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**Wednesday, 17 February 2021**

*Parliament met at 3.15 p.m. in Parliament House, Kampala*

PRAYERS

*(The Speaker, Ms Rebecca Kadaga, in the Chair.)*

*The House was called to order.*

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I welcome you to this afternoon’s sitting. I apologise for the late start. We have had several meetings over many issues to do with the work of Parliament. However, we shall be able to catch up.

There are a number of issues that I would like to bring to your attention, honourable members. Last week, I received a call from one of the citizens inquiring why Government cannot support hepatitis B patients. He told me that the cost of taking a test is Shs 100,000 for each visit, and that the treatment itself is very expensive. I was asked to pass on that information to the Government to see whether hepatitis B patients could equally be supported like the patients of HIV/AIDS.

Secondly, honourable members, it has come to my attention that the following Bills have stayed before sectoral committees beyond the 45 days as prescribed under rule 128(2) of the Rules of Procedure:

1. The Administration of Estates (Small Estates) (Special Provisions) (Amendment) Bill, 2019;

2. The Administrator General’s (Amendment) Bill, 2019;

3. The Estates of Missing Persons (Management) (Amendment) Bill, 2019;

4. The Probates (Resealing) (Amendment) Bill, 2019;

5. The Succession (Amendment) Bill, 2019;

6. The National Health Insurance Scheme Bill, 2019;

7. The National Climate Change Bill, 2020;

8. The Anti-slavery Bill, 2020;

9. The Inland Water Transport Bill, 2020;

10. The Physical Planners’ Registration Bill, 2020;

11. The Leadership Code (Amendment) Bill, 2020;

12. The Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2020;

13. The Excise Duty (Amendment) (No.2) Bill, 2020;

14. The Employment (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

Of course, I am aware that part of the time, the Members were engaged in the democratic process. Nevertheless, we need to pull up our socks and ensure that this work is done as quickly as possible. Therefore, I would like to urge the chairpersons and members of the sectoral committees named to expedite their consideration of these Bills.

I also have the following private Members’ Bills for which leave was granted by the House and they are awaiting instructions from their respective movers in preparation for their first reading:

1. The National Community Works Bill, 2016 by hon. Mbwatekamwa;

2. The Trustees Bill, 2018 by hon. Edward Otto Makmot;

3. Uganda Development Bank (Amendment) Bill, 2018 by hon. Mwine Mpaka;

4. The Standardisation of Labour Bill, 2019 by hon. Arinaitwe Rwakajara;

5. Persons with Albinism Bill, 2019 by hon. Safia Nalule Juuko;

6. Parliamentary Pensions (Amendment) Bill, 2019 by hon. Remigio Achia;

7. Veterinary Drugs and Feeds Bill, 2019 by hon. Fred Mwesigye;

8. Establishment and Management of Markets by hon. Margaret Rwabushaija;

9. The Real Estate Agents Bill, 2020 by hon. Richard Okot Othieno;

10. The Fish (Amendment) Bill, 2020 by hon. Anthony Okello;

11. The Public Enterprise Reform and Divestiture Repeal Bill by hon. Michael Mawanda;

12. The Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill, 2020 by hon. Lyandro Komakech;

13. The National Legal Aid Bill by hon. Lyandro Komakech;

14. The Succession (Amendment) Bill by hon. Rosette Kajungu;

15. The Sexual Offences Bill, 2019 by hon. Monica Amoding;

16. The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2020 by hon. Michael Mawanda;

17. The Constitution (Amendment) (No.2) Bill by hon. Paul Mwiru;

18. The Constitution (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill by hon. Jack Odur Lutanywa;

19. The Patients’ Rights and Responsibilities Bill, 2019 by hon. Paul Akamba.

I instruct the Clerk to urgently write to the Members in charge of these Bills, seeking from them whether they still intend to pursue the Bills for first reading so that the House can prepare.

Honourable members, there are just a few matters of national concern. I invite hon. Hillary Lokwang.

3.21

**MR HILLARY LOKWANG (NRM, Ik County, Karenga):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on an urgent matter regarding high transport charges levied on the public by transporters countrywide.

Since last year, around March, from the time of the outbreak of COVID-19, the Minister of Health and Minister of Works and Transport have issued guidelines on how to combat the pandemic. Regarding the issue of transport, it was supposed to be half capacity with double charges. This was relevant because one person would sit on behalf of the other missing one in order to social distance.

At the moment, however, buses carry full capacity, which is around 64 people as opposed to the 32, which number was required for a bus. However, the charges levied on these passengers remains doubled. From Karamoja to Kampala, for example, one has to pay Shs 100,000, yet it was around Shs 60,000 before the outbreak of COVID-19. In taxis, from Mukono to Kampala, for example, before the outbreak of COVID-19, it used to be Shs 4,000 but currently, it is between Shs 7,000 to 8,000. However, the capacity remains full and yet-

**THE SPEAKER:** You are supposed to use only two minutes.

**MR LOKWANG:** I would like to ask the Ministry of Health whether they have lifted the ban. The prices remain high, yet vehicles carry full capacity as opposed to the proposed half. Prices also remain high, yet the price of fuel has never changed. Therefore, they should come and tell us whether the guidelines still hold. It seems there is no one bothered to rescue the citizens, yet they are being exploited by the transporters.

Very soon, schools are going to re-open. Parents and guardians are struggling to raise fees because schools are going to increase fees, since they are trying to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

**THE SPEAKER:** You have raised your point; I think you should not go into debate. You want to know whether the Ministry of Health is aware that numbers are still the same and the cost has gone high.

**MR LOKWANG:** Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Health issued guidelines that it should be half capacity but the transporters doubled the fares for buses and taxis. Why are they still charging people double when they are now loading full capacity, not half? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you. The Minister of Health is here; I hope she will be able to say something, then I will invite hon. Ssemujju.

3.26

**THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH (PRIMARY HEALTH CARE) (Dr Joyce Moriku):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank my colleague, hon. Hillary Lokwang, for raising this very important matter.

It is true that since the onset of COVID-19, a number of guidelines and regulations have been put in place for the safety of the people of Uganda. Once we relaxed the restrictions, the transporters were to carry people half capacity - for the buses and taxis. As they carry people half capacity, they are supposed to observe Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). People have to wear face masks, sanitise and all that it takes to keep people safe.

However, the police are supposed to enforce those SOPs. I can say that for now, the Ministry of Health has set standards and passed the regulations but it is the police and security officials to strengthen and make sure that people abide by those set guidelines. Thank you.

**THE SPEAKER:** Now that you are the issuer of the guidelines, the citizens are saying they are not being observed; what are you going to do? Are you going to leave it to the police or inform them to comply, or you are also leaving it to us?

**DR MORIKU:** I think now that this has been brought to the Floor of Parliament, I want to take this matter up with my colleague, the Minister of Internal Affairs. This is to ensure that the relevant regulatory bodies, especially the police, try as much as possible to ensure that people follow these guidelines until we issue fresh ones.

3.28

**MR IBRAHIM SSEMUJJU (FDC, Kira Municipality, Wakiso):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In your communication, you spoke about Bills that have delayed in committees. I seek guidance on the urgent matters that you have given to committees of Parliament to handle.

Madam Speaker, you issued a directive, and I want to thank you, because by raising the profile of the violation of rights, we have achieved some dividends, with some people being abandoned by security. However, you instructed the Committee on Human Rights to investigate the violation of these rights and then report to Parliament.

Madam Speaker, since you gave that directive, I have been looking for the committee to give them the information that I have but I do not see the chairperson and where the committee is sitting, yet these violations continue. Today, journalists have been beaten and they are bleeding; why? Just because they went to cover hon. Kyagulanyi as he was submitting a petition to the United Nations. More than 10 journalists have been badly beaten!

