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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

CONTENTS

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS AND THE OFFICIAL REPORT — [Col. 1]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — [Col. 3]

STATEMENTS—

- a) Revocation of Appointments and Recruitments — [Col. 28]
- b) National Chocolate Week, 2025 — [Col. 38]
- c) Commemoration of the 2025 National Chocolate Day — [Col. 42]
- d) Celebration of Valentine's Day and National Chocolate Day — [Col. 46]
- e) Black History Month — [Col. 97]

ADJOURNMENT— [Col.122]

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THE
PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF GHANA

FIRST MEETING, 2025

Friday, 14th February, 2025

The House met at 11.08 a.m.

[MR FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER IN
THE CHAIR]

PRAYERS

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, there being no communications from the Speaker and the President, can we move to the item numbered 5, *Correction of Votes and Proceedings and Official Report*.

**VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS AND
THE OFFICIAL REPORT**

Hon Members, the *Votes and Proceedings* of Thursday, 13th February 2025.

Page 1...16?

Mr Anthony Mmieh: Mr Speaker, there seems to be an error with the item numbered 1 – Opening on page 16. I believe the “the” in front of the “Thursday” on line 4 ought to be deleted.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, is that all?

Mr Mmieh: That is it.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Table, take note. Any more on page 16?

Page 17...20?

Mr Frank Afriyie: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

On page 20, the item numbered 1, line 3, I guess the word should be insurance: Social Security and National Insurance, but the ‘r’ has rather been omitted.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table, please take note.

Page 22...23.

Hon Members, in the absence of any further correction, the *Votes and Proceedings* of Thursday, 13th February 2025, is hereby adopted as the true records of proceedings.

Hon Members, the *Official Report* of Tuesday, 4th February, 2025. Any correction?

[No correction was made to the Official Report of Tuesday, 4th February, 2025]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, we will move on to the Business Statement.

Yes, Majority Leader, the Business Statement.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Chairman of the Business Committee/Majority Leader (Mr Mahama Ayariga): Mr Speaker, this is the Business Statement for the Sixth week ending Friday, 21st February, 2025. Your Committee met on Thursday, 13th February, 2025, and arranged the Business of the House for the Sixth week.

Mr Speaker, the Committee accordingly submits its Report as follows:

Arrangement of Business

Formal Communications by the Speaker

Mr Speaker, you may read any available communication to the House.

Question(s)

Mr Speaker, the Business Committee has taken cognizance of Questions you have admitted so far, and the respective Ministries have been notified to commence preparations towards responding to the Questions.

Accordingly, the Business Committee, pursuant to Order 77 of the Standing Orders, would begin scheduling of Questions in the ensuing week.

Statements

Mr Speaker, pursuant to Order 91(2), Ministers of State may be permitted to make Statements on Government policy.

You may also admit Statements by Hon Members in accordance with Order 93.

Mr Speaker, the Committee of Selection is concluding the composition the Standing and Select Committees and the Report would be submitted to the House early next week.

Papers and Reports

Mr Speaker, pursuant to Order 97, Papers may be laid during the week and Reports from Committees may also be presented to the House for consideration.

Motions and Resolutions

Mr Speaker, Motions may be debated and their consequential Resolutions, if any, taken during the week.

Briefing of the House

Mr Speaker, the Business Committee has programmed the Minister for Health to brief the House on Tuesday, 18th February, 2025, on the outbreak of the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV), meningitis in the northern part of the country, and cholera in the Effutu Municipality.

The Business Committee has also scheduled the Minister for Energy for Thursday, 20th February, 2025, to brief the House on the steps being taken by the Ministry towards the gradual transition of the country in the use of clean and renewable energy.

Hon Members are to take note and avail themselves for the briefings on the said dates.

Conclusion

Mr Speaker, in accordance with Order 216(2) and subject to Order 67, the Committee submits to the House the order in which the Business of the House shall be taken during the week.

Tuesday, 18th February, 2025

Roll Call

National Pledge

Statements

Presentation of Papers

Motions

Committee Sitings

Wednesday, 19th February, 2025

Roll Call

Statements

Presentation of Papers

Motions

Committee Sitings

Thursday, 20th February, 2025

Roll Call

Statements

Presentation of Papers

Motions

Committee Sitings

Friday, 21st February, 2025

Roll call

Statements

Presentation of Papers

Motions

Committee Sitings

11.18 a.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Majority Leader. The Business Statement has been presented; any comments?

Mr Patrick Yaw Boamah: Mr Speaker, let me commend the Leader of the House for the presentation of the Business of the House for the week ending 21st February, 2025. However, I would like to refer the Leader of the House to Standing Order 222. Leader, it is on the House Committee. I think one of the Committees that this House has overlooked year-on-year is the House Committee and Mr Speaker, with your kind permission, let me refer you to Standing Order 222(2), which reads:

“The Committee shall consider any matter connected with the provision of services to Members of Parliament that includes the office, residence, catering, medical care, working and other facilities and make recommendations to the House for approval and implementation.”

Mr Speaker, you realise that most of the lifts leading to our offices are not working. Also, security on the floors, as well as some of the air conditioners in the offices of Members are not functioning properly. There are broken tiles on the floor, and I believe that next time, the Committee of Selection must constitute the House Committee as part of the Appointments Committee to oversee the working of some of these broken-down facilities. It cannot be that when we receive delegations in our offices on the 10th floor, they have to wait for about 20 minutes before they get onto the lifts. It is not good. The tiles are not in place; the air conditioners are not working properly; security on the floors is not too good and comfortable, and I believe it is something that must also be looked at.

I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Point well made.

Dr Eric Afful: Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Business Statement presented by the Leader of the House. I have realised one or two things in the House which I want to bring to our attention.

Mr Speaker, our Friends on the other Side have been invoking Article 102 of our Constitution. More so, our Standing Order 64, which all boils down to quorum in this House. And they raise it at a time when we are handling an important Public Business of the House. I want to make a personal application to you. The application is that if you agree, through the Leaders of the House and

through the Business Committee, I want us to shift our Sitting time from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Mr Speaker, I am saying this because, firstly, it would help Hon Members to use their mornings for their administrative duties and to be in their seats. Secondly, it would help Ministers of State to prepare adequately to answer parliamentary Questions from Members and make Statements on their Ministries. Mr Speaker, thirdly, it would also help you because I know that your Speakership does not lie only in this Chamber. You have other administrative duties that you can also do in the morning hours. So, I am making this application to you; if it can be adopted.

Mr Speaker, fortunately, I have been with the Business Committee for almost eight years, and through your influence, I have visited a lot of Parliaments in the world. The last one was Zambia, where they start their Sittings between 12 noon and 2:00 p.m. and that helps them. So, if we can replicate that in this country, I think it will go a long way to help us. This is my application.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Any further comments?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, I would like to find out from the Leader of Government Business when the Message on the State of the Nation would be presented and when we should expect the Budget.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Any comments?

Osahen Alexander Kwamena Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, first, let me thank the Leader of Government Business for delivering the Business Statement for the ensuing week.

One issue that I wanted clarity on has already been dealt with by my respected Colleague, Alhaji Habib Iddrisu. That has to do with the Message on the State of the Nation; we wanted to know when this would happen in this House. I am sure the Majority Leader would have an opportunity to deal with this.

Mr Speaker, in the course of the week, there were certain matters that I believe the Leader of Government Business must take steps to address same; that has to do with revocation of appointments. We hear of—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, I said you should raise it at the time allotted.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Yes, it is not that one. Mr Speaker, I am always guided. I would not act in bad faith, please.

