative districts and involving political parties, Paramount Chiefs, civil society, women, youth, traders, landowners, tribal authorities, fishermen, students and other groups, with approximately 30,000 responses and submissions-demonstrated the breadth of public engagement that accompanied the constitutional review.

A proportional system could also change the incentives facing political parties. Under FPTP, parties may concentrate resources on constituencies where they believe they can win. Under PR, votes obtained across a wider geographical area can contribute to overall parliamentary representation. Parties would therefore have greater incentive to seek support beyond traditional political strongholds and develop genuinely national programmes. Instead of asking how many constituencies they can narrowly capture, political parties would have stronger incentives to ask how many Sierra Leoneans they can persuade.

This could have important implications for national cohesion. If political parties must seek votes across different regions and communities, they have an incentive to broaden their appeal. This is particularly relevant because Sierra Leone's constitutional framework already requires political parties to have a national character and prohibits parties established solely to advance particular tribal, ethnic, religious or geographical interests. A proportional system could reinforce that constitutional principle by rewarding broader national support rather than geographical concentration alone.

There is also a crucial distinction between majority rule and majoritarian exclusion. A democratic society must respect the will of the majority, but it must also ensure that significant minorities are not permanently excluded from legitimate political participation. When citizens believe that no matter how many people support their political position they will never have a meaningful voice in Parliament, confidence in democratic institutions can suffer. Proportional representation provides a constitutional avenue through which significant minority political support can obtain legitimate representation. In this respect, inclusive representation can become an instrument of democratic stability and conflict prevention.

We must, however, approach this argument responsibly. It would be neither accurate nor helpful to suggest that the First-Past-the-Post system caused Sierra Leone's civil war. The historical causes of that conflict are far more complex. But Sierra Leone's post-conflict constitutional development has rightly placed emphasis on inclusion, participation, accountability, decentralisation and peace. An electoral system that provides politically significant groups with greater opportunities for representation can contribute to these objectives by providing institutional channels through which political dissatisfaction can be expressed within the democratic system rather than outside it.

Perhaps the most powerful argument for PR is its capacity to make Parliament more closely reflect the national vote. The Constitutional Review Commission stated that proportional representation should enable the legislature and local councils to reflect, with "more or less mathematical exactness," the divisions of opinion within the country. If half of the electorate supports one party, three-tenths another, and smaller proportions support other parties, a proportional legislature should broadly reflect that distribution, subject to the electoral formula and any threshold established by law. Under FPTP, the distribution of seats can differ considerably from the distribution of votes. PR seeks to reduce that democratic distortion.

Proportional representation may also provide greater opportunities to improve the representation of women and other groups that have historically been underrepresented in public institutions. The CRC recommended that not less than 30 percent of Members of Parliament should be

Contd. page 10

Governance & Development

In a defining moment of his presidency and as outgoing ECOWAS Chairman, His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio stood on West African soil not just as host of the 69th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, but as a builder. On 18th July 2026, the President commissioned two massive state-of-the-art infrastructural projects that many diplomats and development experts have described as the most significant legacies of his ECOWAS chairmanship: the Julius Maada Bio International Conference Centre and the ECOWAS Logistics Depot. As you are aware, the very next day, President Bio presided over the 69th Ordinary Session inside that same conference centre - the first time in the 50-year history of ECOWAS that the summit was convened in Sierra Leone. But these were not stand-alone projects. They are the final pieces of a masterplan that began with another of the numerous

For decades, Lungi was known only as "the airport side" - a place people travelling into the country pass through. Under His Excellency President Bio, it has now become far more than that.

goodies that we have seen under the Bio presidency, including the new Lungi International Airport Terminal constructed by Turkish firm, Summa. **The Vision: From Transit Point To Modern Gateway City** For decades, Lungi was known only as "the airport side" - a place people travelling into the country pass through. Under His Excellency President Bio, it has now become far more than that. The transformation began with the new Lungi International Airport Terminal, delivered by Turkish construction giant Summa and commissioned under the Bio administration. The modern terminal replaced an outdated facility with expanded check-in halls, new immigration and customs zones, upgraded baggage systems, and VVIP lounges fit for international summits.

Lungi Is Rising: President Bio's Twin Legacy Projects Put Sierra Leone At Heart Of Ecowas

It was that same infrastructure that welcomed eleven Heads of State gathered to address regional security, confirm a 2027 launch target for the Eco single currency, and appoint a new ECOWAS leadership. It was the first signal that Lungi would no longer be an afterthought. It would be far more than a gateway. Building on that foundation, President Bio then delivered the Conference Centre and Logistics Depot beside the airport. The result is what planners now call the "Lungi Triangle" - Aviation, Diplomacy, and Security - all within one corridor. **This is transformational leadership in practice:** using infrastructure to move growth out of congested Freetown and anchor a new modern city in the North-West region of the country. **From Host To Hub: Why It Matters To West Africa** **Seamless Connectivity:** With the Turkish-built terminal handling international arrivals, delegates for

and the warehouse we will all use again." **Why It Matters To Sierra Leone** **For President Bio, the Lungi corridor embodies three pillars of his administration:** **Infrastructure- Led Growth:** The Turkish terminal created jobs and skills transfer during construction. The Centre and Depot will create permanent jobs in hospitality, aviation, and logistics. **Decentralization:** By investing billions in Lungi, the government is unlocking the socio-economic potentials of Port Loko District and easing the enormous social problems confronting the capital Freetown. **Global Image:** From a post-conflict nation to a country that can build, with Turkish partners, an airport terminal and one that can host 15 presidents the next day. That is a new Sierra Leone. "These are the goodies that will outlive us," a senior official said. "The Turkish terminal brings the world to us. The Centre brings African leaders together. The depot helps keep our region safe. That is visionary leadership." **The Legacy Question** As President Bio handed over the ECOWAS Chairmanship on July 19, 2026, he left behind a corridor that future governments will inherit and expand. The Turkish-built Airport Terminal, the Conference Centre, and the Logistics Depot are not expenses. They are assets - revenue generators, security multipliers, and diplomatic tools. **Looking Ahead** With the Summa terminal operating daily flights, the Conference Centre hosting summits, and the Logistics Depot being stocked, Lungi's transformation is irreversible. In five years, Lungi is no longer synonymous with ferry-crossing. It will be remembered as the place where President Bio's visionary leadership built a modern gateway city - and where West Africa came to meet, plan, and respond. That is why across Sierra Leone and the region, these projects are being described as the signature "goodies" of the Bio regime: foundations for the next generation. **Author:** Alhaji Abubakarr Bah is the Information Attaché at the Embassy of the Republic of Sierra Leone. He has written extensively on President Julius Maada Bio's legacies, which he has dubbed "The Goodies of the Bio Presidency."

ECOWAS and other summits now land, clear, and convene within minutes. No more long ferry crossings for dignitaries. **Faster Crisis Response:** The ECOWAS Logistics Depot will pre-position equipment for peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. With the airport next door, Sierra Leone becomes ECOWAS' fastest deployment point in the Mano River region. **Diplomatic & Economic Weight:** West Africa has few venues that combine an international airport, conference facility, and logistics base. Lungi now has all three. ECOWAS has already scheduled WAIS 2026 - the West Africa Investment Summit - for November at the same venue. **As one regional diplomat put it:** "Sierra Leone didn't just host a meeting. President Bio built the airport, the hall,

President Bio At Work

President Bio Reaffirms Commitment To Private Sector Growth

His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio today received the Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer of Oakwood Green Africa Limited and Representative of the Majority Shareholders of Bloom Bank Africa, Mr. Gabriel Edgal, and his delegation at State House, where both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening public-private partnerships, promoting entrepreneurship, and expanding support for women- and youth-led enterprises. Introducing the delegation, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Sheku Ahmed Fantamadi Bangura, thanked President Bio for receiving the team, noting that the visit was intended to express appreciation for the Government's continued efforts to create an enabling business environment and to reaffirm Bloom Bank's long-term commitment to Sierra Leone. Speaking on behalf of the Bank, Mr. Gabriel Edgal congratulated President Bio on his leadership as Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government and his role on the United Nations Security Council, describing Sierra Leone's growing international profile as a reflection of the President's stewardship. He noted that Bloom Bank Africa, which operates in four African countries, aligns its investments with the Government's Big Five Game Changers agenda and remains committed to supporting small and medium-sized enterprises through capacity development, access to finance, and investment facilitation.