The matter I am raising is to ask whether the committee you instructed to do this work should not do it urgently, so that this Parliament can process it.

**THE SPEAKER:** Of course, any violation of human rights is a matter of concern. Let me ask the committee to move expeditiously and give us a report as quickly as possible so that we can make some resolutions.

3.30

**MS BETTY NAMBOOZE (DP, Mukono Municipality, Mukono):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of national importance concerning the re-opening of schools that were closed across the country due to COVID-19.

It shall be recalled that a year ago, the Government of Uganda issued a directive for the closure of all institutions of learning and schools in order to curb the spread of COVID-19. After about a year, the Minister of Education has issued guidelines in relation to re-opening of schools. However, if you read them, you will find that some are not practical.

The parents and learners will find themselves in very difficult situations attending school, especially those in the day section. According to the guidelines, learners are not supposed to travel to school by public transport. This means that only a parent can deliver his or her child to school or a special hire vehicle. I imagine people from my constituency; those staying in Seeta cannot jump onto a taxi to go to Mukono and attend school because that was disallowed in the guidelines.

The other guideline is about international schools. They say that international schools may re-open according to the programme of their affiliate institutions in other countries. The ordinary people in Uganda think that we re-opened international schools for our children and kept theirs closed.

My prayer is that our Committee on Education sits to look at these guidelines and chooses those that are practical and leaves out those that are not practical.

Secondly, our committee should work on this anomaly because we are equal before the law. Even if you go to international schools or Bishop’s Primary School, Mukono East, where I went, you remain a pupil, a Ugandan and a learner. Therefore, the issue should be about having a number of people gathering - even if they are in international schools - and not giving some institutions authority to work while those where the children of the poor go to remain closed.

Lastly, the head teachers, including the one of Bishop’s Senior Secondary School in Mukono, have accordingly issued circulars to parents. Most of them have doubled or even tripled the school fees, claiming that they now face bigger expenditure. All of us stayed home when there was a lockdown. I do not know where the head teachers expect our people to get money.

In Mukono, for example, all students have been ordered to enrol for boarding school. The school, however, does not have adequate facilities for boarding. Since it was founded, it has been operating as a day school but today, all learners are by law required to enrol in the boarding section and pay a sum of Shs 960,000 to zero balance.

Schools do not have the facilities but everywhere, they are telling students not to go back home because they will bring COVID-19 to the rest of the school. So, they are forcing parents to take their children to the boarding section.

Lastly, there are some headmasters and directors who are demanding that parents pay the school fees for last term, yet we all know that last term, the children did not go to school. They are saying that according to them, these students were in their school; even if they did not study, there were teachers to pay. So, learners must pay for the year they have not been at school. Parents do not have money. *(Member timed out)*

**THE SPEAKER:** We shall ask the Minister of Education and Sports to examine those complaints because they are core to the existence of our schools.

**MS NAMBOOZE:** Madam Speaker, the students reporting to school are candidates and they are being dismissed because of money. I beg that you find it within your means to tell the Minister of Education and Sports to guide the country as fast as possible.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the matters raised are grave, especially since the timetable has been already issued by the Government. I think the Ministry of Education and Sports needs to examine those complaints, address them and come back to us quickly. Are they here today? They are not here, but the matter should go to them. They should come back to us by Tuesday next week.

3.37

**MR ABDULATIF SEBAGGALA (Independent, Kawempe Division North, Kampala):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The issue I am raising is of great national importance.

We have a delay in issuing driving permits. Many drivers are finding difficulties on the road. When you go to Face Technologies, they say they do not have materials to print the permits, yet when drivers are given temporary permits, the traffic officers on the roads do not respect these printouts.

Many of the drivers, both new and old, have already paid their money but up to now they have not been issued with permits. I request your office, Madam Speaker, to intervene in protecting the rights of these drivers. They have done what they are supposed to do and the problem is on the side of Face Technologies. That is where the problem is. That is the concern of many drivers who are being disturbed on the roads since they do not have genuine driving permits, yet they have already paid for them and they have not been issued.

**THE SPEAKER:** Is the Minister of Works and Transport here? Let us hear from the Chairperson of the Committee on Physical Infrastructure.

3.39

**THE CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE (Mr Kafeero Ssekitoleko):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank hon. Latif Sebaggala for raising such a fundamental issue.

Indeed, there is suffering in this area. However, in a committee meeting this morning with the Minister of Works and Transport and her entire delegation from the ministry, we were informed that Face Technologies is winding up their contract by the end of February 2021. Indeed, the ministry has made a public announcement to the effect that the new driving permits and any other renewals, commencing on 1 March 2021, will not be done by Face Technologies but by the new company called Uganda Security Printing Company on behalf of the Ministry of Works and Transport.

We were told that this whole delay and disorganisation is due to this transition. The location of issuing driving permits is also going to change from Kyambogo to the Uganda Railways Corporation premises effective 1 March 2021.

**THE SPEAKER:** It is good because it is the House that requested that Government take over the issue of the driving permits. We are happy they have done it. However, I think we need a transitional arrangement where the police can be told to allow people to drive because there are no driving permits until 1 March 2021. It is important to do that so that people can do their work. Thank you.

**MR SEBAGGALA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you have ably said, instructions should be given to the traffic officers. Otherwise, up to now, this information is not out in the public and those who have already paid are suffering. Their vehicles have been confiscated because they do not have driving permits, yet they have already paid. Your instruction, Madam Speaker, should save the situation.

**THE SPEAKER:** Can we ask the minister in charge of transport to instruct the police traffic department that there is a transition, so people should be allowed to drive until they get new driving permits. They have paid and they are only awaiting the paper. Please, Rt Hon. Prime Minister, inform the Minister of Works and Transport so that our people can continue to do their business.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DIRECTIVES ISSUED BY THE MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT TO LABOUR RECRUITMENT COMPANIES TO FACILITATE REPATRIATION OF UGANDANS STRANDED IN RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

3.43

**THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS) (Mr Mwesigwa Rukutana):** Madam Speaker, as you may recall, on 4 February 2021, hon. Kibalya drew the attention of the House to contents of our letter dated 19 January 2021 addressed to some recruitment companies. The said letter was prompted by a letter from the Ugandan Embassy in Riyadh informing us about the plight of 43 distressed migrant workers under the care of the embassy.

In the letter referred to, and indeed as rightly pointed out by hon. Kibalya, the ministry had informed the concerned companies about the 43 distressed migrant workers at the Ugandan Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The embassy was financially constrained to accommodate and feed them.

The letter reminded the external recruitment agencies of their obligation to protect the interests and wellbeing of the workers they externalise. Thirdly, our letter directed the responsible external recruitment agencies to arrange with their foreign partners to facilitate repatriation of the affected 43 migrant workers. Lastly, our letter directed the concerned external recruitment agencies to update the ministry on measures they have taken on the matter before 25 January 2021.

Madam Speaker, besides writing to the concerned recruitment agencies, my ministry met with the leadership of the Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies (UAERA) over the 43 distressed migrant workers. The Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies is working with her members to facilitate the expeditious repatriation of the said workers.

In addition, between 22 and 29 January 2021, UAERA fielded a mission led by the chairperson to Saudi Arabia to carry out on-spot assessment of the situation.

Having said that, permit me, in line with your directive of 4 February 2021, to update you and the House on the status of implementation of the directives issued by the ministry to external recruitment agencies to facilitate the repatriation of stranded Ugandan migrant workers, wherever they may be. All the concerned recruitment companies had, by 25 January, apprised the ministry of the measures they were taking to facilitate the repatriation of the workers.