Mr Speaker, we heard of Hon Edward Abambire Bawa being appointed as Acting Chief Executive of the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) and he has now been reassigned to GOIL PLC (GOIL). Again, we heard of Hon Hanna Louisa Bissiw going to be the Administrator of District Assembly Common Fund (DACF), but, now, we have heard Mr Ishmael Yamson's son is going there. We had Ms Bernice Makafui Brempong

being appointed to the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) and now, we have heard they have changed it to Mr Simon Madjie.

Mr Speaker, the President has just assumed office. It appears as though what is happening is Asiedu Nketia *fa baako*, Julius Debrah, *fa baako*, *yen ky3 mu p3*, *wo fa baako a*, *ma yi baako*. *S3 obi ani ngye a*, *m'asesa no*. [Laughter]

Mr Speaker, the President should not be sent into a lame duck rather too quickly. The President is just forming his government, and this posture does not give a good signal to the investment community. And governance requires that there must be some certainty because GIPC is a very important state agency that drives investment into the country.

Mr Dafeamekpor — *rose* —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader—

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, normally, he should let me finish, then he can make his point. Mr Speaker, do not encourage this point of order.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Let me hear him.

Mr Rockson-Nelson Etse Kwami Dafeamekpor: Mr Speaker, I would not have done this, but I had to because the Minority Leader, in making his submissions, spoke Twi and said, “Asiedu Nketia *fa baako*”. I believe

that—[*Interruption*]—No, I believe that—[*Interruption*]—

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Which order are you coming under? You cannot just start—[*Interruption*]—

Mr Dafeamekpor: Why? Are you the Speaker?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon First Deputy Minority Whip, with all due respect, I do not expect you to get up without having the floor and begin to speak.

11.28 a.m.

Mr Dafeamekpor: Mr Speaker, the Minority Leader knows better. He can make his point without drawing in my National Chairman's name. Because, my National Chairman is not an appointor of the persons he has referenced in his submission. So, with all due respect to him, he should withdraw that aspect of the submission that drew in my National Chairman.

I thank you for your attention.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, just take note.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Very well. I have taken note.

Mr Speaker, we are aware in this House the history of Friends of Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings (FONKAR) and Get Atta Mills Elected (GAME) and that is why I was trying to caution—The FONKAR-GAME era— So, I am just

being very careful here. We know the President has one term and he just assumed office. All of us must support the President, especially his own party members. Because if he makes an appointment today, he will reassign. So, for instance, we have four more Deputy Ministers that are to be nominated to add up to make it 60. It is still delaying and we do not know what is happening—[*Interruption*]—Yes, there are 56 and they need to add four more to make it 60.

Mr Speaker, we do not want a situation where we start vetting the 14 Nominees that we have and something comes up at the tail end. So, I want the Leader of Government Business to ferry this to the Presidency, encourage the Presidency to as a matter of urgency, nominate these additional four Deputy Ministers. We have Deputy Minister for Communication, Digital Technology and Innovations pending, we have Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs pending, we have deputies for Ministry of Health and Ministry of Transport pending.

Mr Speaker, we also know that there are very prominent senior Members of this House who have still not been considered. We will not repeat it. But there is anxiety on the Frontbench and the Backbench of the Majority. So, the Leader of Government Business must bring certainty to this matter by dealing with it.

Mr Speaker, the second issue has to do with Government's suspension of the implementation of National Roads Authority Bill, 2023, which sought to restructure the management of roads and

highways. Indeed, per Act 1118 —this House passed the law in July 2024 to streamline the management of Ghana roads infrastructure by merging Ghana Highways Authority (GHA), Department of Urban Roads, and the Department of Feeder Roads into a unified entity for improved coordination and management. However, the announcement of the suspension of this Act to allow for stakeholder engagement is unknown to governance. I believe this Government came into office with its own manifesto.

Today, a committee here and a committee there as if they are now enacting their manifesto. There is a law and that must be implemented. They cannot, on their own, at the Ministry, suspend the law and say they want to engage in further stakeholder consultation. It does not happen. We have given a rather negative signal. So, I want the Leader of Government Business to take this matter up and advise government, so that the government may not find itself in any illegality.

Mr Speaker, the third issue has to do with a communication by the spokesperson to the President and Minister of State in charge of Government Communications. This is dated the 11th February, 2025, and it reads:

“President Mahama directs Finance Minister to urgently bridge USAID funding gap.”

Mr Speaker, basically, this public notice is directing Dr Cassiel Ato Forson, the Minister for Finance to find

ways of filling that gap of US\$156 million as a result of United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID) suspension of support. How can the Minister for Finance be directed to do such a thing without at least a certain level of engagement with Parliament? The Minister for Finance must be directed to engage Parliament. He cannot on his own—Parliament is an important governance institution. So, when we see letters flying from the Jubilee House to the Ministry for Finance and it is being read in the media, what is the use of Parliament?

Mr Speaker, this is an important matter for the Leader of Government Business to take up. We want the Minister for Finance to, as a matter of urgency, appear before us to brief us on the steps he is taking, pursuant to this directive. He cannot do things on his own. This is the people’s Chamber. The people’s representatives must have the opportunity of knowing what is happening at the Ministry of Finance.

Mr Speaker, on the issue of violence, we raised this matter here and the Leader of Government Business, that is Dr Ato Forson, the Majority Leader as he then was, assured the House that he would engage Government and state security agencies to enforce the law and not to allow lawlessness in our country. The Council of State elections that took place, we all heard what happened in Ashanti Region. It is important for all of us to come to terms with the fact that peace is a *sine qua non*. We need peace in this country for our democracy. We cannot allow people who are always

disappointed in the outcome of an election to introduce violence. It will not help us. Maybe today, it favours somebody, but tomorrow it may go against all of us. Let us be careful about that.

I want the Minister for the Interior to be programmed by the Majority Leader to come and explain to us steps that are being taken to ensure that our laws are enforced. What happened in Kumasi in the Ashanti Region is most regrettable and very unacceptable. That during counting, some thugs entered the enclave where the counting is taking place, overpowered the police. This is serious. You have unarmed ordinary citizens overpowering the police. Let us be careful. So, the Minister would have to brief us and assure us that such a thing would not be allowed to happen.

Mr Speaker, my final point on this has to do with the recent press conference held by the respected Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Again, it is within our right to know certain decisions that the Attorney-General is taking in his Ministry. Yes, he can hold a press conference, but he must brief the House. He is saying that without consulting the President and engaging Cabinet, on his own, he has entered *nolle prosequi*, in other words, he is discontinuing certain criminal trials. He told the press that the President is not even aware, and he is responsible, and that he is yet to prepare a Cabinet memo.

11.38 a.m.

Mr Speaker, this is unacceptable. I again invite the Leader of Government

Business, as part of next week's agenda, to programme the learned Attorney-General to give this House a full briefing and for us to ask him the necessary questions. This is so that the Members of Parliament who have concerns about the reasons for the *nolle prosequi* will have answers. It is important.

Mr Speaker, without more—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader—

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: I said that was my last point.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, but Hon Minority Leader, when the power of a *nolle prosequi* is exercised, is it questionable?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, thank you for the question. I would first give you a political answer and then attempt a legal answer.