Mr. Edgal further announced plans to partner with the Government and international institutions to implement a national SME capacity-building programme aimed at strengthening entrepreneurship, improving business competitiveness, and creating greater opportunities for women- and youth-owned businesses. Welcoming the delegation, President Bio thanked Bloom Bank Africa for its confidence in Sierra Leone and reaffirmed his Government's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment that encourages investment and private sector growth. "We are very eager to engage and support the private sector through effective collaboration," President Bio said, stressing that sustainable economic transformation depends on strong partnerships between Government and private enterprise. The President underscored the importance of expanding economic opportunities for women and young people and commended the Bank's focus on financial literacy and SME development. He also encouraged Bloom Bank and other financial institutions to increase investment in agriculture, emphasizing that the successful implementation of the Feed Salone initiative requires stronger private sector participation. President Bio observed that his administration is pursuing reforms to strengthen the banking sector and improve access to finance, particularly for start-ups and emerging entrepreneurs. He reaffirmed his



Government's commitment to building a structured financial system capable of driving inclusive economic growth and unlocking the productive potential of Sierra Leone's youthful population. The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their

commitment to deepening collaboration in support of entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, private sector development, and sustainable economic growth, with a particular focus on empowering women and youth-led businesses across Sierra Leone.

Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion Presents 2025 Annual Report and 2026-2030 Strategic Plan To President Bio

The Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion (ICPNC) presented its 2025 Annual Report and 2026-2030 Strategic Plan to His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening peace, dialogue and national cohesion across Sierra Leone. Presenting the reports, Executive Secretary of the Commission, Madam Hawa Samai, expressed appreciation to President Bio for his vision in establishing the Commission and for the continued support that has enabled it to fulfil its mandate. She described the Commission's work over the past five years as both challenging and rewarding, noting that it had consistently relied on dialogue and mediation to resolve conflicts and build trust among Sierra Leoneans. Madam Samai commended President Bio for recognizing that peace is the foundation of national development, adding that his commitment to dialogue, reconciliation and prevention had empowered the Commission to engage effectively in difficult situations across the country. She noted that one of the Commission's most significant achievements had been helping to build public confidence through dialogue, including its contribution to the National Unity Agreement. She also highlighted Sierra Leone's re-eligibility for another five years of support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund as international recognition of the country's commitment to peaceful conflict resolution. While cautioning that peace should never be taken for granted, Madam Samai stressed that it must be continually nurtured and protected through collective effort. She described the Annual Report and Strategic Plan as a reflection of what Sierra Leone can achieve when citizens choose unity, dialogue and service over division and confrontation. Presenting the documents, P.C. Sheku Tejan Fasuluku III, ICPNC Board Member, praised President Bio for establishing the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion, describing the institution as a lasting investment in Sierra Leone's peace and stability. Receiving the report and strategic plan, President Julius Maada Bio commended the Executive Secretary, the Board and staff of the Commission for fulfilling their statutory responsibility and for their continued efforts to promote peace and national cohesion. "The work you are doing is critical for national development because peace and national cohesion are indispensable to the country's progress," President Bio said. The President recalled that the establishment

of the Commission fulfilled a key recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report, describing its creation as one of his administration's important contributions to consolidating peace and strengthening

democratic governance. He reaffirmed that peace remains the bedrock of national stability and sustainable development, urging the Commission to continue fostering dialogue and reconciliation across the country. The presentation concluded with

President Bio formally receiving the 2025 Annual Report and the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, while reaffirming his Government's continued support for the Commission's efforts to safeguard peace, strengthen national cohesion and promote inclusive development across Sierra Leone.

President Bio Receives 2025 Electoral Commission Annual Report

His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio has received the 2025 Annual Report of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone (ECSL) from the Chief Electoral Commissioner and Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Edmond Alpha, during a presentation ceremony at State House. Presenting the report, Mr. Alpha said it was both an honour and a profound responsibility to formally present the Commission's 2025 Annual Report to the President on behalf of the ECSL. He noted that the report was prepared in fulfilment of the Commission's constitutional obligation under Section 32(12) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991), which requires the Chief Electoral Commissioner to submit an annual report on the programmes and work of the Commission to the President, with a copy subsequently laid before Parliament. Mr. Alpha described the occasion as more than the fulfilment of a statutory obligation, saying it was a demonstration of the Commission's commitment to transparency, accountability, and good governance. He explained that the report reflects the ECSL's determination to remain accountable to the people of Sierra Leone through the country's constitutional institutions while providing a comprehensive account of how it has discharged its constitutional mandate. He emphasised that credible elections remain fundamental to democratic governance, national stability, and sustainable development. Consequently, he said, every activity undertaken by the Commission is guided by its constitutional responsibility to ensure that elections are conducted professionally, impartially, transparently, and in strict accordance with the laws of Sierra Leone. The Chairman explained that the report provides a comprehensive overview of the Commission's activities, achievements, challenges, and financial stewardship during the reporting period. He highlighted significant institutional progress, including investments in staff capacity development, the construction of regional offices, enhanced staff training and election observation programmes, improvements in internal governance systems, the promotion of evidence-based decision-making, and strengthened accountability mechanisms. Mr. Alpha further reported that during the period under review, the Commission successfully conducted thirteen Paramount Chieftaincy elections across six districts in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs. He also noted the successful leadership transition following the completion of the tenure of



former Chief Electoral Commissioner and Chairman, Mr. Mohamed Kenewui Konneh, on 27th July 2025. Among the Commission's notable achievements, he highlighted the ECSL's receipt of the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS) Award for Electoral Conflict Management, recognising its efforts during and after the 2023 general elections. While acknowledging that the Commission had faced challenges over the years, he said the lessons learned would continue to strengthen electoral processes and enhance public confidence in future elections. Concluding his remarks, Mr. Alpha expressed profound appreciation to the Government of Sierra Leone for its continued financial support, which he said had enabled the Commission to effectively fulfil its constitutional responsibilities. He reaffirmed the ECSL's commitment to continuous institutional improvement, strengthening its independence, enhancing transparency and accountability, promoting innovation in electoral management, deepening stakeholder engagement, and upholding the principles of impartiality, inclusiveness, professionalism, integrity, and service to the people of Sierra Leone. He also thanked President Bio for his steadfast support for democratic governance and for graciously receiving the report. Receiving the report, President Bio welcomed the ECSL delegation and commended the Commission for the professionalism, integrity,

impartiality, and resilience it has consistently demonstrated before, during, and after elections in Sierra Leone. The President acknowledged the complexity of electoral management, describing it as "an extremely difficult job," and recognised the pressures that accompany the conduct of credible elections. He encouraged the Commission to remain steadfast in upholding the highest standards of professionalism, fairness, confidence, impartiality, and integrity, noting that the manner in which it conducts future electoral processes will further strengthen public trust and confidence in the institution. President Bio expressed satisfaction with the Commission's achievements despite the many challenges it has faced and urged its leadership to begin preparations for future elections well in advance. He underscored the importance of early planning, continuous staff capacity building, efficient electoral administration, and the timely announcement of election results. The President further assured the Commission of his continued personal and institutional support as it carries out its constitutional mandate, reaffirming his Government's commitment to strengthening democratic institutions and promoting credible, peaceful, and transparent elections. President Bio formally accepted the 2025 Annual Report and thanked the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone for its continued service in safeguarding the country's democratic governance.

Strong Government Institutions Are Run On Strong Internal Audits

By Musa Abdullah Kargbo, Head of Finance, MOICE

The effectiveness of any government institution is measured not only by the policies it formulates but also by its ability to implement those policies efficiently, transparently, and accountably. Behind every well-functioning public institution lies a system of checks and balances designed to safeguard public resources, improve operational performance, and strengthen governance. At the heart of this system is the internal audit function. Often misunderstood as merely a compliance or fault-finding mechanism, internal audit plays a much broader and more strategic role in modern public administration. Strong government institutions are built on strong internal audits because effective auditing provides the assurance, oversight, and guidance necessary for sound decision-making and responsible stewardship of public resources.

The Foundation of Accountability

Government institutions are entrusted with managing public funds on behalf of citizens. Whether it is a ministry, department, agency, local council, or state-owned enterprise, every public institution has a duty to ensure that resources are utilized efficiently and for their intended purposes.

Internal audit serves as an independent and objective assurance function that helps management assess whether internal controls are operating effectively. Through regular reviews and evaluations, auditors identify weaknesses, recommend improvements, and provide assurance that financial and operational activities are being conducted in accordance with established laws, regulations, and policies.

Without a strong internal audit function, institutions become vulnerable to waste, inefficiency, fraud, and financial mismanagement.

Promoting Transparency and Good Governance

Transparency is one of the cornerstones of good governance. Citizens have a legitimate expectation that public resources will be managed responsibly and that government decisions will be subject to appropriate scrutiny. Internal auditors contribute significantly to transparency by ensuring that transactions are properly documented, controls are functioning effectively, and management practices are aligned with established standards.

Their work provides confidence to stakeholders, including policymakers, oversight institutions, development partners, and citizens, that public resources are being managed in a responsible and accountable manner.

In Sierra Leone, where public sector reforms continue to emphasize transparency and accountability, internal audit has become an indispensable component of effective governance.