Arising out of the interventions of the recruitment agencies and the embassy of Uganda in Riyadh, 17 migrant workers of the 43 have been successfully repatriated. The embassy has taken appropriate measures to facilitate the exit of the remaining 26. However, their return has been delayed by limited flights as a result of a Saudi Government ban on flights to the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, which are the key transit destinations for Ugandans from Saudi Arabia. The ban is part of the Saudi Government COVID-19 containment measures.

The challenge of labour migration management goes beyond the 43 migrant workers who are the subject of discussion today. Accordingly, and in order to keep us all informed, allow me also to update this august House on a number of steps, which have been taken to make labour migration safer, more regular and more productive.

The majority of cases of distressed Ugandan migrant workers have been domestic workers, as this august House has noted before. While the ministry will continue efforts to protect the rights of the domestic workers, we are of the view that the share of unskilled workers among Ugandan migrant workers in the Middle East should be gradually decreased.

Accordingly, the ministry is developing a programme of supporting youth to acquire the necessary training and internationally recognised certification so that they can increasingly access more skilled jobs in hotels, construction and information technology industries in the Middle East.

The ministry has also established that a majority of the workers who get into problems with employment relations in the destination countries are those who are unskilled. Going forward, the ministry will make a case to Cabinet and this august House on the need for the Government to appreciate the importance of skilling in realising successful and productive placement of Ugandan migrant workers abroad.

It is well known that for any export to be gainful to a country, it must not be raw; it should be processed and of high quality. Accordingly, for Uganda to optimise the benefit of her migrant workers abroad, as it is the case in some countries like the Philippines, the Government of Uganda must invest in the pre-departure orientation and training of young people destined for work abroad.

With the necessary resources available, professional training institutions in various vocations, for example in beauty therapeutics, use of domestic and commercial tools, airport ground handling machinery, construction machinery etc., will be licensed or accredited to train the youth before they are taken abroad. The pre-departure orientation and training will also cover aspects of destination languages as well as cross-cultural adjustment.

I therefore appeal to you, Madam Speaker and honourable members, that when time comes and we call upon you for more resources, come to our aid and support.

Furthermore, the ministry is going to strengthen its mechanisms for monitoring migrant workers in Uganda and aboard. In order to finance the proposed measures, we are reviewing the regulations to allow charging of foreign recruitment companies a document processing fee. This non-tax revenue will be paid into the Consolidated Fund and appropriated by Parliament to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the improvement of labour migration management.

As I conclude, I would like to reiterate our commitment towards our citizens’ welfare. Migration is a human right. I have said this before - migration is as old as human kind. People will migrant from an area where they think that they do not have opportunities to an area they perceive to have greener pastures, and nobody can stop that. If you try to regulate it, people will find a way of beating whatever regulations. Movement of human beings is like movement of air; you can never stop it. The best thing you can do is to put mechanisms to regulate it.

We are also working with organisations like the International Organisation for Migration to ensure social protection of Ugandan migrant workers abroad.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank hon. Henry Kibalya for raising this issue and thank you for giving us this opportunity to explain it to the august House. I rest my case.

3.54

**MS ANIFA KAWOOYA (NRM, Woman Representative, Ssembabule):** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the honourable minister for the statement that he has just given us.

Madam Speaker, I vividly recall that the issue of external workers and the recruiting firms has been in this House for some time. At one time, this august House directed the Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development and the Committee on Foreign Affairs to combine efforts and look into the issue of recruitment firms and who is responsible for whatever was happening to our citizens abroad when they travel in search of labour.

One time, a report came to this House – and that is the clarification I want from the minister. The minister at that time promised us that he was going to go to many countries, especially the Asian countries, where indeed he went and I think he was sponsored by one of the recruitment firms. I think - I am not being very firm on that.

It was established that many of these recruitment firms are owned by Government officials. That was number one. Secondly, it was established that there is no sector or ministry that has ever come to this august House and confirmed that they are the ones who are responsible. After your guidance, Madam Speaker, an inter-ministerial committee was put in place.

I want to seek clarification from the minister, who has been in this portfolio for some time. We have never received any conclusive report from the inter-ministerial sector, which this House is supposed to take on. Today, the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development has come; tomorrow, it will be the Minister of Internal Affairs; the other day, it will be the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who never shows up.

Madam Speaker, I am keen on this issue because I have been dealing with it for the last 15 years. I am the vice-president of the African women for the protection of these people - our citizens and those who have jobs abroad. I thank my colleagues on the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

I would like to seek clarification from the honourable minister. We requested for a comprehensive report and you have raised an issue that you are going to strengthen monitoring, but you have got embassies through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

So far, you are not telling us which mechanisms you want to use but you are requesting for more funds. We are not talking about funds; we are talking about protection of our citizens abroad. We are talking about the companies that are recruiting and were blacklisted. We are talking about the Ugandan recruitment companies that are not known in those other countries where they are taking our citizens.

That is the clarification I am seeking. I would request that once again, a comprehensive status report is brought to this House in order to refresh our minds and the minds of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. I thank you.

3.58

**MR HENRY KIBALYA (NRM, Bugabula County South, Kamuli):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the minister for the explanation.

We shall request the minister to begin with, as he said, some of those migrant workers we have helped to come back to Uganda. We shall request, with time, to have some evidence laid here for those who were brought back because most of the parents whom we have heard from are saying their children are still abroad. Since you said you have helped some to return, we shall request for evidence, with time.

Secondly, I am a member of the Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development. There was an inquiry that was being carried out concerning the money that is charged to those who go abroad by those companies. That money, instead of helping the migrant workers, goes onto some people’s personal accounts.

Up to now, Madam Speaker, there is nothing conclusive that has been reached. When we asked the technical team from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, they said that they did not have control over recruitment companies. Those recruitment companies are still advertising and continually taking sons and daughters of Uganda to countries that are unknown. When I raised the issue, you saw hon. Sebaggala equally add the issue of Kenya and some other countries. There are many migrant workers who are stranded but the concerned authorities are not helping Ugandans.

Madam Speaker, we have always advised Government that the more they go to bed with some of these companies and the more we continue having conflict of interest, the more problems we get, as hon. Anifa Kawooya has said. People who own these recruitment companies are the big shots in Government.

A colleague here was raising the issue of Face Technologies. We told Government about Face Technologies. It is a company that was given a five-year contract. It has operated for 15 years but it has not remitted money. They are now walking away with the loot from Uganda. Government is now coming in to say they are beginning to issue permits. It is the same story that will happen here. These companies are extorting money from small girls and boys. They are taking their loot, taking advantage of being untouchable and at the end of the day, Ugandans are suffering as Government is watching.

Madam Speaker, we were here on –*(Interruption)*

**MR SEBAGGALA:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you, colleague, for giving way.

The information I would like to give is that these recruiting companies promise Ugandans heaven on earth, in terms of payments. They even advertise on television and radio that someone is going to get Shs 2 million and people are attracted to join and be taken abroad. When they reach where they are supposed to work, the situation is very different. They talk about insurance, being fed, being looked after but at times, these do not happen.

**MR KIBALYA:** Thank you, honourable colleague, for the information. Madam Speaker, we must always have value for money. We do not know what the Government wants.

We went to the Philippines in the process of working on the Anti-Slavery Bill. We got money from Parliament to go and benchmark. We came and gave information on how migrant workers are managed by some of these companies. We advised Government on how they could handle this in a very formal and clear way, where nobody is taken advantage of. However, they are not interested in formal and straight things. They only want those “*kwara kwara”* things where people benefit and enjoy the workers’ money while innocent Ugandans are suffering.

4.03

**MR MICHAEL TIMUZIGU (NRM, Kajara County, Ntungamo):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Honourable minister, I am very happy with your report. I would like to supplement the contributions of my colleagues who are proposing better solutions for our people abroad.