Mr Speaker, we operate in a political space. All my prayer is that—The Attorney-General has briefed the press. He held a press conference and briefed the press. This is the Chamber where the people's representatives deliberate. I am saying that the respected Majority Leader should, as part of next week's programme—Mr Speaker, what we are doing here is Business Statement, and I am saying that if the Attorney-General has found it prudent to hold a press conference to brief the press, then as part of our bona fides as a Parliament, the Majority Leader should programme him to also brief the House.

Mr Speaker, he is not required to provide a reason for entering into a *nolle-prosequi*. But we are saying that since he has gone to the extent of deciding to give an explanation to the media, we are the people's representatives, so it is only a request to the Leader of Government Business to invite him here so that he briefs us. That is basically the point I am making.

Mr Speaker, I will rest my case on that to allow the Leader to answer some of the questions.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader and Hon Members, in Ghana, the Attorney-General has the statutory power to issue a *nolle prosequi*, under the Criminal Procedure Code, 1960 (Act 30), to discontinue any criminal proceedings before final judgment is made, and this is without question from anybody. I believe when the Attorney-General is programmed to come here, the House would be questioning the Attorney-General on the exercise of his authority; so, please, let us tread cautiously.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with respect, it is a good exercise—
[Uproar]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, I believe that we should tread cautiously; I just want us to tread cautiously.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, we are here to learn and you are here to also help with the process of governance. It is not for us to question the Attorney-

General's discretion. I mount my request on the ground that he himself, *suo motu*, has engaged the press. In fact, this is the first time in our recent history that an Attorney-General has invited the press to give an explanation as to why he has discontinued a case. And I am saying that the right forum for this act is Parliament.
[Uproar]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, order!

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I am only inviting the Leader of Government Business to programme the Minister as part of the Business Statement. Mr Speaker, the matter is relevant because this is the Business Statement, which is to consider the Business of the ensuing week, and we have good reason, as a House, to allow contributions after the Leader has made the presentation. So, in making a contribution, I am urging upon the respected Leader to consider inviting the Attorney-General to come and brief us. That is if it finds favour with him and with the leave of the House.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: It is not enough to brief the press because this is an important national issue. Mr Speaker, I rest my case.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I will give the Floor to the Majority Leader to respond. Before doing that, Hon Members, let us remind ourselves that the issue under consideration is the

Business Statement of the sixth week ending Friday, 21st February, 2025. It is in relation to the said Business Statement that we are taking comments. Hon Members, I want us to focus on it and comment as such.

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, I thank Hon Colleagues for drawing attention to a number of matters relating to the Business Statement for next week. Let me start with the issue of appointments raised by the Minority Leader. Mr Speaker, I believe the Minority Leader is aware of Article 79 of the Constitution, which says:

“The President may, in consultation with a Minister of State, and with the prior approval of Parliament, appoint one or more Deputy Ministers...”

The appointment of a Deputy Minister has to be done in consultation with the substantive Minister. So, the nominations for Deputy Ministers cannot come at the same speed that those of the substantive Ministers came. I hope that the Minority Leader is educated a little now and he appreciates it.

Now that the Ministers are in place, the President has to take his time, consult the sector Ministers, and agree with them on the Deputy Ministers, and now bring the nominations. The Minority Leader should take his time as the President is consulting his Ministers, and after the consultation, he will bring their names. I hope he understands.

Now to the issue of other agencies. If we noticed, all the letters that went out to

the people appointed to the agencies did not appoint them as substantive officials. They have been asked to act. If we will recall, before we passed the Transition Act, we had a difficulty where, like the former Minister for Defence tried to convince this House the other day, at midnight of 7th January, the Government ceases to exist and there is a vacuum. So, very often, what we do is to send people to act; then, subsequently, we make up our minds as to where we want them to serve, then a realignment is done; that is what is happening.

So, when somebody is asked to act as an official somewhere, he is not appointed as a substantive head of that institution. That gives the President the liberty to realign and decide who to move to what organisation when he now settles down. That is where the person may then be asked to serve as a substantive head or CEO of that agency. What is happening is not out of the ordinary; it is normal, and that is what is expected when there is a transition.

On the issue of the Roads and Highway Authority, it was raised in this House the other day, and the Minister for Roads and Highways was here and I inquired.

11.48 a.m.

ajiIt turned out that the workers in the Ministry had petitioned the National Labour Commission (NLC) and the NLC had gone into the matter, and they then decided that the implementation of the Act should be suspended pending the

resolution of the labour issues. So, this was a decision of the Labour Commission; it had nothing to do with the Hon Minister. In fact, the Minister had not got to the Ministry yet when the Labour Commission took that decision. And I saw a copy of the decision of the Labour Commission. So, it is not this Government that has decided to suspend the implementation of the Act. It is the Labour Commission that has directed that the implementation of the Act be suspended in the interim while they resolve the labour issue. Because in the opinion of the Labour Commission, there were some appointments, promotions and labour issues that would make it difficult for the provisions of the Act to be implemented. So that is a decision of the Labour Commission and not the Government of the NDC.

And then on the issue of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding gap, I think the President could direct the Minister for Finance to find a way of dealing with the gap that would be created because of the suspension of USAID funding coming into the country. I am told that last year, USAID funding alone was about US\$150 million. So, if that is suspended by the US Government or it is taken out of what would normally come to us, the Minister for Finance, in preparing his Budget, has to find a way of making sure that he makes provisions so that those activities that were funded by the USAID can now be dealt with by the Government of Ghana. For instance, some of the USAID funding goes into things like supporting antiretroviral

medications. There are a number of activities that they support. And so, if they stop funding those activities, malaria-related matters—I think the other day the former Minister for Finance made a Statement in which he outlined areas where the Government of Ghana normally gets support through USAID to fund. And so, if we are losing that, then we have to make provision for some way of funding those activities. And so, when the President writes or communicates to the Minister for Finance to make provision for the funding gap that would be created, it is to draw his attention so that in the Budget that would be presented to this Parliament, he would make sure that he takes care of all those activities. Indeed, this is a very responsive Government. This is a Statement made by the Minority Side's own former Minister for Finance. He drew attention to the fact that there would be a funding gap. He was rather trying to convince this Government not to do away with certain taxes that we promised to do away with. That was what he proposed. But we rejected that and said, do not worry, we would find a way of dealing with that funding gap that would be created. We would not continue with certain draconian taxes that we disagree with, no matter what funding gap that is going to be created by USAID funding not coming into the country. [*Hear! Hear!*]

On the issue of Sitting in the afternoons, I have always been an advocate of Sitting in the afternoons, because, I have also gone around West Africa and I have noticed that a lot of

Parliaments tend to Sit in the afternoons so that they allow professionals like lawyers, doctors, business people, *et cetera* to go and practice. Because what happens is that when people get elected as Members of Parliament and they are lawyers, the legal profession loses the services of those people. This is because we are supposed to Sit at 10 a.m. and then they cannot go to court; the doctors can also not go to the hospitals. By the time they close, it would be too late and they would be tired and all that. So, in some jurisdictions, they start Sitting in the afternoon and then they close very late into the night and they get work done. So, I have no issue except that this is a matter that should be discussed with the Speaker and it is going to be the Speaker's decision. It cannot be the Business Committee's decision because our Standing Orders makes provision for us to start Sitting at 10 a.m. And so the Business Committee would continue to programme on the assumption that Sitting would start at 10 a.m. in the morning. House Committee, we discussed it and we indicated that next week we would present the Report of the Committee of Selection so that we can constitute the various Committees. And so, the House Committee is one of those Committees that the Standing Orders make provision for so it would also be part of the Report. Therefore, the House Committee would come into existence.