Strengthening Internal Controls

Every institution faces risks. These risks may arise from weak procedures, inadequate supervision, technological failures, human error, or deliberate misconduct. Internal controls are designed to mitigate such risks and protect institutional assets. However, controls are only effective when they are regularly assessed and strengthened. Internal auditors evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of these controls and recommend corrective actions where deficiencies are identified. Their assessments help ensure that financial transactions are properly authorized, assets are safeguarded, records are accurate, and operations are conducted efficiently.

Strong internal controls lead to stronger institutions.

Supporting Better Decision-Making

Modern internal audit extends far beyond the review of financial records. Today's auditors provide valuable insights that assist management in making informed decisions. Through risk assessments, operational reviews, and performance audits, internal auditors identify emerging challenges and opportunities. They help management understand where resources may be underutilized, where processes can be improved, and where risks may threaten the achievement of organizational objectives. In this way, internal audit serves as a trusted advisor to leadership while maintaining its independence and objectivity.

Institutions that utilize internal audit effectively are often better positioned to achieve their goals and respond to changing circumstances.

Combating Fraud and Mismanagement

Fraud and corruption remain significant challenges in many public sectors around the world. While no system can completely eliminate these risks, strong internal audit functions serve as a powerful deterrent. Internal auditors help identify weaknesses that could create opportunities for fraud. They review financial transactions, procurement activities, payroll systems, asset management practices, and other critical operations to ensure compliance with established controls.

Their presence encourages greater discipline and accountability throughout the institution.

More importantly, auditors promote a culture of integrity by reinforcing ethical standards and emphasizing the importance of responsible stewardship of public resources.

Internal Audit and Public Financial Management

Effective public financial management depends on reliable systems of oversight and control. Internal audit is a critical component of this framework.

It supports compliance with key legislation such as the Public Financial Management Act, the National Public Procurement Act, financial regulations, and other governance frameworks that guide the use of public resources.

By ensuring adherence to these requirements, internal auditors help protect public funds and strengthen confidence in government institutions.

In Sierra Leone's ongoing efforts to improve fiscal discipline and accountability, internal auditors have a vital role to play in supporting reforms and ensuring sustainable progress.

Building Stronger Institutions for National Development

Strong institutions are essential for national development. They provide the foundation for economic growth, effective service delivery, investor confidence, and social stability.

However, institutions do not become strong by chance. They become strong through effective leadership, sound systems, competent personnel, and robust oversight mechanisms.

Internal audit contributes to all these elements. It enhances accountability, strengthens controls, improves performance, and promotes good governance.

When internal audit functions are adequately resourced, professionally staffed, and supported by leadership, they become powerful instruments for institutional transformation.

The Way Forward

To maximize the benefits of internal audit, public institutions in Sierra Leone should continue investing in the professional development of auditors, strengthening audit committees, adopting risk-based auditing approaches, and leveraging technology to improve audit effectiveness.

Equally important is ensuring the independence of internal audit units so that auditors can perform their duties objectively and without undue influence. Government leaders must recognize internal audit not as an obstacle to operations but as a strategic partner in achieving institutional objectives.

Conclusion

Strong government institutions are run on strong internal audits. Effective auditing provides the assurance, accountability, and oversight necessary for sound governance and responsible management of public resources. In an era of increasing demands for transparency, efficiency, and accountability, the role of internal audit has never been more important. Institutions that embrace and strengthen their internal audit functions are better equipped to manage risks, improve performance, combat fraud, and deliver quality services to citizens. For Sierra Leone, strengthening internal audit is not simply a technical reform; it is an investment in better governance, stronger institutions, and sustainable national development. The path to accountable and effective public service begins with robust internal audit systems that promote integrity, transparency, and excellence in public administration.



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources
 5th Floor, Youyi Building
 Brookfields, Freetown.

PRESS RELEASE

Clarification on the Status of JM Mining Kenema (SL) Limited

The Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources and the National Minerals Agency (NMA) clarify that the Government of Sierra Leone did not revoke or withdraw a Large-Scale Mining Licence from JM Mining Kenema (SL) Limited, because no such licence had been issued. Consistent with standard licensing procedures, the company received only a conditional offer of mineral rights, which lapsed after JM Mining failed to meet the statutory requirements for acceptance and payment within the prescribed timeframe.

A conditional offer is not a licence. Under the applicable statutory process, a Large-Scale Mining Licence can be granted only after an applicant formally accepts the offer in writing and pays all prescribed statutory fees within the required period.

On 23 January 2025, following a recommendation by the Minerals Advisory Board, JM Mining received a conditional offer approved by the Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources. Section 108(5) of the Mines and Minerals Development Act requires an applicant to accept such an offer in writing and settle the prescribed statutory fees before a licence may be granted.

Key Facts: Due Process and Repeated Opportunities to Comply

¢ Initial support and institutional guidance: The Government actively supported JM Mining's proposed project before the offer lapsed. The Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources, the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), and the National Minerals Agency provided guidance to help the company meet the requirements for an environmental licence and the offer of a mineral right.

¢ Extended payment window: At JM Mining's request, the NMA delayed issuing the statutory payment demand after the initial offer to allow the company additional time to secure financing. Official Orders to Pay were issued on 24 July 2025, requiring payment within 30 days of \$1,000,000 in licence fees and \$100,000 in monitoring fees.

¢ Repeated defaults: JM Mining then missed several payment deadlines and repeatedly acknowledged non-payment:

" The initial payment deadline expired on 23 August 2025, without payment.

" Following a demand from the National Revenue

Authority (NRA) on 28 October 2025, JM Mining requested an extension to 31 December 2025. This self-requested deadline passed without payment.

" On 29 January 2026, the company requested a new Order to Pay, acknowledging that it had not honoured the previous orders.

" On 30 January 2026, after 372 days from approval of the conditional offer and 190 days from issuance of the payment orders-far beyond the statutory 30-day requirement-the Minister formally confirmed that the conditional offer had lapsed and was rescinded.

Written Admissions of Default

The Ministry and NMA confirm that JM Mining acknowledged its default in writing on three separate occasions:

1. On 31 October 2025, JM Mining wrote to the NRA Commissioner-General acknowledging overdue licence and monitoring fees.

2. On 15 January 2026, JM Mining wrote to the Director of Mines acknowledging fee defaults dating back to 24 August 2025.

3. On 29 January 2026, JM Mining wrote to the Director of Mines requesting a new Order to Pay because the previous payment obligations had not been met.

Government Commitment to Fair and Consistent Standards
 The Ministry and NMA affirm that the decision was neither arbitrary nor hostile to foreign investment. It was reviewed by the Minerals Advisory Board and carried out in accordance with statutory procedures, with each step documented in official records.

Waiving \$1.1 million in statutory fees for one entity would undermine regulatory integrity, weaken equal treatment under the law, and disadvantage operators that comply with Sierra Leone's mining requirements.

Sierra Leone's mineral resources belong to the people of Sierra Leone and will be entrusted only to those who meet their obligations under the law.

Media & Official Inquiries:
Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources:
 +232 72 003535

National Minerals Agency (NMA): +232 79 250702
 New England Ville
 Freetown

SPORTLIGHT ON HEALTH CARE

Breastfeeding: A Lifeline for Mothers and Babies as Sierra Leone Marks World Breastfeeding Week

As Sierra Leone joined the rest of the world to observe World Breastfeeding Week, the Ministry of Health is encouraging mothers, families, communities and employers to create an environment where every woman who chooses to breastfeed receives the support she needs.

World Breastfeeding Week is observed annually from August 1 to 7. The 2026 global theme, "Breastfeeding for a Sustainable Start in Life: Strengthen What Works," calls for greater attention to proven approaches that help mothers initiate and continue breastfeeding successfully.

For many mothers, breastfeeding is more than simply feeding a baby. It is a moment of bonding, comfort and protection, an experience that begins from the first hours of a child's life and can have lasting benefits for both mother and child.

Abibatu Bangura, a suckling mother residing at the Central part of Freetown, maintained that, breastfeeding has become an important part of caring for her child.

"I feel very close to my baby whenever I breastfeed," she explained. "At the beginning, it was not always easy. I had to learn how to position the baby properly and make sure the baby was feeding well. But with the support I received from health workers and family members, I became more confident.

She maintained that breastfeeding has also given her reassurance that she is providing her baby with the nourishment needed for healthy growth.

"I encourage other mothers not to be discouraged. If you experience difficulties, talk to a health worker. Sometimes you need someone to show you the right way to breastfeed," she said.

Why breastfeeding matters

Health practitioners say breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways of giving infants a healthy start in life.