Madam Speaker, allow me to propose, in addition to the minister’s proposal concerning the training of our people going abroad, that the Government takes it up either as a policy, working under Government, or the Government supervises these companies, which are exporting labour.

We have discovered that when our fellow Ugandans go abroad, they instead assist other people from other countries. They tell us that they are given odd jobs. Government needs to identify the skills, which are needed abroad, so that we can train our people in those very skills. That way, we shall improve on their value so that when they go abroad, they are not mistreated the way they are being mistreated now.

My thinking is that those people are being mistreated simply because they are not indispensable. If they cannot get such people from Uganda, they can get them from another country. However, when we train our people in those strategic skills, they will be so valuable that the mistreatment will reduce. We shall not be there to supervise the way our people are being handled. So, what we have to do is to prepare them.

My divergence from the proposal of the minister is that funding the training now, as Government, might delay. This is because people are going abroad even now. Therefore, we can allow companies to train our people going abroad but under the supervision of Government so that they are trained in skills, which can make them valuable. That will improve the value of the remittances we are getting from abroad. Right now, they are paid as casual labourers. They are paid so little because their employers can get any other person to do those jobs. When they are trained however, we shall get more foreign exchange from them. Thank you.

4.06

**MS JANE AVUR (NRM, Woman Representative, Pakwach):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for the report presented.

It is a known fact in Uganda that unemployment is one of our biggest problems, and it is mainly affecting the young Ugandans. I would like to thank the Government for opening its door for our people to go abroad to look for better opportunities. However, allow me note that this matter on how our people are suffering out there has come here again and again.

I remember one time, while I was a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, we recommended that there is need to prepare our people as they export their labour outside. We observed and recommended that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, should carry out massive sensitisation of our people. We recommended that they should not only sensitise the young people, but also the parents so that before they allow their children to go abroad to seek opportunities, they should be able to know the associated risks.

Our people would not have gone out of Uganda if we had all the opportunities to employ them here. Now that we do not have those opportunities and we have allowed them to go out, there is need for us to put in place safety measures for them. Just this afternoon, on one of the fora, I read a message that was forwarded by a senior member of this House on how certain parts *–(Member timed out.)*

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable member, please conclude.

**MS AVUR:** My call to Government is that whereas we allow people to go abroad to work, there is need to prepare them enough through sensitisation about the envisaged dangers out there. Thank you.

4.08

**MS ESTHER ANYAKUN (NRM, Woman Representative, Nakapiripirit):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for presenting this statement.

I would like to add that the ministry should come up with standard operating procedures, like other organisations have done. Today, I went to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to renew my passport and I witnessed an influx of young people, between 20 and 35 years old. When I talked to one of the officials, he said that since December – and even yesterday, which was a public holiday - they have had to work because of such pressure.

The issue is that these companies do not have any law that guides them in taking these young people abroad. Getting the young people out of this country is smooth for them. The moment these young people get out of Entebbe International Airport, they belong to “whom it may concern”. When they get issues while abroad, nobody wants to know. However, if we had such SOPs put up by the ministry, it would include family tracing.

All the SOPs should be put up by the ministry to guide these companies. The SOPs should include the money that they are taxing from these people’s pay. The problem is the rate at which these young people are being – actually, this is human trafficking, if I am not mistaken, and there is no law that has been put in place to curb this.

Honourable minister, let us come up with SOPs like those of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migrants (IOM). They have very good SOPs and they have been using them especially for taking immigrants to Canada; those going there for – *(Interruption)*

**MS JOY ATIM:** Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I thank hon. Anyakun for giving way. I would like to give my colleague information on this subject.

As we talk about our children being taken out of this country, we have been lamenting that the ministry should get in touch with the labour exporters. This is because they do not even have clear data on who is registered and who is not registered.

What I wanted to bring out is that when these labour exporters take our people abroad, they withdraw their passports and take charge of them. They leave these children without anything. In the event that they want come back, they cannot. They are not even introduced to the embassies abroad. That is the challenge that our people are facing. Thank you.

**MS ANYAKUN:** What I was trying to say is that if we come up with SOPs, we shall have a central place where records on these people are kept. If they have issues while they are outside the country, family tracing can easily be done through this system. As long as we do not have this kind of system, we shall continue losing our organs abroad because we will not know whose child is outside there. They will only keep sending us bodies.

Many times, Members of Parliament solicit for money to send to someone who going to help repatriate the body of a particular Ugandan. When the body arrives in Uganda, again tracing the family becomes a problem. That means we are not responsible as a country. Let there be SOPs to guide these organisations. Thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have a feeling that the Government is too proud to acknowledge that we do not have enough employment. They are too proud to acknowledge that we need to export labour officially. I would like the Government of Uganda to eat humble pie and accept that we do not have enough jobs and that our people need to go abroad. They need to take it on as Government. Our people are suffering because they are dealing with individuals and small companies.

4.13

**MR IBRAHIM SSEMUJJU (FDC, Kira Municipality, Wakiso):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

Hon. Anyakun had a similar experience I had when I was at the Ministry of Internal Affairs**.** The traffic of individuals applying for passports has increased. When I asked the officials, they told me that the door for going to the Middle East has been opened.

Honourable minister, you have people who are stranded largely because of COVID-19 and they are crying to be returned home. However, you have also opened the door for others who will be crying next week that they want to be returned. Can you tell us the interim measures of Government under COVID-19, especially regarding people who go to do simple jobs such as domestic work?

Madam Speaker, the second point, which you have also mentioned, is that the majority of Ugandans who go to the Middle East go there because domestic work is available. Even if you skill them, – even graduates go, in case the minister is not aware - what are you going to add from which you will extract value by skilling people who are going to be washing utensils in the Middle East? What skill are you going to give them that will make them better?

The only jobs that are available are domestic ones - driving or doing domestic work. Can you tell us the particular skill you are going to give to people who go to become domestic workers that will make them better? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable minister, we had an argument with your predecessor over the title “domestic worker” in that agreement of Saudi Arabia. They said it includes all jobs including doctors and accountants. We objected to that definition and asked him to make sure that they define it properly. You cannot say that domestic workers include doctors and accountants. There is a problem there and I hope we can solve it.

4.15

**MS BETTY NAMBOOZE (DP, Mukono Municipality, Mukono):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have a rule, which provides that if anybody has interest in a matter, that person should declare their interest before he or she handles that subject in Parliament. I was, therefore, waiting for some of us to stand up here and declare interest in this matter. That is why I would like to propose that we institute a commission of inquiry into this matter because the very people who bring reports here are the ones who own the labour export companies.

Madam Speaker, apart from sanitising evil, what we are facing is modern-day slavery. The issue to do with labour export companies is wrong - these are slave traders. Busoga and Buganda contribute the majority of these girls, who travel to the Middle East for work. Some of them are bought to markets like goats. One time, our ambassador in Dubai told Members of Parliament who were visiting that these girls were sold in the markets and in two weeks’ time, they recalled her from her job. If you put up a telephone line and get messages from these girls, you will get to know the problem the country has.

Secondly, the men are taken for military training in Afghanistan and all those countries where there are terrorists. They are equipped and their contracts are renewed only once. After four years, they are brought back here. These are military veterans and some of them have even lost parts of their bodies and we have no preparation whatsoever for their rehabilitation. However, if you talk about those who go for security work, most ministers will say, “Speak slowly; you see, the exporter is a first whatever…”. *(Laughter)*

Madam Speaker, last time you ordered the Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development to investigate this matter. Hon. Sseggona and I appeared before that committee. I do not know what happened but I gave them all the documents concerning the person who exports military men and slaves from here, to go and act as human shields when Americans are at war. Up to now, the committee has not brought the report.