The Minister for Finance has indicated that he would want to present the Budget either on the 10th or 11th March but I told him that 10th is a Monday and since we do not Sit on Mondays, 11th March would be a more

appropriate date for him to present the Budget. So, 11th March is the date that the Hon Minister proposes to bring the Budget to us for consideration.

The Office of the President has also communicated that the State of the Nation address, if we are available as a House, could be presented on the 27th February. So that is the provisional date that the Office of President has communicated to us regarding the presentation of the State of the Nation by His Excellency, the President.

I believe that the Minority Leader knows that there are many ways by which matters can be brought before this House. When we want the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General to come to this House and answer questions about how he exercised his discretion to enter *nolle prosequi* — the Minority Leader knows how one can come to this House. He can ask a Question to the Minister. He is a Minister in addition to being the Attorney-General. So, his responsibility as a Minister is to this House. His exercise of his powers as Attorney-General, those are discretionary powers that he has exercised.

And so, the Minority Leader could ask the Hon Minister a Question and he would come to this House and answer those questions. The Minority Leader could also make a Statement in this House and we can all comment on his Statement. But the Minority Leader cannot always seek to use Business Statement presentation as a platform to organise a press conference. The Minority Leader cannot be allowed to do

that. So please, cease and desist from continuing to try to use this platform as a platform for organising press conferences.

As for what happened in Kumasi, this House does not know what happened in Kumasi. If the Minority Leader wants this House to deal with any matter that happened in Kumasi, he should come properly. Bring a Question to the Minister for the Interior. He would come and answer the Question. If it relates to conduct of the police, he would come and answer Question. If it relates to matters of law and order in the country, he would come and answer questions. But like I said, cease and desist this conduct of always trying to use Business Statement time as a platform for making press conferences. [*Hear! Hear!*] We would not allow that. We would not allow the Minority Leader to continue.

Today, we indulge the Minority Leader. Next time, we would prevent the Minority Leader from making such Statements on the floor of the House.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Minority Leader, you know you do not have a right to respond.

Hon Minority Leader, let us make progress with all due respect to you. Hon Minority Leader, I would give you the floor after adopting the Business Statement. — On the Business Statement?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with respect, let us not set up a new precedent. I keep saying it.

Mr Speaker, only yesterday, I was a Leader of Government Business. The Majority Leader in opposition — I would go for the *Hansard*. I have enjoyed his tutorials, but fortunately, *Hansard* is always a record to guide us. Today, when an Hon Member is raising a matter for a Minister to be programmed, one is told to go for a press conference. No, I take it lightly. I know he said it on a lighter note. Mr Speaker, these are part of the *bona fides* of every Hon Member of Parliament. A Member asks a question, makes a Statement, and also make an application for a Minister to be programmed to brief the House on a national issue. And that is the gravamen of the application I made. So, I am not wrong at all. I cannot be wrong on this matter. Mr Speaker, I said that there is violence in Kumasi regarding the Council of State election.

11.58 a.m.

So, the Minister of the Interior be programmed. I said that we have seen the re-assignment of people from one agency to the other. Is it the case that the Government was not prepared at the time it took office? These are national issues I am raising; there was nothing wrong with them. I also said that the Attorney-General should be programmed to come and explain to us why he did the press conference when the people's representatives have not been briefed, so I am saying that the Majority Leader should programme him to come and brief the House.

Mr Speaker, these are national issues, but I would rest my case. I have taken his tutorials, but the Majority Leader should be rest assured that, next week, I would bring the *Hansard*—[*Interruption*]—Research is not a problem for me. I am going to bring up all the issues he raised when he was in the middle Bench and also acted as the *defacto* legal advisor to his Frontbench. He was the *defacto* legal advisor to the Frontbench; he was always harassing me when I was in that black seat with issues and, today, he says I should file a Question. Next time, they will prevent me; I do not know how they are going to prevent me. Whether they would sacrifice me or not, I do not know.

Mr Speaker, but I am guided by the precedent they taught me when I was a Majority Leader. The way Mr Dafeamekpor, the current Chief Whip—For him, I would rest my case. He would raise quorum and, today, they are complaining about quorum. He would raise quorum, and I had to beg him. Today, you see—Mr Speaker, I rest my case.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, thank you very much.

Hon Members, the Business Statement for the Sixth week ending Friday, 21st February, 2025, is hereby adopted.

Hon Members, we will move to the item numbered 7, Statement.

Yes, Minority Leader?

STATEMENT

Revocation of Appointments and Recruitments

Minority Leader (Osahen Alexander Kwamena Afenyo-Markin): Mr Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to make this Statement on the aftermath of the directive of the Chief of Staff to state institutions regarding the employment of civil servants and public servants post 7th December, 2024.

Mr Speaker, in a letter dated 10th February, 2025, with reference SCR/DA85/B5/01/A.

“OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Revocation of Appointment and Recruitment Made After 7th December 2024

Consistent with Government pronouncement in relation to near end of tenure appointments and recruitment, I wish to bring to your attention that all appointment and recruitment made in the Public Services of Ghana after 7th December, 2024 are not in compliance with established good governance practices and principles. Accordingly, all Heads of Government Institutions are hereby requested to take the necessary steps to annul any such appointments or recruitment and submit a comprehensive report on the actions taken to this Office by 17th February, 2025.

Your cooperation in this matter is highly appreciated.”

Signed

Hon Julius Debrah
Chief of Staff

ALL HEADS OF GOVERNMENT
INSTITUTIONS”

Mr Speaker, pursuant to this, state institutions have been issuing termination letters and revoking appointments, and it is causing a lot of trauma to the youth of the country who have been employed by the state. I have seen letters from the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), Ghana Water Limited, Ghana Grid Company (GRIDCo), and, of particular concern, the Ghana Health Service (GHS). Health professionals who were recruited have been given letters to go home. Teachers who were recruited have been given letters to go home.

Mr Speaker, recruitment is not an event; it is a process. It is not just a day that an institution would get up, call somebody and give a letter. In our own Parliament, recruitment started as far back as June, July and August. It is only around January that some people receive their appointment letters. They went through interview, did aptitude tests and had to pass medicals. So, knowing Hon Julius Debrah, perhaps, he meant well, and this is somebody I respect.

Mr Speaker, I do not think that the intendment of this letter was for state institutions to dismiss or revoke appointments. I believe that, perhaps,

some clarity would have to be given. If he says that, in the interest of good governance practices, all appointments after 7th December be revoked, is it the argument that even where the process had started and the time that they were given their letter is post-7th December, they should lose their job?

Mr Speaker, I am guided by history. In 2017, particularly 26th May, 2017, at 7.12 p.m., former President John Dramani Mahama, as he then was, tweeted:

“Bad precedent for our governance. Mass sacking of workers by the NPP govt unacceptable”.

He goes further, at 7.13 p.m.,

“These workers are all citizens and like all Ghanaians have rights, which must be protected. #OneGhana #OnePeople.”

Mr Speaker, pursuant to this, there were serious behind-the-scenes discussions, and although government had intended to scrutinise this recruitment, no Ghanaian worker was sent home. I know about the Economic and Organised Crime (EOCO). There were recruitments at the EOCO and not a single one of them was sent home, and I say this on authority. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Health Insurance, Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) and a lot of government agencies had done recruitment, and the explanation was that the process started before 7th December, and H. E. John Dramani Mahama raised this matter.