Millicent Gbenjen Allie, Chief Nutritionist, Directorate of Food and Nutrition at the Sierra Leone's Ministry of Health, explained that breast milk provides babies with essential nutrients and immune protection, while breastfeeding also contributes to the emotional bond between mother and child. "Breastfeeding is important because breast milk is specifically suited to the needs of the baby. It provides nutrition and contains protective factors that help the child fight infections," the practitioner explained.

According to her, mothers are encouraged to initiate breastfeeding as

For the nursing mother interviewed, however, one of the greatest benefits is the relationship she is building with her child.

"When I breastfeed my baby, I feel that we are communicating without words," she said. "It gives me happiness and makes me feel that I am doing something very important for my child."

Sierra Leone has recorded significant progress in breastfeeding practices in recent years. According to the World Health Organization, the country's exclusive breastfeeding rate reached 52.7 percent according to the 2021 Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey, surpassing the WHO global target of 50 percent for 2025.

The country also recorded a major improvement in early initiation of breastfeeding, with the proportion of mothers initiating breastfeeding within one hour of birth increasing from 57 percent in 2017 to 89 percent in 2021. (WHO | Regional Office for Africa)

Despite this progress, the Ministry of Health and Partners continue to emphasize the importance of sustaining and expanding breastfeeding support.

Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) have called for stronger health systems and support structures for breastfeeding mothers, noting that many women still do not receive timely and skilled assistance when they need it most.

For breastfeeding to succeed, practitioners say mothers need more than information. They need practical and emotional support at health facilities, at home, in communities and in workplaces.

The Chief Nutritionist at the Directorate of Food and Nutrition, Ministry of Health said mothers should feel comfortable seeking assistance whenever they experience challenges such as difficulty with positioning and attachment, concerns about milk supply, breast pain or uncertainty about feeding practices.

"Breastfeeding is natural, but that does not mean it is always easy. Mothers should never feel ashamed to ask for help," she said.

The call during the World Breastfeeding Week was therefore not simply for mothers to breastfeed, but for society to support mothers to breastfeed. As the nursing mother puts it, "When you support a mother, you are also supporting the baby."

For Sierra Leone, strengthening breastfeeding support is an investment in the health and wellbeing of the next generation ensuring that more children receive a healthy start while mothers are empowered and supported throughout their breastfeeding journey.

soon as possible after delivery, ideally within the first hour of birth, and to exclusively breastfeed their babies for the first six months.

"Exclusive breastfeeding means that the baby receives only breast milk during the first six months, unless there is a medical reason requiring otherwise. After six months, appropriate complementary foods should be introduced while breastfeeding continues," Chief Nutritionist Allie said.

She stressed that breastfeeding should not be viewed as the responsibility of the mother alone. "Family members have a very important role. A breastfeeding mother needs adequate food, rest, encouragement and emotional support. Fathers, grandparents and other family members should help create an environment that makes breastfeeding easier," she added.

Benefits extend to mothers

While much of the discussion around breastfeeding focuses on babies, health professionals emphasize that mothers also benefit.

Breastfeeding can support the mother-child bond and has important maternal health benefits.

It also contributes to postpartum recovery and is associated with reduced risks of certain cancers, including breast and ovarian cancer.



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
DIRECTORATE OF FOOD AND NUTRITION

BREASTFEEDING THE BEST START FOR A HEALTHY LIFE

Breast milk is the perfect food for babies. It protects, nourishes and helps them grow strong.



BREAST MILK IS FREE, SAFE AND ALWAYS AVAILABLE



WhatsApp



TEL:+232 030366666



Add:Heneson Street, New England Ville, Freetown



Sierra Leone Full-Category Printing & Business Scope

- Posters, books, calendars, bills printing
- Leaflets, flyers, billboards production
- Acrylic signs & nameplates processing
- Work permits, passports & various certificates production
- T-shirts, hats printing & customization
- IC cards, access cards, smart cards
- Trophies, medals, souvenir gifts customization
- Notebooks, booklets, office stationery customization
- Copy paper & office paper supply
- Corrugated boxes, food packaging & all kinds of white card packaging products
- One-stop service for advertising materials & printed products



WhatsApp



TEL:+232 030366666



Add:Heneson Street, New England Ville, Freetown

Policy & The People

More Than Soldiers:
Understanding Sierra Leone's National Defence Policy and Strategy

By Alice A. Kamara Esq.

When most people think about national defence, they picture soldiers in uniform, military parades and the protection of the country's borders.

While these remain important responsibilities, modern national defence has evolved far beyond the battlefield.

Today's security challenges are more complex. They include cyber threats, terrorism, organised crime, natural disasters, maritime security, pandemics and the protection of critical national infrastructure. Responding to these challenges requires more than military strength. It requires clear policy, long-term planning and strong institutions.

It is against this backdrop that Sierra Leone launched its first home-grown National Defence Policy and Strategy in 2026. The Policy provides a framework for strengthening national security while aligning defence with the country's broader development priorities.

At its heart, the Policy recognises that national security is about protecting both the state and its people. A secure nation creates the conditions for economic growth, investment, education, healthcare and social development. Without peace and stability, progress in every other sector becomes more difficult.

The Policy further acknowledges that security is a shared responsibility. While the Armed Forces play a central role, lasting national security also depends on collaboration with other security institutions, government agencies, local communities and citizens.

The Policy also reflects the changing role of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). Beyond safeguarding the nation's sovereignty, the Armed Forces increasingly contribute to disaster response, engineering works, peace support operations and other activities that support national development. This broader approach recognises that security and development are closely linked.

Another important feature of the Policy is its emphasis on professionalism, preparedness and institutional development. Modern defence institutions require well-trained personnel, appropriate equipment, effective leadership and the ability to respond to emerging threats while upholding the rule of law and democratic values.

The Policy further acknowledges that security is a shared responsibility. While the Armed Forces play a central role, lasting national security also depends on collaboration with other security institutions, government agencies, local communities and citizens. Public vigilance, cooperation and respect for the law all contribute to a safer and more resilient nation. Importantly, the Policy aligns national defence with Sierra Leone's long-term development aspirations. Security is not viewed as an isolated sector but as an enabler of national progress. Stable societies are better positioned to attract investment, expand infrastructure, create jobs and improve the wellbeing of their citizens.

As Sierra Leone continues to strengthen its institutions and respond to new global and regional challenges, the National Defence Policy and Strategy provides a roadmap for building a modern, professional and responsive defence sector.

Ultimately, this Policy is about more than protecting borders. It is about protecting the conditions that allow a nation to thrive-peace, stability, public confidence and sustainable development.

Because national defence is not only measured by the strength of a country's armed forces. It is also measured by the security, resilience and confidence of the people they serve.

Why Constitutional Reform And Proportional Representation Deserve Serious National Consideration

women, with details to be prescribed by legislation. A properly designed proportional system can assist such objectives by enabling political parties to construct candidate lists that reflect the diversity of the population. PR does not automatically guarantee inclusion, but it can provide greater institutional flexibility for achieving it than a purely constituency-based system.

The case for electoral reform must therefore be understood as part of the wider constitutional project. The proposals before the nation address women, persons with disabilities, children, vulnerable groups, decentralisation, regional participation, independent institutions, political parties, electoral administration, local governance and democratic participation. The electoral system should reinforce these objectives. Proportional representation, properly designed, can form part of a broader constitutional architecture aimed at making national institutions more inclusive and representative.

But proportional representation must be designed for Sierra Leone. We should neither assume that every feature of PR used elsewhere will automatically suit our circumstances nor present the reform as a cure for every weakness in our political system. Important questions must be answered. What should constitute the electoral unit? Should representation be national, regional or based on multi-member constituencies? What threshold should apply? Should party lists be open or closed? How should women and persons with disabilities be represented? How should regional interests be accommodated? What role should independent candidates play? And how can citizens maintain an effective relationship with individual Members of Parliament? These are questions that require careful national debate.

This is precisely why the constitutional review should be approached with seriousness rather than slogans. Those who support reform must be willing to explain how it will work. Those who oppose it must equally explain why the existing arrangements remain preferable and how the shortcomings identified by the review process should otherwise be addressed. The national interest is not served by reducing constitutional debate to partisan accusation.

The same spirit should guide the wider constitutional review. Environmental protection, youth participation, technology, digital governance, entrepreneurship, fiscal responsibility and social protection are not peripheral concerns. They reflect the realities of a twenty-first-century Sierra Leone. A Constitution that is expected to guide the Republic for generations must be capable of addressing both the rights and aspirations of today's citizens and the challenges that future generations will inherit.

The Daily Mail therefore believes that the constitutional review should be judged not by the fact that it proposes change, but by the quality and consequences of the changes proposed. Reform should strengthen democratic governance, improve accountability, modernise public institutions, clarify constitutional relationships, protect citizens' rights and better equip the State to confront contemporary challenges.