I am appealing to you, Madam Speaker, to ask the chairperson of the Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development to come and tell this House where the report is. How many more people did he talk to and where did these investigations end? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4.19

**MR ASUMAN BASALIRWA (JEEMA, Bugiri Municipality, Bugiri):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to find out from the minister whether the ministry is privy to the contracts that external recruitment companies have with the various Ugandans that seek jobs abroad.

When you hear the lamentations - I am very sure that all colleagues here have heard the experiences of people from our constituencies who are suffering abroad. I am aware that we are asked for money to help in the repatriation processes. I am also aware that our embassies are constrained to support Ugandans who are stranded abroad. However, when you hear the lamentations and challenges, you wonder whether the ministry is in charge of this process.

Our honourable colleague here was talking about the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) but there is a statutory instrument that was issued by the Government. Some people in that ministry are not doing their job. They are just sleeping on the job.

As honourable colleagues have submitted here, the Government has a conflict of interest in this matter because most of their officers are engaged in the recruitment process. That is why we will come here and make all sorts of statements but we are not going to get a solution if indeed senior Government officers are engaged in the recruitment processes.

I would like the Minister of State for Gender, Labour and Social Development to clarify whether they have had an opportunity to look at these contracts and ascertain how exploitative these contracts are. I submit, Madam Speaker.

4.21

**MS HELLEN ASAMO (NRM, Persons with Disabilities Representative, Eastern):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since elections, this is the first time I am speaking here. Therefore, I would like to congratulate you and other Members and also pray for those who did not make it.

I would to say that the issue of external recruitment would not be bad because we do not have jobs for young people. I would like to say that not all of them are suffering. It is especially the female gender, which is suffering. The males are somewhat cushioned because sometimes, we talk to some of these young people.

I have been lucky to be on the Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development, Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the Committee on Equal Opportunities. I know that we do not have a structure, which could help us know who these young people who go abroad are. We do not have funding whatsoever for our missions abroad.

We have met young people stranded in the missions. Even in Kenya here, you can get over 25 children packed in a room because the ambassador has nothing to do to help them. We got people stranded in Nigeria. One time, we got a young girl stranded in Denmark and we had to contribute from our own money to help her to travel.

Madam Speaker, the issue is bigger than the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. I would like to ask the minister to be sincere and come here with a structured proposal. We are aware that you have improved in coming up with agreements with some of these recruiting agencies. However, we would like to look beyond the funding. For a Ugandan going abroad, when he or she gets stranded there, how do they come back? The only place we can run to is our mission or embassy, yet you do not fund that mission or embassy to do that - there is no budget – and people are pleading. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the whole world and our children were running to the missions but their hands were tied; so, they could not repatriate them.

The leadership in Uganda does not know what to do for the people. Some of the agencies were affected by COVID-19. I think it is a bigger thing than lamentations. This means that the Government should begin thinking of bigger things. We do not have the jobs here but people have to work.

This is not a bad thing. I have seen some young people who have built houses out of these placements. Some of them have come back and bought motorcycles and are doing other things. We really need to look at the challenge. The Government, must think about these people. I beg that we look at the bigger picture and at an appropriate time, the ministry should come here with a detailed proposal so that Parliament can debate it and then agree on it and later talk about funding. Thank you very much.

4.25

**MS JESCA ABABIKU (NRM, Woman Representative, Adjumani):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for the position presented. However, as the minister elaborated the efforts put forward, when we analyse these efforts and compare with the increasing challenges faced, it means that we are very far from achieving the target that we want as a country, to ensure that our people are safe and gain what they target to achieve.

I request that instead of moving in circles to say that it is the Government agencies, individuals or companies operating this business thus causing problems to our people, a list should be brought here. This is because that issue is generating a lot of suspicion and in this manner, we shall not be able to come up with specific remedies. We also need this list because we shall be able to address our specific challenges to these agencies and come up with better solutions.

Madam Speaker, therefore, I propose that instead of deliberating in a suspicious manner, where people are not pointing out these agencies or companies, the minister should bring this list to the House so that the committee handles this matter in detail. The committee would interact with these specific agencies and raise the specific concerns of this House.

Secondly, the minister talked about training of those who are being prepared to leave the country. To me, that is a secondary step. The preliminary would be telling the entire country about the pros and cons of going outside Uganda.

Our people are desperate and they are being duped. Due to desperation, our people get recruited with the hope of getting better opportunities, which to a certain extent do not come to reality. I pray that the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and all of us sensitise our people.

However, as we do that, the Government should come with a clear strategy on how to ensure the safety of these people, if they use the formal channels. After leaving the country, what happens? If I have been supported by my country to leave, what happens there? Who is going to ensure my safety and that of my property?

Madam Speaker, this is a very big challenge to this country. Adjumani is one of the districts affected. There were two cases that I failed to manage because they were already duped since they were desperate. I counselled them about the disadvantages of going there without following the formal processes but they could not listen to me. Therefore, telling the truth to this country about the pros and cons is my first prayer to the ministry and to all of us. Thank you.

4.29

**MR ALEX NDEEZI (NRM, Persons with Disabilities, Central):** Madam Speaker, I would like to remind you that there were petitions on this particular subject by hon. Nambooze and hon. Mpaka. Later on, you directed the Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development to investigate the matter and report to the House. I would like to also remind you that this item was on the Order Paper three weeks before the outbreak of COVID-19. However, with the outbreak of COVID-19, the priorities of Parliament changed.

Regarding the specific issue being mentioned, I would like to assure Members that 90 per cent of the concerns you are raising are captured in that report, which is available right now. I am saying 90 per cent because COVID-19 was never anticipated at the time we were compiling our report. Therefore, our request is that you give us two extra weeks to go and polish this report and take into account the element of COVID-19, and then we will bring the report here for a compressive debate on the subject. Thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you, hon. Ndeezi. We shall give you the time because we need serious review and decision. We have talked about this matter very many times.

4.31

**MR ABDULATIF SEBAGGALA (Independent, Kawempe Division North, Kampala):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The issue of externalisation of labour in our country is a fact that everybody knows. We need employment opportunities but the jobs in this country are few. Therefore, having Ugandans exported to other countries is a good idea but how is it done?

As a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, I know that we have interacted with the companies often. The issue of ensuring that there is safety for Ugandans who go abroad should be a cardinal objective of the Government. When these labour recruiting companies are registered - the minister talked about registration - there is a cash deposit of Shs 50 million paid to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. I stand to be corrected. This is on condition that if someone you have taken is stuck somewhere, they would use part of this deposit to ensure that this person is brought back. Therefore, I would like to request the minister to clarify this.

Secondly, many countries that have taken this seriously have signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). For countries where MoUs are signed, their nationals do not suffer. When we went to Qatar, we found many Ugandans, including girls, who were very happy and working well. We have not heard any problem in as far as those working in Qatar are concerned. I believe that we need to streamline this. If we do this, we will get many people going abroad and, in the end, we shall count on them as far as our budget is concerned.

Finally, what those recruiting agencies tell Ugandans that they are going to get is not in conformity with what is on ground. The onus is on the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to endeavour to see that they look at these contracts to ensure their fulfilment.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable minister, do you have any closing remarks?

**MR RUKUTANA:** Madam Speaker, I would like to heartily thank the Members who have contributed and also thank you, Madam Speaker, for the positive guidance that you have given us on this matter.

The issues and concerns raised by honourable members are very pertinent. These are matters to do with our own children. To every parent, the welfare of a child is indeed paramount. However, I would like to clear some few areas where Members were not accurate in their submissions.

Hon. Kawooya was decrying the plight of the workers and saying that it looks as if there is nobody who is responsible for what is happening to our people abroad. I would like to assure you that the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to some extent, before departure, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, have an inter-ministerial task of looking after the welfare of our children before, during and after they have been externalised.