Mr Speaker, I remember that, for recruitment into the Ghana Immigration Service, the Ghanaian youth went into training after 7th December. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo was the one who presided over the parade for the graduation in March. The records are there; let us be very careful as a nation. The goodwill our friends have must not erode rather too early or too soon.

Mr Speaker, to conclude, I know Mr Julius Debrah; he is a private sector person. He is a businessman who knows that when somebody is employed, it adds value to the economy. So, I do not think he had intended that people who have gone through aptitude tests and interviews should be sent home, but it is all over the place that our countrymen and women and our youth are being sent home.

12.08 p.m.

They went to office they were asked to come home with these letters. Where do they find food to eat? How do they feed their families? How do they feed themselves? What is going to be their future on the strength of His Excellency John Dramani Mahama's tweets of May 2017? I would want to adopt these words as though they were mine. These are very veritable words that he used to crave the indulgence of the Government at the time to get back to ensure that our people did not lose jobs. And I repeat it —

"These workers are all citizens of Ghana and like all Ghanaians have rights which must be protected. #One Ghana #One people."

Mr Speaker, I rest my case.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, I would not open the Floor for debates but take response from the Majority Leader.

Mr Mahama Ayariga (NDC — Bawku Central): Mr Speaker, like I keep saying, Parliament is a space where we can make Statements and draw attention to important public matters. But Mr Speaker, let us also be even and balanced when we view matters in this House. I served as a member of the transition team and I recall that, during that period, there was a mad rush to employ people even after a party had lost an election and was on its way out after December 7. We saw Ministers in a hurry to have people interviewed and taken through the processes so that they could be officially served with employment letters. At the transition team meetings, joint meetings, we raised issues. We told our counterparts who are outgoing Ministers that that practice must stop because a number of issues are implicated.

One, we all know that we must have fiscal space before we take decisions to employ people. They were living and we are coming in. We have not told them that the public money that is available, we want to commit it to paying workers. So, they cannot clog the fiscal space and leave us with problems that we cannot deal with. So, we pleaded with them to hold on with the recruitments and at the meetings they told us that so long as they had gotten financial clearance during the year, they will proceed with the

recruitments. And we said that is wrong. Once they have not done the recruitments, they should hold on; when we come in, we would assess the situation and see whether we have fiscal space to do recruitments or not. But they insisted on recruiting and insisted that so long as they were in office until January 7th, they were the validly established Government of the Republic of Ghana and they will do whatever pleases them and so they were going to recruit.

I was in the meetings and minutes of the meetings exist. I can point to specific outgoing Ministers who made those statements. So, if they engage in such recklessness knowing that they were leaving office, and they decided to load the public sector with workers that would make it difficult for the incoming Government, what do they expect?

Mr Speaker, I will not — I made those statements at the transition team meetings and I am repeating those statements here that it is reckless — *[Interruption]*— for them to know that they are leaving office but they decide to load the public sector with workers so that the incoming Government will come and inherit such workers and they will be struggling with how to pay them.

Mr Speaker, I chaired about eight Ministries during the transitions. I saw an agency — I would not mention the name but if they push me, I would mention the name. When we were leaving office in January 2017, that agency had about 120 workers with a certain asset to manage. During the transition team meeting, we asked them

how many workers were in that agency. Mr Speaker, there were over 1,000 workers — **[Some Hon Members: Eii]** —

Mr Speaker, we asked them; have you added additional assets for them to manage? No. So assets that we could use 110 workers to manage, the New Patriotic Party came and have loaded that same organisation with over 1,000 workers. It is not a question of whether or not they are not Ghanaians. It is about the proper management of the state. That is why the NDC as a party realised that this country should not be run with over 180 Ministers. That is why we have reduced the number of Ministers to 60. Because we want this country to be properly managed with the labour force that is needed to manage it.

So, if at the time we were cautioning them during the transition to be circumspect with their recruitment exercise, and they said they would not do it, what makes them think today, we will allow those recruitments to stay? I think that what the Chief of Staff has done is proper; it is consistent with good governance and we will review the recruitments that took place and we would reverse them as indicated.

I was in this House when the Minister for the Interior came and said he was going to recruit people into the security agencies. During the transition meetings, we cautioned him not to proceed with the recruitment. We said even if they have to recruit, they should go through proper advertisements and give every young person an opportunity.

Mr Speaker, if we go and interrogate a lot of the recruitments that took place, we would realise clearly that those recruitments amounted to abuse of discretion. There were no proper advertisements. People sat down and then just agreed among themselves, brought together family members, brought together foot soldiers and then they went and recruited them. That was what happened. — [*Interruption*]—

How many did they advertise? How many did they give opportunity to every Ghanaian to in order to apply and be taken through the proper processes? Mr Speaker, we knew what happened in this country and that is why Ghanaians voted overwhelmingly for the NDC. It is because what happened was wrong and Ghanaians expect us to correct what is wrong — [*Hear! Hear!*]— What was wrong yesterday is wrong today but what they did yesterday which was wrong must be corrected today. — [*Hear! Hear!*]— We cannot allow it to stand. So, what the Chief of Staff has said which is that we should reverse what has happened, we on this Side of the House stand by it — [*Hear! Hear!*]— We will push it and make sure that fairness exists in the public sector.

12.18 p.m.

When it comes to recruitment under our Government, I want to assure him that we will also ensure that there is fairness and equity and that we are even-handed in doing whatever we do. That every young Ghanaian is given a fair

opportunity; an opportunity that they were not given in the past. We will give every young Ghanaian the opportunity. Because, as we promised, we are resetting this country and the resetting begins now. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, Order! Order!

Yes, Hon Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I could not have risen on a point of order against the Majority Leader when he was in the dispatch box. I have always held the view that the dispatch box is a unique place, so you cannot rise on a point of order.

Mr Speaker, I think that the Majority Leader has been an advocate for measured language. I raised this matter in good faith. We are not to repeat a vicious cycle in our country. The point is that if he uses the word recklessness against his former Colleagues and also says that family, friends, and foot soldiers were recruited and all. I do not think that these should be part of our record, especially coming from the Leader of the House.

Mr Speaker, I would want to register these as my protest. If he is minded to take these words back, so be it. If he feels strongly about it, that indeed these should be part of the records and that Ghanaians who have been recruited

should be sent home and do not deserve to be employed — I have already made my point. I have relied on what President John Dramani Mahama said and I will not litigate the matter any longer.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Hon Members, I feel this is a simple matter that the two Leaders can engage on. With the Minister for Labour, Jobs and Employment being involved, they can have audience with the Chief of Staff and then most of these matters will be resolved. There will be a better understanding when the Chief of Staff is engaged. Then, we will all appreciate the nature of the action that he has taken. So, I will urge the two Leaders to engage and rope in the Minister for Labour, Jobs and Employment to resolve some of these issues.

Hon Members, today is Chocolate Day and Valentine's Day [*Hear! Hear!*]*—*Hon Members, we have admitted three Statements that we have to take jointly. They are on the Chocolate Day and Valentine's Day Celebration. Hon Members, before I do so, may I use the opportunity to wish everybody a happy Chocolate and Valentine Day. [*Hear! Hear!*] Not forgetting my dear wife— [**Some Hon Members:** Eii] — Mrs Angel Kafui Ahiafor.

Hon Members, the Statements are in the name of Ms Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe, Mrs Elizabeth Ofosu-Adjare and Ms Abba Dzifa Gomashie. I would proceed to give the floor to Ms Abba Dzifa Gomashie.

The Second Deputy Speaker would take the Chair.