Every generation inherits constitutional responsibilities. The generation that drafted the 1991 Constitution acted in response to the circumstances of its time. Those who subsequently amended the Constitution also responded to the demands of their respective periods. Our generation carries the same responsibility. Supporting constitutional review does not mean disrespecting the 1991 Constitution. On the contrary, it means recognising the wisdom of its framers, who deliberately provided lawful mechanisms through which the constitutional order could evolve.

The question before Sierra Leone, therefore, is not whether the Constitution should ever change. History has already answered that question. It has changed before and will inevitably continue to evolve as the nation evolves. The real question is whether we have the vision, maturity and patriotism to ensure that our supreme law serves not only the Sierra Leone of 1991, but the Sierra Leone of today and the Sierra Leone we aspire to build tomorrow.

For Daily Mail, the answer must begin with an appeal for informed national engagement. Constitutional reform should unite rather than divide us. It should encourage informed debate rather than misinformation, evidence rather than political rhetoric, and national interest rather than partisan advantage. Every Sierra Leonean-regardless of political affiliation, region, ethnicity or social background-has a legitimate stake in the future constitutional order of the Republic.

The argument for Proportional Representation should consequently be considered on its merits. First-Past-the-Post asks a simple question: who came first in a constituency? Proportional Representation asks a broader one: what does the electorate as a whole look like, and how should Parliament reflect it? For Sierra Leone, a nation whose constitutional review recognises diversity and whose democratic development places a premium on peace, inclusion, good governance and national cohesion, the second question deserves serious consideration.

No Sierra Leonean should be politically invisible merely because the candidate or party they supported came second. A democracy is strengthened when citizens know that their political voice has a legitimate place within the institutions of the State. If a properly designed proportional system can bring Parliament closer to the actual distribution of political opinion, broaden representation, encourage parties to seek national rather than narrow support, strengthen minority participation and advance the constitutional promise of inclusion, then it deserves to be debated on that basis.

Constitutional reform is ultimately an exercise in nation-building. It is not about rejecting the past; it is about learning from it. It is not about weakening the Republic; it is about strengthening the institutions through which the Republic is governed. Sierra Leone has repeatedly demonstrated its capacity to adapt its constitutional framework when national circumstances demand it. The present review is another chapter in that continuing journey. If pursued through the lawful constitutional processes, subjected to rigorous public scrutiny and informed by genuine national dialogue, the proposed reforms can become another milestone in Sierra Leone's constitutional development-from our traditional institutions and colonial experience, through independence and republican government, to a modern democratic Republic prepared to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The task before us is therefore neither to preserve the Constitution unchanged nor to alter it for political convenience. Our task is more profound: to ensure that Sierra Leone's supreme law remains capable of protecting its people, representing its diversity, strengthening its institutions and securing a democratic future for generations yet unborn. In strengthening the Constitution where necessary, we strengthen the Republic itself.

Foreign Mission
In Focus

Kuwait Fund Reaffirms Support
for the Construction of Sierra
Leone's Cancer Centre

Acting Director-General of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), Mr. Rashaid A. Al-Bader, has reaffirmed the Fund's commitment to supporting the proposed construction of a Cancer Centre (Diagnostic, Radiotherapy and Nuclear Medicine/Imaging) to improve specialised healthcare delivery in Sierra Leone. He made this disclosure during a meeting held with Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas, at the Fund's headquarters in Kuwait City. According to Mr. Al-Bader, the mutually beneficial relationship between Sierra Leone and the Kuwait Fund could be traced as far back as the 1990s, when the Fund supported the construction of the Waterloo-Tokeh Road project, adding that the Fund has continued to support the country's development initiatives in various sectors ever since. "Kuwait Fund is thrilled to partner with the Government of Sierra Leone to construct a Cancer Centre, as one of its development priorities for the country's health sector. A team from the Fund will embark on the appraisal Mission to Freetown when the government has conveyed the approval," he stated. Her Excellency Haja Ishata Thomas congratulated Mr. Al-Bader on his appointment as Acting Director-General of the Fund, commending their effort to engage Sierra Leone's Minister of Finance, Hon. Sheku Fantamdi Bangura, in respect of the construction of the long-awaited Cancer Centre in Freetown,

on the sidelines of the Islamic Development Bank's Meetings to strengthen regional housing and infrastructure financing in Baku, Azerbaijan in June this year. "The construction of a Cancer Centre will go a long way in providing essential healthcare support and reducing the death rate not only for Sierra Leoneans, but also members within the ECOWAS region, drastically eliminating

financial and emotional difficulties of patients travelling overseas for daily care. While we await the approval for the Appraisal Mission, the Mission kindly urges Kuwait Fund to continue its critical development assistance in other sectors," Ambassador Thomas concluded. Kuwait Fund has supported several development projects in Sierra Leone. These initiatives included the Freetown Wash and Aquatic Environment Revamping Project, aiming at

providing sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation to the residents of Freetown and the Western Area; the three tertiary hospitals in Freetown, the construction of Kaningo, Juba Water RAW Storage Reservoir; the Lumley-Tokeh Road, Hillside Bypass Road in Sierra Leone, and the Kenema-Pendembu Road, among others. Cyril Barnes, Information Attaché, Sierra Leone Embassy, State of Kuwait



Sierra Leone High Commission Joins Sierra Leoneans
at Annual Southend Beach Family Fun Day



Officials of the Sierra Leone High Commission in the United Kingdom yesterday joined thousands of Sierra Leoneans from across the UK, as well as Europe and the United States, at the much-anticipated annual Sierra Leone Family Fun Day, held at Southend-on-Sea, a

picturesque seaside resort in Essex. The vibrant, colourful event, which has become one of the largest yearly gatherings of the Sierra Leonean diaspora in the United Kingdom, brought together families, friends, and community leaders for a day of celebration, cultural exhibition, and a strong sense of togetherness on the

Southend seafront. For many years, the Sierra Leone Family Fun Day has been a cherished tradition, attracting members of the Sierra Leonean community from across the United Kingdom and abroad to reconnect, rekindle friendships, strengthen relationships, and celebrate our shared national heritage. This year's event once again showcased the resilience, unity, and solidarity of Sierra Leoneans in the diaspora, reflecting the spirit of togetherness at home. The presence of officials from the Sierra Leone High Commission underscored the mission's commitment to engaging with the diaspora and supporting initiatives that promote national unity and community cohesion. Their participation was warmly welcomed by attendees, who commended the High Commission for standing alongside Sierra Leoneans during one of the UK Sierra Leonean community's most significant annual social gatherings. The atmosphere at Southend Beach was alive with the buzz of lively conversation, the rhythm of upbeat music, the aroma of traditional Salone cuisine, and a wide range of

activities, from swimming to roller coaster rides. Together, these experiences created unforgettable memories for families and visitors of all ages. The gathering provided a valuable opportunity for networking, fostering new connections, strengthening existing relationships, and celebrating Sierra Leone's rich culture, heritage, and diversity. Organisers expressed gratitude to everyone who travelled from across the UK, Europe, the United States, and Sierra Leone to make the event another outstanding success. They reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring that the annual Family Fun Day continues to serve as a symbol of unity, friendship, and national pride for generations to come. As the sun set over Southend Beach and the festivities continued into the lingering summer evening light, the day's celebrations reflected the enduring spirit of Sierra Leoneans; a people united by love, strengthened by faith and togetherness, and committed to preserving the unbreakable bonds that unite us wherever we may live. Abdulai Braima, Information Attaché, SLHC-London <https://www.slhc-uk.org/>

World Bank Consults Ministry of Mines on Sierra Leone's New Country Partnership Framework

The World Bank past Tuesday held consultations with Sierra Leone's Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources as part of preparations for its new Country Partnership Framework, a strategic document that will guide the Bank's support to the country over the coming years.

The meeting, held at the Ministry's Conference Room in Freetown, brought together officials from the World Bank, the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources, and the National Mineral Agency to discuss priority areas for collaboration in strengthening the mining sector and supporting sustainable economic growth. World Bank Country Manager Abdu Muwonge said the Country Partnership Framework is being developed through extensive consultations with government institutions and other stakeholders to ensure it reflects Sierra Leone's national development priorities.

He explained that the new framework is anchored on three key pillars: improving foundational infrastructure, strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks, and promoting private sector investment. He added that cross-cutting priorities, including youth employment, gender equality, social inclusion, skills development,

and human capital, will remain central to the Bank's support programme.

The Minister of Mines and Mineral Resources, Hon. Julius D. Mattai welcomed the World Bank's continued engagement and outlined the Ministry's reform agenda aimed at transforming Sierra Leone's mining sector into a stronger driver of inclusive economic growth. He highlighted ongoing efforts by the Ministry and the National Mineral Agency to improve governance, strengthen regulation, and attract responsible investment.