You were right to say that the embassies are not properly equipped and facilitated to handle all the distressed companies. In the regulations, we have told you, that issue and very many others are addressed. We think that when they have been passed, most of the issues honourable members have been raising will be covered. I was proposing that because of the wide concern the august House has, when the Solicitor General approves these regulations, we lay them before Parliament so that Parliament can have an input in what we are doing.

Hon. Kibalya wants evidence to be laid on the Table regarding those who have been rescued. Yes, we shall oblige. We shall bring the evidence to this House so that you can verify what we are saying.

There was an inquiry about the money, which is being charged. I think that inquiry was by Parliament. I hear the report has not been submitted but as far as we are concerned, as a ministry, we saw some flaws in that activity and we stopped it.

Hon. Kibalya alleged that these companies are owned by big shots in Government. The same allegation was made by hon. Nambooze, and this is not the first time. At one time, we were appearing before the Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development and hon. Nambooze alleged that I have companies doing eternalisation of labour. When we came out, I challenged hon. Nambooze to repeat that statement and offer proof or else I was taking her to court. She withdrew the allegations. Now, I am surprised that she is raising that allegation again.

Madam Speaker, I would like to suggest that Members should not abuse the privilege of this House. You do not make such a statement without substantiation. To find out ownership of a company, whether hidden or express, is very easy. I have always challenged whoever alleged that big shots in Government own these companies to bring forward the evidence and lay it on the Table. Nobody has ever done it. It is not good to abuse our privilege and make wild allegations because you know that the press is going to carry these allegations tomorrow and it will be taken as if you made a point.

I would like to assure you, honourable members, that to the best of my knowledge, none of the labour exporting companies is owned by a person in Government. For that matter, some Member had demanded that we provide a list of all the externalisation of labour companies. Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to lay on the Table the list of licensed private companies as at 17 February 2021 and it has 210 companies. I hereby lay.

**THE SPEAKER:** Please, conclude. We have a lot of other work to do.

**MR RUKUTANA:** Hon. Ssemujju said that there are people who are stranded, yet others are going. Honourable members, I would like us to note that people who go abroad are in three categories. There are those who go through licensed companies, those who go through personal contacts with individuals abroad, and it is true that some people may go through human traffickers.

The evidence on record is that the category taken by licensed externalisation of labour companies are the least in those who get distressed. It is true that there have been some few incidents but whenever they occur, the ministry and the Government machinery take up the matter and they handle it and relieve the distressed person.

It is also true that some people are going because as you said, rightly, the labour markets have opened. However, as a country, we have not yet opened for the people who are going for the first time to be externalised. It is true that we allowed those who had come on holiday, those on leave and those who are working and are only returning to their employment. For new cases, we are waiting for the COVID-19 situation to improve.

Of course, we are also mindful that this sector is competitive. We may delay in taking up opportunities and other countries like Kenya, Ethiopia, the Philippines and others will not delay. They are very keen.

As honourable members noted, opportunities here are still limited. Of course, I know the ideal would be to create an atmosphere where we absorb all our labour force but Members have rightly noted that we are not yet at that point. We cannot, as of now, absorb all our labour force who are qualified to join the labour market. Therefore, the important thing now is to put in place a mechanism to ensure that we regulate the sector.

Hon. Basalirwa asked whether we are privy to the contracts between the companies that take our people and the Ugandan workers. It is not a question of being privy only; it is a mandatory requirement. Before any company externalises a workforce, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development looks at the terms of the contracts and engages in negotiating the contracts. It is a mandatory requirement. Nobody externalises Ugandans without us knowing what is going to happen. However, I must say –

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, allow the minister to respond. Those were issues raised.

**MR RUKUTANA:** I must say that whereas that provision exists, some errant companies have breached contracts and where that has happened, we have brought the companies to book.

I entirely agree with hon. Asamo Hellen that the funding is not enough and there are people stranded in our embassies. The measures we have put in place in our regulations and in the new policy are meant to address all that.

Hon. Ababiku Jesca, I have given the list. Hon. Sebaggala, you are right that the opportunities in Uganda are still limited, but I would like to correct you that the Shs 50 million that you have talked about is not paid to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. It is a guarantee given to the ministry by a financial institution – we do not get cash. A bank, an insurance company or any other financial institution gives a guarantee for the enforcement of the requirements under the statutory instrument. We get that money and sometimes apply it whenever need arises.

Like I said, maybe it is important that our new strategy, policy and regulations be brought to this House for you to appreciate and participate in what we are doing. I am assuring you that when they are through, the issues you raised rightly will be handled. Thank you very much.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the Chairperson of the Committee on Gender, Labour and Social Development has requested for a fortnight to complete their report and incorporate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the externalisation of labour.

We would like to give him those two weeks but ask him to work during that time to complete this so that we can address this matter, which has been so troublesome to this House and the country. Earlier we talked about the –

**MS OGWAL:** Madam Speaker, I am sorry to interrupt but I would like to find out from the minister whether there is any formal financial arrangement between the various embassies and the labour export agencies, so that should any of our children be challenged with the kind of disasters that you have highlighted in the paper, the agencies and the Government have a standing arrangement of dealing with the crisis. I ask this because I have not seen it in your communication.

Secondly, the minister should also look at the recommendations that were given by Parliament when we discussed this matter earlier. So, when he comes back, we want to be sure that he has lifted those areas and demonstrated to this Parliament that he has taken action and implemented them. Thank you.

**MR RUKUTANA:** Thank you, hon. Cecilia Ogwal. These recruitment agencies have an association – UAERA. Through their association, they approach the embassies and make some arrangements between them and the Government is not privy to these.

However, in the new regulations, we are proposing some arrangement where the work of oversight and monitoring the workers will be handled by all the stakeholders. I note your request that we study the recommendations. We did study them and they form part of the new proposals, which I have undertaken to bring here.

**THE SPEAKER:** Minister, it would be very important for us to look at the regulations together. I hope you can lay them on the Table as quickly as possible.

Honourable members, earlier we talked about the need for the Committee on Human Rights to expedite their report. I have also received a petition from the Uganda Young Democrats on the deteriorating political environment and violation of human rights. In particular, they claim that the police, the army and the Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (CMI) are in breach of Articles 22, 24, 28, 29 and 44 of the Constitution. I refer the petition to the Committee on Human Rights also to handle and report back quickly.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE CAUSE OF A FIRE THAT GUTTED THE PALACE OF THE OMUSINGA OF RWENZURURU ON 26 JANUARY 2021 DESPITE THE PRESENCE AND WATCH OF

ARMED SECURITY PERSONNEL

4.51

**THE FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (Gen. (Rtd) Moses Ali):** Madam Speaker, the Office of the Prime Minister received a message from the Minister of Defence saying that they will not be ready with this until Wednesday next week.

**THE SPEAKER:** The matter will be reflected on next week’s Order Paper on Wednesday.

LAYING OF PAPERS

1. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PETROLEUM AUTHORITY OF UGANDA FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2019-30 JUNE 2020

4.51

**THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR ENERGY AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT (MINERALS) (Ms Sarah Opendi):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I beg to lay on the Table the annual report of the Petroleum Authority of Uganda for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

**THE SPEAKER:** It is sent to the Committee on Natural Resources for perusal and report back. As I indicated sometime back, in the Eleventh Parliament we may need to consider another committee to deal with annual reports because we have not been able to meet that obligation except in one or two sectors and it is not reflecting well on us. I had asked the rules committee to examine that situation and see how it can be improved.

1. UGANDA COMMUNICATIONS (FEES AND FINES) REGULATIONS, 2019

4.52

**THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE (Ms Judith Nabakooba):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I beg to lay on the Table the Uganda Communications (Fees and Fines) (Amendment No.2) Regulations, 2020 in accordance with section 93 of the Uganda Communications Act, 2013 as amended. I beg to lay.