12.25 P.M. — [MR SECOND DEPUTY SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR]

STATEMENT

National Chocolate Week, 2025

Ms Abba Dzifa Gomashie (NDC — Ketu South): Mr Speaker, thank you very much and I wish you a happy Chocolate and Valentine Day too.

Mr Speaker, Hon Members, today as we mark Valentine Day, also now observed as National Chocolate Day in Ghana, I am honoured to speak on the theme, "Eat Chocolate, Stay Healthy, Grow Ghana" and with the guiding sub-theme, "Chocolate for All, Taste, Share and Care."

As we celebrate National Chocolate Day, we are celebrating Ghana's rich cocoa heritage as a vital component of our economy and culture. These themes outlined also underscore the importance of sustaining an ecosystem that promotes growth in our cocoa sector. It also recognises the hard work of our cocoa farmers, processors and all within the supply chain, whose livelihoods encourage healthy lifestyles and drive economic development. We appreciate their production of high-quality chocolate that delights our consumers.

Mr Speaker, as you may be aware, the celebration of the National Chocolate Day, was instituted in 2007 by the then Minister for Tourism and Modernisation

of the Capital City, the late Mr Jake Obetsebi Lamptey (may his soul rest in peace) to coincide with the celebration of Valentine's Day.

In 2021, Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) and Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) came up with the idea to extend the chocolate day celebration to a week-long celebration and has been celebrated since its successful launch.

Mr Speaker, the National Chocolate Week is more than just sharing of chocolates; it is a time of fostering unity, national pride, focusing on marketing Ghana and promoting domestic tourism. As we indulge in the sweetness of chocolate today, let us be encouraged to patronise the exquisite flavour of our locally produced chocolate, share its goodness with family and friends, and show care and concern for the communities that cultivate this precious crop. Additionally, let us acknowledge the importance of sustainable cocoa practices, and push for fair trade and social responsibility in the cocoa industry.

Mr Speaker, as part of the activities marking this year's National Chocolate Week celebrations, each passenger arriving at the Kotoka International Airport will receive a complimentary bar of Golden Tree chocolate. This '*Chocolate experience*' gesture is to introduce the Ghanaian brand of chocolate to arriving passengers, especially our visitors and tourists. In our show of love as promoted by all Ghanaian cultures, a chocolate drink stand will be mounted at the reception of

the Ghana Tourism Authority head office, for all staff and visitors to join the celebration of the National Chocolate Week.

Regional offices of the Ghana Tourism Authority will participate in the National Chocolate Week by visiting the Paediatric Units of their Regional Hospitals with chocolates. The celebrations will be climaxed with a street float and chocolate feast through the principal streets of Accra, ending with a durbar at the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park.

12.28 p.m.

We trust that our stakeholders like COCOBOD, Cocoa Processing Company (CPC) Limited, and other corporate bodies in Ghana will support us in this exciting initiative.

Mr Speaker, the National Chocolate Week and other activities on the tourism events calendar would enhance the appeal of Ghana as a preferred tourist destination providing memorable experiences for both domestic and international tourists.

I, therefore, urge Hon Colleagues to join the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts and its partners to celebrate the 2025 edition of the National Chocolate Week, which starts today, 14th February. Indeed, the celebration of Chocolate Week is a unique opportunity to show love to friends, family, colleagues, and the disadvantaged, and the perfect gift for the season is chocolate and care.

Ayekoo, thank you, *akpe na mi, meda mo ase*; to all our cocoa farmers, we appreciate your dedication to cultivating the finest cocoa beans. To our chocolate makers and all involved in the supply chain, we celebrate your creativity and innovation in creating unique products. Let us all embrace the goodness of Ghanaian chocolate, sharing its taste and care with loved ones, while growing Ghana's prosperity.

I have brought a gift for all Members of Parliament, and if it could be brought here— [*Hear! Hear!*]—Happy National Chocolate Week to all of you. We have cold and warm chocolate drinks out there for all Hon Members to taste as well. I would give it to our Leader, Ms Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe, so that all Members can enjoy the chocolate day with us.

I thank you very much for today.

[Ms Abba Dzifa Gomashie presented a parcel to Ms Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe and presented a chocolate bar to the Chair to commemorate the celebration of Chocolate Day]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you; Hon Minister, hold on. If you want to go, you can leave it with us. Let us take all the three Statements first.

So, let me come to the Hon Minister for Trade, Agribusiness and Industry to also read her Statement.

STATEMENT

Commemoration of the 2025 National Chocolate Day

Minister for Trade, Agribusiness and Industry (Mrs Elizabeth Ofosu-Adjare) (MP): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity. I rise to make a Statement to commemorate the celebration of the 2025 National Chocolate Day as the Minister for Trade, Agribusiness and Industry.

Mr Speaker, on this auspicious day, I wish to congratulate our gallant cocoa farmers, cocoa processors, and value chain actors within the industry. Let me first pay homage to our ancestors. Tetteh Quarshie's humble act of bringing cocoa to Ghana, laid the foundation for what would become one of the nation's most vital industries, earning Ghana substantial foreign exchange before and after independence. Earnings from cocoa trade has clothed our children, built our schools, and fueled our progress. It has also been a single symbol of Ghana's resilience, ingenuity, and unity. His legacy lives on, as cocoa remains a cornerstone of Ghana's economy and a symbol of agricultural prowess.

Mr Speaker, the theme for the celebration of National Chocolate Day over the past four years has been "Eat Chocolate, Stay Healthy, Grow Ghana", with a sub theme of, "Chocolate for All, Taste, Share, and Care".

Twenty years ago, the Ministry of Tourism instituted the “National Chocolate Day” to create awareness of the health benefits of cocoa-based products. Since then, the country has carried on this tradition of bringing to the fore the economic and health benefits of cocoa and chocolate.

On this day, we celebrate love using a product of pride coming from our homeland, the Ghanaian chocolate. Chocolate, like love, is universal, sweet, transformative, and rooted in the heart. Using chocolate as a theme product for this day has been carefully crafted not only for considering its use in the expression of love, but most importantly, its health impact on, especially the heart, which is also in itself a symbol of love.

Mr Speaker, the impact of chocolate on the heart has been confirmed by various research works; it increases heart health. Dark chocolate has been shown to lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of clotting, and increase blood circulation to the heart; thus, lowering the risk of stroke and death from heart diseases. It also balances the immune system.

Research published by Johns Hopkins Medicine and National Institute of Health indicates that the flavonoids and polyphenols in chocolate help prevent excessive immune activation and reduce oxidative stress. In particular, these bioactive compounds appear to modulate the inflammatory innate response as well as the systemic and intestinal adaptive immune responses, thereby contributing to improved immune homeostasis and reduced

overall inflammation. It also combats diabetes.

Mr Speaker, the health needs of chocolate cannot be overemphasised. In view of these health benefits, I would encourage Colleagues to increase their consumption of made-in-Ghana chocolates. I also entreat Hon Members to invest in supporting schools in their constituencies to procure more cocoa-based beverages as immune boosters for the children in our schools.

Mr Speaker, as the Minister responsible for Trade, Agribusiness, and Industry, I am committed to collaborating with the relevant stakeholders within the cocoa value chain to harness the full benefits of cocoa through enhanced value addition and value extension. While the world savours our cocoa, let us embrace the sweetness we cultivate. This day is a call to Ghanaians to eat chocolate. Yes, but also take pride in the hands that grow it, the hearts that process it, and the spirit that makes it unique.