Minister Mattai also underscored the need to increase the participation of Sierra Leonean investors in the mining industry alongside foreign investment, noting that broader local participation is essential to maximizing the sector's contribution to national development.

Energy remains one of the sector's most pressing challenges, Hon. Mattai said, stressing that reliable and affordable electricity is critical to achieving the Government's ambition of promoting mineral beneficiation, value addition, and downstream processing of Sierra Leone's critical minerals. Responding to the concerns, Mr. Muwonge pointed to the potential of renewable energy, particularly solar power, as a viable



solution to support mining operations while advancing the country's sustainable development objectives. The discussions concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to continued collaboration as the World

Bank finalises its Country Partnership Framework, with the shared goal of unlocking greater economic opportunities and ensuring the sustainable development of Sierra Leone's mining sector.

MTHE, NSTIC Hold Strategic Development, Research Funding and Grants Management Workshop



The Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE), in collaboration with the National Science, Technology and Innovation Council (NSTIC), has commenced a three-day Strategic Development, Research Funding and Grants Management Workshop the Ministry's headquarters, New England Ville.

The workshop brought together officials from the Ministry, NSTIC, the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), and experts from the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) to strengthen research governance, strategic planning, and grants management in Sierra Leone.

Officially opening the workshop, Deputy Minister of Technical and Higher Education, Sarjoh Aziz-Kamara, reaffirmed the Government of Sierra Leone's commitment to advancing science, technology, and innovation (STI) as key drivers of sustainable national development. He described the workshop as an important milestone in strengthening NSTIC's institutional capacity and implementing the National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy.

The Deputy Minister stressed that effective strategic planning, sustainable research financing, and sound grants management are essential to enabling research that supports national priorities, including

food security, healthcare, climate resilience, digital transformation, industrialisation, and quality education.

He called for stronger collaboration among universities, research institutions, government ministries, development partners, the private sector, and civil society in developing NSTIC's strategic plan. He also encouraged the adoption of international best practices in governance, competitive grant management, financial accountability, and monitoring and evaluation.

Aziz-Kamara thanked the Science Granting Councils Initiative for its continued support and commended NSTIC Chairman Professor Redwood Sawyer and the Council for their efforts in laying a solid institutional foundation.

He concluded by reaffirming the government's commitment under President Julius Maada Bio to promoting research, innovation, and human capital development, urging participants to work collectively to produce a robust strategic plan aligned with the Government's Big Five Game Changers, the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, and the African Union Agenda 2063. The Director of Science Education, Fatmata Kaiwa, said the

training would support NSTIC in developing its first strategic plan while strengthening research management and improving access to research funding. She noted that the strategic plan would serve as a roadmap for measuring progress, identifying gaps, and enhancing the Council's overall performance.

SARIMA Project Manager, Zimasa Sobuza, reaffirmed her organization's commitment to strengthening research and innovation management in Sierra Leone. She described the engagement as a continuation of the partnership established through the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) in 2023 and emphasized that the programme is designed as a peer-learning exercise in collaboration with the West African Research and Innovation Management Association (WARIMA). She said the sessions focus on strategic development, partnerships, collaboration, and the management of funded research, while also promoting stronger regional cooperation among African research and innovation institutions. The three-day workshop is expected to strengthen Sierra Leone's research and innovation ecosystem while enhancing institutional capacity to attract, manage, and effectively utilize research funding for national development.

MoPED and Foreign Affairs Strengthen Partnership with Development Partners Through Host Country Agreement Signing Ceremony



The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED), in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, today Thursday 6th August, 2026 hosted a Host Country Agreement (HCA) Signing Ceremony with six international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), reaffirming the Government of Sierra Leone's commitment to fostering strategic partnerships that advance national development priorities.

The ceremony, held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, brought together the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Madam Kenyeh Barlay, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Alhaji Musa Timothy Kabba, officials from MoPED's NGO Directorate, heads and representatives of six eligible international NGOs, and the Co-Chairs of both the International NGO (INGO) and National NGO (NNGO) Steering Committees. The Host Country Agreements establish the legal framework governing the relationship between the Government of Sierra Leone and eligible international NGOs, while granting them the diplomatic privileges and immunities necessary for the effective implementation of their development and humanitarian programmes in accordance with national laws and policies. The six organizations that signed the agreements were Catholic Relief Services Sierra Leone, ChildFund Sierra Leone, Médecins Sans Frontières Sierra Leone, Partners In Health Sierra Leone, Plan International Sierra Leone, and World Vision International Sierra Leone.

Speaking on behalf of the INGO Steering Committee, the Chair described the ceremony as a landmark achievement that further strengthens the longstanding partnership between the Government and international NGOs. The Chair noted that the agreements would enhance collaboration in delivering essential services, particularly to hard-to-reach communities, while supporting Government's national development agenda.

In her remarks, Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Madam Kenyeh Barlay, welcomed the signing of the Host Country Agreements, describing them as a significant recognition of organizations that have consistently partnered with Government in driving Sierra Leone's development over several decades.

She commended the six organizations for their sustained contributions in key sectors, including health, education, humanitarian assistance, child protection and community development, noting that

and a two-thirds majority required for the final approval of the constitutional amendment. Members of Parliament of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), Paramount Chiefs and two APC MPs remained in the Chamber and participated in the subsequent proceedings, which resulted in the passage of the remaining provisions, including the final amendment.

The passage of the Bill represents the culmination of a lengthy process of constitutional review and political debate. The exercise has generated considerable public discussion, particularly around electoral representation, presidential elections, citizenship and the administration of elections.

Among the key provisions retained in the amendments is the Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system which intends to provide a more inclusive mechanism for translating votes into parliamentary representation. The 50+1 requirement for presidential elections has also been retained. Under this arrangement, a presidential candidate must secure half of the valid votes cast to win in the first round.

Another significant provision concerns dual citizenship. Under the amended framework, eligible dual citizens will be permitted to

their interventions have positively impacted the lives of thousands of Sierra Leoneans. The Minister reaffirmed Government's commitment to maintaining an enabling environment that promotes effective collaboration between development partners and national institutions in support of the Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP).

Madam Barlay further emphasized the critical role of MoPED, through its NGO Directorate, in coordinating, monitoring and strengthening partnerships with non-governmental organizations to ensure that development interventions are aligned with national priorities and contribute meaningfully to sustainable socio-economic development.

Delivering the keynote address, Foreign Affairs Minister Alhaji Musa Timothy Kabba described the signing ceremony as a demonstration of the Government's unwavering commitment to building productive partnerships with international organizations. He noted that the agreements provide a clear legal and institutional framework that promotes accountability, strengthens

coordination and facilitates the effective implementation of development programmes while safeguarding Sierra Leone's national interests.

Minister Kabba also acknowledged the invaluable contributions of international NGOs to Sierra Leone's development, paying special tribute to the humanitarian assistance provided by Catholic Relief Services and Médecins Sans Frontières during the country's civil war. Reflecting on his personal experience, he noted that he was among the many Sierra Leoneans whose lives were positively impacted by their interventions.

The ceremony concluded with the formal signing of the Host Country Agreements by the heads and representatives of the six organizations, followed by the signatures of the Ministers of Planning and Economic Development and Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, officially ushering the organizations into the Host Country Agreement framework and reinforcing the Government's commitment to stronger collaboration with international development partners in advancing Sierra Leone's national development aspirations.

MoPED Communications

Parliament Passes Bipartisan Historic Constitutional Amendments As Some APC MPs Walk Out

contest parliamentary elections. However, restrictions remain on their eligibility to serve as Speaker or Deputy Speaker of Parliament or to assume the presidency under circumstances requiring the President and Vice President to be absent from the country.

The amendments also make a change concerning the proposed Search Committee for the appointment of the Chief Electoral Commissioner. The proposal to introduce the Search Committee was reversed, with the previous arrangement for the appointment of the electoral commissioner retained.

The reforms come at a time when Sierra Leone continues to strengthen its democratic institutions and electoral processes. The introduction and retention of proportional representation is particularly significant because it has the potential to broaden parliamentary representation and ensure that political parties and groups receive representation more closely aligned with the level of electoral support they command.

The 50+1 presidential threshold is similarly important for strengthening the democratic mandate of the presidency. By requiring a successful presidential candidate to obtain a majority of valid votes, the system can encourage candidates to appeal to a broader cross-section of the electorate and build wider national support.

The dual citizenship provision could also create additional opportunities for Sierra Leoneans with international experience and expertise to participate in parliamentary governance, potentially bringing new skills, perspectives and networks into national policymaking.

More broadly, the constitutional reforms are expected to provide clearer rules for political participation and representation, while helping to strengthen confidence in the country's democratic institutions.