**THE SPEAKER:** Minister, I understand that you are supposed to first lay on the Table the regulations and then propose the amendment.

**MS NABAKOOBA:** Madam Speaker, I have also been advised to lay on the Table the first copy of the fees and fines that were laid. Parliament directed us to go and work with the people who had petitioned over the fees. This is the earlier copy of the Uganda Communications (Fees and Fines) Regulations, 2019. I beg to lay, Madam Speaker.

**THE SPEAKER:** Noted. Honourable members, under the Uganda Communications (Amendment) Act, 2017, Parliament is given 30 days to review and if necessary, revoke the regulations. Therefore, the Committee on ICT is hereby implored to quickly review those regulations and report back within 30 days. If they do not, the regulations will come into force automatically. Thank you.

Let us go to item No. 5. Honourable members, you may recall that we had substantially handled that Bill. There were only a few clauses, which have been outstanding. We would really want to complete them today.

BILLS

COMMITTEE STAGE

THE NATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Honourable members, just to refresh our minds, we stood over clauses 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 of the Bill.

Clause 10

**THE VICE-CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Ms Agnes Kunihira):** Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under clause 10, we propose to insert a new section 24A to the principal Act. We propose to replace clause 10 to read as follows:

“24A. Midterm access to benefits

(1) A member who has made voluntary contributions to the fund shall be allowed midterm access to his or her benefits accrued from the voluntary saving on such terms and conditions and in a manner prescribed by the Board.

(2) A member who is employed and is 45 years and above or has contributed to the fund for at least 10 years is eligible to mid-term access of a sum not exceeding 20 per cent of his or her accrued benefits.

(3) A member who is a person with disability who ceases to be employed for a period of not less than one year may withdraw 75 per cent of his or her accrued benefits.

(4) A member who is 45 years and above and has ceased to be employed for a period of not less than three years is eligible to mid-term access of a sum not exceeding 40 per cent of his or her accrued benefits.

(5) The minister shall, in consultation with the Board, prescribe by statutory instrument the terms and conditions and procedure for accessing the accrued benefits under this section.”

Madam Chairperson, I am reading from the text of the harmonised position. You may recall that one of the members, hon. Lubogo, had moved a motion and you had asked us to go and harmonise. That is how we came up with this amendment and this position was submitted and uploaded.

**THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS) (Mr Mwesigwa Rukutana):** Madam Chairperson, I am in a precarious situation. The chairperson has mentioned some harmonisation that took place but I was not privy to that harmonisation. I do not have any reason to distrust the chairperson, though. However, I think the safest thing to do is to report on the position of the Government and then the House can take a decision either way.

Our response to the proposed amendment is that the main objective of social security is to ensure that persons get secure retirement, therefore mid-term access should only be maintained on voluntary contributions.

Secondly, it is our view that to open up mid-term access on standard contributions under Article 24A (2) undermines the cardinal principle of social security, of ensuring a secure retirement.

Lastly, allowing Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) who cease to be employed for a period of one year to be eligible for mid-term access of a sum not exceeding 75 per cent of his or her available accrued benefits is worse. This is because PWDs are disproportionately affected by old age.

Therefore, our proposal is that instead of introducing amendment 24A on sub-clauses (2) and (3), clause 10 of the Bill should be maintained. However, even when we maintain it, under clause 9 of the Bill, section 19 (1a) should be amended to read as follows:

“The Board may, in consultation with the minister, by statutory instrument, prescribe additional benefits, including mid-term access on standard contributions.”

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Honourable members, you have heard the proposals. Our committee has made some proposals. I put the question that clause 10 be amended as proposed.

**MS KUNIHIRA:** Madam Chairperson, we have not harmonised with the minister. We already have what is in the report. We had added only one bullet - the one taking into consideration the proposal by hon. Lubogo. I do not know if we are going to resort to what is in clause 10 in the earlier amendments attached to the report.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** We asked you to go and harmonise. That is why we stood over the provision. Now, you have reported, we need to take a vote on that. I put the question that clause 10 be amended as proposed.

*(Question put and agreed to.)*

*Clause 10, as amended, agreed to.*

*Clause 11, agreed to.*

Clause 12

**MS KUNIHIRA:** Madam Chair, clause 12 was not clear. Maybe we need to give notice to re-commit it. It talks of lending to Government. Our justification is that in practice, NSSF already lends to Government through Government securities, treasury bills and bonds or other instructions sold on the open market.

Lending through the open market ensures that members’ funds are protected from transactions below market interest rates, high costs are not imposed on savers, and lastly, the financial market is not distorted since NSSF is a key player in the Uganda market.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Does lending to Government preclude them from doing the other things you were talking about?

**MS KUNIHIRA:** During our debate and discussion in the committee, we said it was like the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, who is the supervisor, would be borrowing money from NSSF directly, yet there are other means through which they can get the money. Our amendment was to delete clause 12.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** In clause 12, there is an amendment to delete the words, “which may include lending to the Government”. If everybody is okay with that, I put the question that -

**MR AOGON:** Madam Chair, if I understood her well, I know her fears. Just like we borrow money from World Bank and other places, if we maintain the original position – Government has been borrowing money from NSSF and there are these securities like bonds. That is what we feel is safe. We do not want to have a provision, which opens up NSSF money to the Government where they will borrow money directly, the same way we borrow from African Development Bank. I think that is what she is talking about.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** I think the minister has agreed to the amendment. Let clause 12 be amended by deleting the words, “which may include lending to the Government”. I put the question that clause 12 be amended as proposed.

*(Question put and agreed to.)*

*Clause 12, as amended, agreed to.*

*Clause 13, agreed to.*

*Clause 14, agreed to.*

*Clause 15, agreed to.*

Clause 16

**MS KUNIHIRA:** Madam Chair, in clause 16, we propose to insert a new paragraph as follows and renumber: “(a) in subsection (1), by inserting the word ‘special’ after the word ‘voluntary’.”

The justification is: to provide for a special contribution by members.

**MR RUKUTANA:** Madam Chair, on the proposed amendment, I would object to the insertion of the word “special” after the word “voluntary” in Clause 16(a). Instead, I would move that we amend Section 34(2)(b)(i) to read as follows: “attaining the age of 60 years and there is no balance on his or her account”.

The justification for my objection and my proposal is that Section 34 of the Act is about members’ accounts. Members’ accounts receive 15 per cent from the employer; that is, five per cent from the employee and 10 per cent from the employer as prescribed under sections 11 and 12 of the Act. Special contributions go to the reserve account as employers’ contributions for employing non-eligible members provided for under section 13 of the Act. Special contributions are therefore penalties paid by employers and as such, I think the best way to proceed is as I have proposed.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Could the chair read the whole sentence that you are trying to insert?

**MS KUNIHIRA:** In Clause 16, we are inserting a new paragraph to read as follows and we re-number: “(a) in subsection (1) by inserting the word ‘special’ after the word ‘voluntary’.”

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Madam Chair, I am reading the Bill and I do not see the word “voluntary”. That is why I am asking you to read the entire new sentence. That is what I want to hear. I have got subsections (16)(a) and (16)(b) and I do not see the word “voluntary” there.

**MS KUNIHIRA:** Madam Chair, the word “special” is being inserted in Section 34 of the principal Act – member’s account.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** The word “member’s account” is not in Clause 16.

**MS KUNIHIRA:** Madam Chairperson, we concede because “special voluntary” is not in the definition.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Clause 16 remains as it is. I put the question that Clause 16-

**DR LYOMOKI:** Madam Chairperson, there was an amendment, which is being brought by the honourable minister, which is good for the workers. I would request that in that particular clause-

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Honourable members, we said that spontaneous amendments are a problem here, whether from the minister or from the back benchers. Therefore, should we leave Clause 16 as it is?