Mr Speaker, we stand firm in our resolve to reset the country through industrialisation by aggressively implementing the rapid industrialisation for jobs as captured in our manifesto. This agenda of the President’s vision of increasing our exports through value addition and value extension will soon be launched by the Ministry of Trade, Agribusiness, and Industry. This involves establishing new strategic industries and reviving defunct ones. Therefore, we will facilitate the establishment of cocoa processing factories in cocoa-growing areas.

Mr Speaker, under the Feed the Industry program, Government, through the Ministry of Trade, Agribusiness, and Industry, is developing a program that includes revitalising Ghana's cocoa sector. As committed in our manifesto, the plan includes reintroducing free fertilisers, improved seedlings, and agro-inputs to boost yields, restoring efficient management of COCOBOD and prioritising investment in cocoa production over administrative costs. It also aims to combat illegal mining on our cocoa farms, ensure timely funding to prevent smuggling, and promote organic fertilisers. Support for Cocoa Research Institute Ghana (CRIG) to develop resilient cocoa varieties, enhance pest resilience, and "Youth in Cocoa Farming" projects are key components in this project.

Mr Speaker, the plan integrates agroforestry, establishes cocoa colleges, supports women in cocoa farming, and invests in research and market expansion. Additionally, it will promote cocoa farmer welfare through price stabilisation, health care, pensions, livelihood programmes, and educational support to eliminate child labour.

Mr Speaker, according to global chocolate market research in 2024, the global chocolate market size was valued at a whopping US\$130.72 billion and is projected to reach US\$172.89 billion in 2030. This is a market that has eluded Ghana over the years, and as we celebrate this day, our commitment listed above should give Ghanaians a new ray of hope that His Excellency John Dramani Mahama is poised to bringing

the cocoa sector out of the doldrums into a new dawn.

1.48 a.m.

I thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon Members, let us be patient and also listen to Hon Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe as she also reads a similar Statement.

STATEMENT

Celebration of Valentine's Day and National Chocolate Day

First Deputy Majority Whip (Ms Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Valentine's Day and National Chocolate Day. A special occasion that symbolises love, appreciation and generosity. This day is not only about expressing affection to our loved ones, but also about fostering unity, kindness and national cohesion. It reminds us of our duty to build a society rooted in compassion, care and mutual support, which should guide our governance and policies.

Mr Speaker, on this National Chocolate Day, let us celebrate the hard work and dedication of our cocoa farmers who make this industry thrive. And I want us to use this medium to encourage all Ghanaians to consume made-in-Ghana goods.

Mr Speaker, let us celebrate the unity and resilience that binds us together as Ghanaians. We share a hope for a brighter future and a love that fuels our ambition to strive for excellence. Let us be reminded of our commitment to our families, communities and the nation as a whole.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity and as it is a lovers' day, let us love ourselves.

Thank you. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon Members, I would give you the opportunity to comment, so hold on a bit. Let me now invite the Hon Minister for Tourism, Creative Arts and Culture to, by way of symbol, showcase chocolate, which symbolises Valentine's Day in Ghana now.

[Hon Minister for Tourism, Creative Arts and Culture, Ms Dzifa Abla Gomashie presents a Valentine-themed chocolate hamper to First Deputy Majority Whip, Ms Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: So, I believe every Member would get a chocolate. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Hon Members, before I invite Members who are desirous to comment, let me also use this platform to extend my love to my dear wife, Mrs Grace Owusu Ansah Asiamah. My dear, I love you—[*Interruption*—And I wish you a Happy Valentine and Chocolate Day.

Now, I would turn to Bosome Freho, that is where my wife hails from. Hon Member of Parliament for Bosome Freho, you may comment.

Mr Nana Asafo-Adjei Ayeh (NPP — Bosome Freho): Mr Speaker, thank you. I am grateful.

Let me first and foremost commend the makers of the Statement and also thank you for giving me the opportunity as an in-law.

Mr Speaker, it is important that we appreciate, celebrate and then make our cocoa farmers heroes and heroines of today's celebration. Without much ado, I want to commend every cocoa farmer in the Bosome Freho Constituency. Mr Speaker, apart from cocoa and cabbage, there is virtually no vital employment again for my people. And they are very predominant in cocoa farming. So today, we are celebrating World Chocolate Day or Ghanaian Chocolate Day, as a form of Valentine's Day to show love. Mr Speaker, it is important that I commend the cocoa farmers in Bosome Freho for helping Ghana become one of the leading producers of cocoa on the continent.

Mr Speaker, while we are appreciating them and commending them, it is important that as indicated by all the speakers, we look at the welfare of cocoa farmers. Mr Speaker, I was arguing and conversing with one of my friends that even the average cocoa farmer's child in my village does not even have the opportunity to enjoy the chocolate we are celebrating today. And

it is important we prioritise the cocoa farmers in terms of celebrating World Chocolate Day. Mr Speaker, it is important that Members of Parliament enjoy the cocoa our Hon Minister is giving us here. But I think some of this celebration should symbolically mean that we extend hands to the farmers and the families and children of the cocoa farmers. Mr Speaker, their welfare is very important. They toil; they work hard, and I am happy. I want to remind the Government once again that it promised them during the campaign that Government is going to increase their cocoa prices from GHC3,000 to GHC6,000. The cocoa farmers in Bosome Freho are waiting to hear an announcement. Maybe today, World Chocolate Day, they would hear the announcement that the prices of cocoa have now moved from GHC3,000 to GHC6,000. This is what they are looking forward to.

Mr Speaker, the next point is developing the roads that lead to the communities where cocoa is farmed. The cocoa farmers are becoming our heroes in this country. But it is important that we know that the roads leading to these areas—

Minority Leader (Osahen Alexander Kwamena Afenyo-Markin): Mr Speaker, I want to crave the indulgence of my respected Colleague, the Deputy Majority Leader, to join me to assist you in managing the House. Mr Speaker, this week, the Rt Hon Speaker made a Statement that when he is not in the Chair and is observing from his office, Deputies are unable to manage the

House. Mr Speaker, I want to plead with Colleagues that we should be tolerant. Indeed, heckling is part of the politics in this Chamber. But at least we should not be reckless in heckling. A Member is making a point. Let us listen to him in silence. When he is done, Hon Members would get the opportunity. I have seen the Majority Leader in now, but Hon Ricketts-Hagan, let us help the Speaker to manage the House. Today is Friday. Let us have some peace. It does not matter. Rise in silence. Hon Leader, this should not be done by you.

Mr Speaker, whatever it is, if an Hon Member has a disagreement, he should rise on his feet quietly, gently, and wait for you to call him. He should then use the opportunity to draw the attention of the House to the action of the Member which is not in accordance with the rules. So please, the Hon Member is on his feet. Colleagues opposite me, please indulge him.

Mr Speaker, that is it. Thank you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Leader.

Please, let us take cue.

Yes, Hon Member for Bosome Freho, please.

12.48 p.m.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Member for Bosome Freho—

Yes, Hon Deputy Majority Leader?

Deputy Majority Leader (Mr George Kweku Ricketts-Hagan): Mr Speaker, I think the Minority Leader's advice goes both ways. This is supposed to be a Valentine's Day and a joyous occasion and nice Statements are being made. It should not become a Statement that would, basically, get into a debate. And, of course, that adds to the part of the challenges that Mr Speaker has in managing the House. So, it should go both ways.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Well, thank you. So, please, let us all be reminded of Standing Order 93(5). It is supposed to be a comment, so do not do it in such a way that it would degenerate into a debate. Please, so, let us take a cue.