The passage of the Constitutional Amendment Bill is therefore more than a parliamentary milestone; it represents an important development in Sierra Leone's continuing democratic evolution. Ultimately, the success of the reforms will be measured not simply by their passage into law, but by their ability to deepen democratic participation, strengthen representative governance and ensure that the voices and votes of Sierra Leoneans are meaningfully reflected in the institutions that govern the country.

The Constitutional Amendment Bill consequently marks a significant step in Sierra Leone's efforts to modernize its democratic framework and build electoral institutions capable of supporting a more inclusive, representative governance system

ENTERTAINMENT

Mariyam Konneh: Sierra Leone's Rising Beauty Ambassador Ready for Miss World 2026

By Marian Magdalene Bangura, Daily Mail Entertainment Correspondent

For Sierra Leone's growing community of beauty queens, models, and young women making their mark on international platforms, Mariyam Konneh is emerging as a name to watch. A beauty queen, model and university graduate, Mariyam has already established herself within Sierra Leone's pageantry landscape and is now preparing for one of the biggest opportunities of her career, representing Sierra Leone at the Miss World 2026 competition in Vietnam. Her journey to the international stage is rooted in determination, confidence, elegance, and a desire to use beauty pageantry as a platform for national representation and personal growth. Mariyam first captured significant national attention when she emerged as the 1st Runner-Up of the Miss Sierra Leone 2025 beauty pageant, held in Freetown. Although she narrowly missed the national crown, her impressive showing positioned her as one of the country's leading young beauty personalities and opened the door to an even greater international opportunity. Now, Mariyam is preparing to carry the Sierra Leonean flag onto the Miss World stage, where she will join delegates from countries around the globe. Her participation represents more than a personal achievement. It is an opportunity to showcase Sierra Leone's beauty, culture, intelligence, creativity, and the growing confidence of its young women to an international audience.

From Pageantry to Purpose

Modern beauty pageants have evolved considerably from their traditional emphasis on physical appearance. Today's contestants are expected to demonstrate intelligence, communication skills, confidence, cultural awareness, social responsibility, and the ability to represent meaningful causes. Mariyam's educational background as a university graduate adds another dimension to her pageantry journey. Her academic achievement, combined with her modelling and public-speaking experience, gives her a strong foundation as she prepares to interact with contestants, judges, media professionals, and international audiences. As she takes part in the Miss World competition, her presence will provide an opportunity to demonstrate that Sierra Leonean women are not only beautiful but also educated, ambitious, articulate and capable of competing confidently on the world's biggest stages.

Carrying the Sierra Leone Story

International pageantry provides countries with an unusual form of cultural diplomacy. Every contestant becomes a representative of her homeland, carrying with her elements of her country's culture, traditions, history, and aspirations. For Mariyam, the Miss World 2026 platform will, therefore, be an opportunity to tell the Sierra Leone story beyond the country's borders. From its rich cultural traditions and breathtaking landscapes to its resilient people and vibrant young population, Sierra Leone has a story that deserves a wider international audience.

Through her fashion, appearances, interviews, cultural presentations, and interactions throughout the competition, Mariyam will have an opportunity to showcase the country's identity while introducing international audiences to the beauty and diversity of Sierra Leone.

Facing the World's Best

The Miss World stage brings together accomplished young women from countries with long-established beauty pageant traditions, including strong pageant nations such as South Africa and the United States, alongside representatives from numerous other countries across Africa and the world. For a Sierra Leonean contestant, competing on such a platform is both a challenge and a tremendous opportunity. Mariyam will be expected to demonstrate not only poise and elegance but also intelligence, confidence, communication skills, and the ability to distinguish herself among a highly competitive field of international delegates.

Her experience as Miss Sierra Leone 2025's first runner-up provides an important foundation. She has already experienced the pressure of national competition and the responsibilities that come with representing a country's pageant community.

Miss World 2026 will take that experience to another level.

A New Chapter for Sierra Leonean Pageantry

Mariyam's international participation also comes at a time when Sierra Leonean beauty queens are increasingly attracting attention beyond the country's borders.

The achievements of Sierra Leonean contestants on international platforms have helped demonstrate that the country's pageantry industry possesses

young women capable of competing with confidence and distinction on the global stage. Mariyam now has an opportunity to contribute to that growing legacy. Her journey can also serve as encouragement to young girls across Sierra Leone who dream of entering modelling, fashion, entertainment, and pageantry but may not always see themselves represented on international

platforms. Her story demonstrates that finishing as a runner-up does not necessarily mean the end of the journey. Sometimes, another door opens—one that leads to an even bigger stage. More Than a Crown



While the ultimate ambition at Miss World is naturally to compete for the crown, Mariyam's participation carries a broader significance. She is stepping onto the international stage as a Sierra Leonean woman, carrying the expectations and hopes of a nation that continues to celebrate its young talents. The Miss World experience will also provide her with opportunities to network with international personalities, learn from other cultures, expand her modelling and pageantry career, and potentially develop partnerships around causes and initiatives that matter to her. For Mariyam, the journey is, therefore, about more than winning a title. It is about growth, representation, and exposure and using an international platform to create possibilities for the future.

Sierra Leone Watches

As preparations continue for Miss World 2026 in Vietnam, attention will increasingly turn toward Mariyam Konneh and her journey. Sierra Leoneans at home and abroad will be watching with pride as she carries the nation's name into a competition that commands a global audience. Her challenge is formidable, but so is the opportunity. From finishing as 1st Runner-Up at Miss Sierra Leone 2025 to earning the opportunity to represent the country at Miss World 2026, Mariyam has already demonstrated resilience and determination.

Now, the international stage awaits. For Sierra Leone, her participation is a moment to celebrate the country's young women, its growing pageantry culture, and its continuing desire to be represented with excellence on the global stage.

And for Mariyam Konneh, Miss World 2026 could become the chapter that transforms a promising pageant career into an international journey. As she prepares to take her place among delegates from across the world, one message rings clear:

The crown may belong to one woman, but the pride of representing Sierra Leone belongs to Mariyam, and an entire nation will be standing behind her.

President Bio Highlights Huge Gains In Agriculture, Education, And Health Sectors

April to 17 percent in May. Private-sector bank lending also increased by 50 percent, which he said had created greater opportunities for businesses to invest, expand and generate employment.

The country's trade deficit narrowed from US\$1.60 billion in 2024 to US\$1.07 billion in 2025, while the overall fiscal deficit declined from 5.4 percent to 4.4 percent of GDP. The primary balance also improved from a deficit of 2.6 percent to a surplus of 1.3 percent, with public debt declining from 50.8 percent to 49.3 percent of GDP.

On Sierra Leone's programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), President Bio said the Extended Credit Facility programme remained on track, with reviews completed in December 2025 and June 2026, resulting in disbursements of approximately US\$79.8 million and US\$31.7 million respectively.

He further disclosed that US\$211.45 million had been approved under the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Facility to strengthen Sierra Leone's ability to withstand climate-related shocks.

Turning to agriculture, President Bio identified the Feed Salone Programme as a central pillar of Government's efforts to strengthen food security, create employment and transform rural communities.

He reported that rice production increased to 1,441,015 metric tonnes in 2025, representing a 4.2 percent increase over the previous year. Cultivated land expanded to 661,016 hectares, while average yields rose to 2.37 metric tonnes per hectare.

Rice self-sufficiency consequently increased from 68 percent in 2023 to 73 percent in 2025. At the same time, the country's rice import bill declined from US\$177 million in 2022 to US\$159 million, representing more than US\$18 million in foreign exchange savings.

President Bio also said the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute had released 18 improved varieties of rice, cassava and maize, while local seed enterprises had supplied all the rice seeds required for three consecutive years. Meanwhile, cocoa, cashew and coffee exports generated US\$107.8 million in foreign exchange and income for farming communities. Government's decision to impose a 35 percent duty on imported eggs, President Bio said, had also encouraged local investment, with three leading farms building a combined stock of 45,000 birds.

At a large-scale onion farm and processing facility in Lungi, onion cultivation has expanded from 70 to 170 hectares, creating employment for more than 500 women. Increased local production has also contributed to a reduction in onion prices from NLe50 to NLe34.

"This is the result we seek: increased local production, lower food prices and more income for families," President Bio said.

Government has also mobilised more than US\$45 million to support agribusiness growth and commercialisation through agricultural credit, matching grants and blended-finance facilities targeting small businesses, women and young entrepreneurs.

President Bio said local farmers were making an increasing contribution to the national school feeding programme, with locally produced rice now accounting for 40 percent of rice supplied to the programme, up from 10 percent in 2024.

The programme provides meals to approximately 270,000 schoolchildren daily while creating a reliable market for local farmers.

He also cited World Food Programme figures showing that severe household food insecurity declined from 28 percent in 2023 to 13 percent in 2025.

In the education sector, President Bio highlighted the US\$15.3 million Salone Pikin 4 Play en Lan initiative, which is providing play-based learning to more than 29,000 children across 87 community centres.