**MS OGWAL:** Madam Chairperson, Clause 16(c) talks about the Minister for Finance Planning and Economic Development. I believe that what we discussed and resolved in the earlier debate still stands; that it must be the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development. So, the responsible person to supervise the management of NSSF should be the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

**DR LYOMOKI:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. That sort of controversy has been resolved by taking the formulation of the Bill in Clause 12. We have already handled that where we have left both the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development in charge of labour.

The current Act that we are trying to amend confers this duty to the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development in charge of labour. If we leave it the way it is, it resolves your concern. I suggest we proceed the way the Bill has been proposed.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Honourable members, I put the question that clause 16 do stand part of the Bill?

*(Question put and agreed to.)*

*Clause 16, agreed to.*

*Clause 17, agreed to.*

Clause 18

**MS KUNIHIRA:** Madam Chairperson, in clause 18, we propose to insert a new paragraph to read as follows and renumber: “in Sub-section (1)(b) by repealing the words. ‘any special contribution and’.” Amendment of Section 36 of the principal Act.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** What is the headnote for Section 36 of the principal Act?

**MS KUNIHIRA:** Madam Chairperson, the headnote is “reserve account”. Maybe let me read the whole amendment –

“in sub-section (1) (b) by repealing the words ‘any special contribution and’.”

“inserting immediately after sub-section (3) the following subsection – ‘(4) The Board shall publish any contributions and the source which cannot be allocated to the account of any member, in a newspaper of wide circulation’.”

The justification is that the Bill is allowing special contributions to be paid to the fund by members, so they should be allocated to the members for whom they are paid.

Two, publication will enable the concerned member to claim their benefit since it is contributed for a purpose.

**MR MUSASIZI:**  Thank you, Madam Chairperson. To me, this proposal collapses since the chairperson already conceded on special contributions in Clause 16. I do not see why we leave it here basing on her justification. Therefore, I would like to pray that she drops her proposal.

**MR RUKUTANA:** In addition to what hon. Musasizi has said, we cannot repeal this word because special contributions are a form of penalty against a contributing employer who hires a non-resident and is not eligible to contribute to NSSF.

Secondly, all employees do not make special contributions. Therefore, special contributions should be left to be deposited in the reserve account because they exist.

**MR AOGON:** Madam Chairperson, my key concern is the aspect of transparency. Every time we have such money in the reserve, we should be having a provision, which demands for us to bring it to the public eye so that everybody gets to know what exactly we have in the reserve. Is that a bad move? I thought it is very important to do something about it like the chairperson has proposed. My concern is about transparency; bring the information to the public eye. That is it.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Have you read Clause 36(2)?

**MR MUSASIZI:** Thank you, Madam Chairperson. If we are to adopt that proposal, then we could deal with it under reserve account and not where it is being proposed.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Honourable members, I put the question that Clause 18 do stand part of the Bill?

*(Question put and agreed to.)*

*Clause 18, agreed to.*

*Title, agreed to.*

MOTION FOR THE HOUSE TO RESUME

5.22

**THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS) (Mr Rukutana):** Madam Chairperson, I beg to move that the House do resume and the Committee of whole House do report thereto.

**THE CHAIRPERSON:** Honourable members, I put the question that the House do resume and the Committee of the whole House report thereto.

*(Question put and agreed to.)*

*(The House resumed, the Speaker presiding\_)*

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE

5.23

**THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS) (Mr Mwesigwa Rukutana):** Madam Speaker, I beg to report that the Committee of the whole House has considered all the clauses of the Bill entitled “The National Social Security Fund (Amendment) Bill” and passed them with some amendments.

MOTION FOR ADOPTION OF THE REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE

5.24

**THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS) (Mr Mwesigwa Rukutana):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the report of the Committee of the whole House be adopted.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, the question is that the report of the Committee of the whole House be adopted.

*(Question put and agreed to.)*

*Report adopted.*

BILLS

THIRD READING

THE NATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

5.24

**THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS) (Mr Mwesigwa Rukutana):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill entitled, “The National Social Security Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2019” be read the third time and do pass.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I put the question that “The National Social Security Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2019” be read the third time and do pass.

*(Question put and agreed to.)*

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED, “THE NATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY FUND (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2019”

**THE SPEAKER:** Title settled and Bill passes.

**DR LYOMOKI:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the workers, I just want to thank you, the honourable minister and the Members for passing this Bill into an Act.

I would like to apologise for my conduct last time, which was unparliamentarily. You know, when a mother is in labour, the pain can make her kick around. I acted as if I was not respecting the Chair yet deep inside my heart, I respect you. I would like to ask for your forgiveness and the House to put on record that that was just labour pains and you had nothing to do. I ask God to bless you and the whole House.

**THE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, hon. Lyomoki. Apology is accepted and we do understand the situation you were in at the time, but thank God that finally the “baby” has been delivered.

**MS KUNIHIRA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also would like to thank you and the Members for considering this Bill. It has been long overdue. I know every Member here was getting pressure from their constituency to complete and pass this Bill into law. I would like to thank the two committees - the one on gender and the other on finance - that worked together to make this report.

**THE SPEAKER:** On behalf of the House, let me also thank the committees on finance and on gender. It is usually hard for two committees to work together to produce a good Bill. It was very tedious but I really want to thank you for the work done. Hon. Ndeezi, hon. Musasizi and your members, thank you so much.

BILLS

SECOND READING

THE UGANDA RED CROSS SOCIETY, 2019

**THE SPEAKER:** The mover is not here. Let us go to item No. 7.

MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION OF THE NATIONAL LOCAL CONTENT BILL, 2019 AS RETURNED BY H.E THE PRESIDENT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 91(3) (B) OF THE CONSTITUTION AND RULE 142 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF PARLIAMENT

5.28

**THE CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON FINANCE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (Mr Henry Musasizi)**: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Local Content Bill was returned by the President when we had gone away for campaigns; we only found it on the Table on return.

I would like to beg that you give us two more weeks to conclude the process. There are two Bills; one is on local content and the other on the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets (PPDA) amendment. I would like to beg for your indulgence that within two weeks, I come back and report.

**THE SPEAKER:** Honourable members, that means that in the first week of March, you should be here with your Bill. Please realise that time is of essence. Let us move on to item No.8.

MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION OF THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AND DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC ASSETS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019 AS RETURNED BY H.E THE PRESIDENT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 91(3)(B) OF THE CONSTITUTION AND RULE 142 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF PARLIAMENT

**THE SPEAKER:** Has the minister laid it on the Table for review? That is the second Bill where we have given you two weeks. Let us go to item No.9.

MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION OF THE GENETIC ENGINEERING REGULATORY BILL, 2018 AS RETURNED BY H.E THE PRESIDENT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 91(3) (B) OF THE CONSTITUTION AND RULE 142 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF PARLIAMENT

**THE SPEAKER:** The Minister of Science and Technology is not here.

**MR AOGON:** Madam Speaker, I and another colleague who is not here have a lot of interest in this matter. It is good if we stay it, since I do not even see the relevant minister here and the committee chair. I think it would be good if we handled it next week for us to prepare adequately.

**THE SPEAKER:** Okay, honourable members, it appears that part of our team is not here. Earlier this afternoon, I enumerated a number of outstanding Bills that are before the committees. I want to give the committees time tomorrow, Friday and Monday so that we can generate some business. House adjourned until Tuesday next week at 2.00 p.m.

*(The House rose at 5.31 p.m. and adjourned until Tuesday, 23 February 2021 at 2.00 p.m.)*