Government has also identified 108,144 out-of-school children and developed an Accelerated Learning Curriculum to support vulnerable and remote learners.

School feeding, he said, has expanded to 1,016,191 pupils in 4,034 schools across all 15 districts.

The President reported that more than 26,000 primary teachers and 5,400 early-childhood teachers and supervisors had been trained, while 300 quality-assurance officers had been appointed.

A further 90,000 educators have been registered, with 1,419 trained teachers added to the payroll and 1,000 pre-primary and nursery educators deployed.

President Bio strongly condemned examination malpractice, warning that public officials, principals, teachers, parents and pupils involved in malpractice would be held accountable under the law.

He also stressed the importance of technical and vocational education in equipping young people with practical skills required by the modern economy.

Among the initiatives highlighted were the WokDonCam Project, BEAR III Programme, Recognition of Prior Learning Programme and Excellence Skills Academy.

On energy, President Bio announced an ambitious expansion of Sierra Leone's electricity infrastructure under the US\$2.2 billion Mission 300 Energy Compact.

The initiative seeks to increase electricity access from 36 percent in 2024 to nearly 80 percent by 2030, while increasing generation capacity from 271 megawatts to 1.12 gigawatts and connecting at least 720,000 additional households.

Government is also implementing a Just Energy Transition and Green Growth Plan, including the development of 200 mini-grids under the Rural Electrification Drive.

President Bio said the completed CLSG Rural Electrification Project had provided 12,000 connections across more than 25 communities and enabled Sierra Leone to import 27 megawatts of electricity from Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

The rehabilitation and expansion of the Bo-Kenema distribution network is expected to connect 50,500 households, while the US\$495 million Millennium Challenge Corporation

Compact is expected to further strengthen the national electricity grid.

The 40-megawatt RESPITE Solar Project, described by the President as the largest single addition of renewable energy to the national grid, is expected to benefit more than 40 communities in the Western Rural Area.

President Bio also reported significant progress in maternal and child health.

Maternal mortality declined from 1,200 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013 to 354 in 2023, representing a 70 percent reduction over the decade and a 51 percent reduction during his presidency.

Under-five mortality also fell from 105 to 91 deaths per 1,000 live births, while neonatal mortality declined from 31 to 29 deaths per 1,000 live births.

To consolidate these gains, Government launched the 300 Days of Activism for Triple Zeros campaign in March 2026.

Skilled birth attendance and institutional deliveries now exceed 95 percent, while the PresTrack initiative has been expanded to an additional 200 health facilities to strengthen pregnancy monitoring and emergency referrals.

Childhood immunisation has surpassed the national target of 90 percent, with more than 1.76 million children vaccinated against measles, rubella and polio. HPV vaccination among girls aged 11 to 18, including those out of school, has reached 99 percent.

The Paul E. Farmer Maternal Centre of Excellence in Kono has expanded from 48 to 100 beds, with three operating theatres and Sierra Leone's first rural Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. The facility has already provided specialised care to more than 2,800 women.

Government has also commissioned the country's first dedicated Burns Unit at Connaught Hospital and installed Sierra Leone's first CT scanners at Connaught and Kenema Regional Hospitals.

Hospitals at Lumley, Macauley Street and Moyamba have also been rehabilitated, while 15 dialysis machines are being deployed to expand access to life-saving kidney treatment.

President Bio said the figures and investments highlighted in his address were intended to demonstrate progress under his Government's development agenda, while acknowledging the need to ensure that such progress translates into tangible improvements in the daily lives of citizens.

He said the next phase of Government's development efforts would focus on converting macroeconomic stability and investments in agriculture, education, healthcare and energy into practical benefits for households, businesses and communities across Sierra Leone.

The President's address placed particular emphasis on strengthening domestic production, expanding opportunities for young people, improving essential services and building resilience against economic and climate-related shocks. If you want, I can also produce a shorter newspaper version (600-800 words) or a stronger government press-release style version with a sharper headline and subhead.

SLFA Increases Premier League Seed Money to NLe225,000 Ahead of 2026/27 Season

The Sierra Leone Football Association, SLFA, has increased seed money for Premier League clubs to NLe225,000 for the 2026/27 season, up from NLe200,000 - a 12.5% rise. SLFA President Babadi Kamara announced the boost at the Leone Rock Premier League Awards Night on Friday as the association prepares to reduce the league from 18 to 16 clubs. In a major win for officials, referees' match fees have also jumped from NLe700 to NLe2,000. Kamara said the SLFA has further strengthened competition administration, discipline and integrity ahead of the new campaign. Bo Rangers were celebrated as Premier League champions, with Star Sport Academy finishing runners-up. Looking ahead, President Kamara urged national support for the Leone Stars ahead of September's AFCON qualifiers. He also announced plans for new artificial-turf facilities across the country, including one earmarked for Lungi.



Abu Diaby Dumbuya Completes Permanent Move to Saudi Arabia's Al Jeel Club



Sierra Leone international midfielder Abu Diaby Dumbuya has officially completed a permanent transfer to Saudi Arabian side Al Jeel Club for an undisclosed fee. The deal was finalized after successful negotiations between the player's representatives and Al Jeel, with all contractual formalities now completed. Dumbuya has also passed his medical examination and put pen to paper on his new contract. The move marks a fresh chapter for the Leone Stars midfielder as he takes on a new challenge in Saudi Arabian football. Dumbuya has been a key figure for club and country in recent seasons, and his switch to Al Jeel is expected to boost his profile on the international stage. The club and the player's camp have yet to announce contract details, but the

transfer is now fully ratified. Congratulations to Abu Diaby Dumbuya on securing the move. Wishing him success and a memorable journey with Al Jeel Club.

Credit: Miracle Kargbo

East End Lions and Star Sport Academy Draw Tough CAF Openers

Sierra Leone's continental representatives, East End Lions and Star Sport Academy, have been handed challenging preliminary round ties in the 2026/27 CAF interclub competitions following Thursday's draw in Cairo. East End Lions will face Ivorian outfit AF Amadou Diallo in the preliminary round of the CAF Confederation Cup. The first leg is set for the opening weekend of September in Sierra Leone, with the return leg scheduled for 11-13 September. The Killers will be keen to improve on their last continental outing, where they were beaten 7-1 on aggregate by Tunisian side US Monastir. Meanwhile, debutants Star Sport Academy will make history in the *CAF Champions League against Gambian side Medina United . The Academy will host the first leg from September 4th to 6th, 2026, before travelling to The Gambia for the return on September 11th-13th. Team Manager Musa Pokawa said preparations have intensified in Kenema, with the club also set to compete in the West Africa Champions Cup in Guinea. The winners will progress to the second preliminary round in October, with first legs on 16th-18th and return legs 23rd-25th. The Champions League tie winner faces Moroccan giants RS Berkane next.

Preliminary round - English

 **CAF**

CONFEDERATION CUP 2026-27

1st Preliminary Round (4-6 September || 11-13 September)

M 1 & 2	MOGADISHU CC  VS  KITARA FC	M 25 & 26	ES ZARZIS  VS  DIAMBARS FC
M 3 & 4	ZED FC  VS  ASAS DJIBOUTI T.	M 27 & 28	VITESSE FC  VS  AS REAL DE BAMAKO
M 5 & 6	AL HILAL ALSAHIL  VS  WELWALO ADIGRAT	M 29 & 30	FC DIARRA  VS  NATIONS FC
M 7 & 8	KMKM SC  VS  AL AHLY TRIPOLI	M 31 & 32	AS ZAM  VS  ASKO DE KARA
M 9 & 10	AL AHLY MADANI  VS  TUSKER FC	M 33 & 34	UNAM  VS  KABUSCORP DE P
M 11 & 12	AL-GHAZALA SC WAU  VS  S. BLACK STARS	M 35 & 36	RED ARROWS FC  VS  FC ROUGE
M 13 & 14	THE PANTHERS FC  VS  ASPAC FC	M 37 & 38	DURBAN CITY FC  VS  RUKINZO FC
M 15 & 16	AS PSI  VS  CO KHOROGO	M 39 & 40	AS PORT LOUIS 2000  VS  JWANENG GALAXY
M 17 & 18	AS DOUANES  VS  HAFIA FC	M 41 & 42	PANTHERE SPORTIVE  VS  RAYON SPORT FC
M 19 & 20	EL KANEMI WARRIORS  VS  UDIB	M 43 & 44	ATOMIC DE N.  VS  A. BLACK BULLS
M 21 & 22	AF AMADOU DIALLO  VS  EAST END LIONS FC	M 45 & 46	DC VIRUNGA  VS  P. BAZAR BROTHERS
M 23 & 24	SHOOTING STARS  VS  CS SFAXIEN	M 47 & 48	 CD 1 AGOSTO