Yes, Hon Member?

Mr Ayeh: Mr Speaker, with your indulgence, I humbly crave that I do not intend to make my contribution degenerate into a debate.

Mr Speaker, we have been in this House and majority of Members of this House have spoken and made reference to campaign and manifesto promises. They mention the 24-Hour Economy virtually in every statement they make. It is a campaign promise that they are hoping and expecting to realise. So, it is not wrong or out of fetch for me to also mention the campaign promises that they make to the cocoa farmers that they would increase the cocoa from GH¢3,000 to GH¢6,000.

Mr Speaker, so if we are celebrating Chocolate Day, and I am urging that the welfare of the cocoa farmers should be looked at—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, please, if he goes out of hand, I will—

Mr Ayeh: Mr Speaker, having said that, it is also important that we prioritise the farming areas and the roads that lead to the cocoa farming areas. I know all the constituencies and the districts that plant cocoa or have cocoa farmers would push for their roads to be developed.

Mr Speaker, the maker of the Statement also raised one very important issue, which is the illegal mining that is gradually eating the cocoa farming areas, which is important. All of us, as a House, should find a way on how to help if we have to incentivise them or do whatever we have to do to ensure that our cocoa farmers do not turn their cocoa growing areas into mining areas.

With a few words, thank you, Mr Speaker.

Some Hon Members — rose —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you so much.

Yes, I have seen—Hon Minister, you would be the last person to speak, so just give me the opportunity—I have noticed Prof Beyuo.

Prof Titus Kofi Beyuo (NDC — Lambussie): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the three Statements made, and I want to also celebrate all our cocoa farmers and all those involved in the production chain for cocoa.

As a medical person, I want to touch a bit on the health benefits of cocoa. I think the first speaker mentioned some of them, and I just want to say that cocoa offers us a lot of health benefits that we are missing, in term of our brain health. Cocoa releases something we call endorphins, and these endorphins modulate our mood, so it can manage depression of those suffering from broken hearts on a day of love. Some bit of cocoa can give you a very good mood, so we are encouraged to consume a lot of dark chocolate. Polyphenols from cocoa is cardio protective, helps in anti-inflammatory effects, can protect against cancers, give us very beautiful skin, and control blood pressure and blood sugar. It is, therefore, very important that we encourage the consumption of cocoa. I would encourage that public functions have cocoa breaks, instead of coffee breaks, and we should encourage the consumption of cocoa during such events.

Mr Speaker, I would want to, since today is also Valentine's Day, wish my beloved wife, Dr (Mrs) Vera Beyuo, who I believe is at the Eye Clinic at Korle Bu Teaching Hospital operating now, a Happy Valentine's Day and a Happy Chocolate Day, and say that we should all love, and let us consume enough Ghanaian chocolate and cocoa for all the health benefits. The Hon Member is asking me to say that cocoa can promote libido. I have not said that—[*Laughter*]

Thank you very much.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Now, let me give it to the Hon Member for

Trobu. Hon Member, I will give you a lot of time, so let us—

Ms Gloria Owusu (NPP — Trobu): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. I rise to support the Statement made by our Colleagues.

Mr Speaker, as today is Valentine's Day, we are expecting our men in this House, who are our Brothers, our backbones to show us some love. They should give a row of flowers and some chocolates to all the females in this House.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, and I thank you for making this snappy.

Yes, let me go to the constituency of my boss, which is represented by Hon Anthony Sumah.

Mr Anthony Mwinkaara Sumah (NDC — Nadowli/Kaleo): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the Statements made by my Colleagues and let me commend them for the Statements they have made.

Mr Speaker, today is a day that is severely characterised: Chocolate Day, day of love. I was particularly enthused when two of them mentioned that we should show love to the less privileged. Chocolate Day or a day of love should not be love we just share with our loved ones. The good Book teaches us that if we do good to people who do good back

to us, what benefit do we get? And we have less privilege amongst us.

Mr Speaker, this House is particularly pushing, uniquely, to be able to influence or affect the lives of the less privileged. I was happy when I chanced on a video by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Mental Health Authority who made a comment about using this day to show love to people suffering from some form of mental illness. I think that this month, February, in this particular day, we should look at the less privileged, particularly people suffering from mental health.

The World Health report said that about 2.3 million Ghanaians are suffering from some form of mental illness. And the Chief Psychiatrist also once said that over 700,000 people in this country are suffering from some form of severe mental illness. That is a significant proportion of our population. So, today presents a unique opportunity, in particular that the Mental Health Authority celebrates this day and this month as Mental Health Month, and I think that we should dedicate some time for mental health in this Chamber.

Mr Speaker, “the success or greatness of a society”, if I will refer to Mahatma Gandhi, “is measured by how we treat the weakest in the society”. Let us not reduce this day to showing love to those that can show us love back. Let us think of those who do not have the ability or the means to show us love back. And talking about this, as I indicated, we have a very unique opportunity to affect the lives of these people. This House passed

a Bill, the Mental Health Act, and, in that Act, we indicated that there should be a Mental Health Fund to help deal with mental health issues in this country. As I speak to you, that has not found expression yet.

12.58 p.m.

I had the opportunity one time to question the Minister for Health on why we were not having the fund established and he said that they were doing the necessary legislative work to get the fund established. Yet it is not. So, on this day, I want to be brief about this but to say that let us look at the other perspective. Let us use this unique opportunity, particularly in February, to affect the life of people living with mental health challenges. This is because by the proportions that have been put out, it is very possible that even sitting here, we have people who are suffering from mental health. We all somehow have persons living with us or relations that have some mental health challenges.

So today, I want to appeal to all my Colleagues and everyone listening to us, that let us use this opportunity to share the chocolates with people suffering from some form of mental health challenges. Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. It is one from each Side so let me go to Atiwa West. I will give you the opportunity, please. Hon Members, that ratio has not been established. That ratio of 2:1 has not been established here. So, once I sit here,

it is still 1:1 by way of contribution. Hon Members, if Leadership takes that decision, I will go by it but for now, it is 1:1.

Yes, Hon Member for Atiwa West, let us hear you.

Mrs Laurette Korkor Asante (NPP — Atiwa West): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. As we all know, Ghana is the second largest producer of cocoa in the world. Cocoa is a major contributor to the economy. However, it does have some challenges: climate change, unpredictable weather, and also pests and diseases. So, I would like to take this opportunity today, as we are all munching the chocolates and enjoying the result of our cocoa farmers, to say that the Minister for Food and Agriculture should continue the support that the NPP Government was providing to all the cocoa farmers in that sector. So, I hope and pray that that support will continue to all cocoa farmers. In my Constituency in Atiwa West, in the towns of Muoso, Kwabeng, Abomosu, and Nkurakan, Akyem Akropong, Tumfa, Pameng, and all the other towns in Atiwa West, we have thousands of cocoa farmers who toil every day and produce excellent beans. Everywhere in the world, it is well known that the Ghanaian cocoa bean is excellent in terms of the way that it is naturally dried and the process it goes through. So, I would like to take this opportunity today to thank all the farmers in Atiwa West for their contribution to the economy and for making cocoa available to produce such excellent products and the chocolates that we are enjoying today. So, thank you

to all the farmers, especially Atiwa West, and to all the farmers in Ghana.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, give me two minutes to acknowledge our children at the public gallery. I understand the Deputy Majority Whip is going to extend the chocolate to them. — [*Hear! Hear!*]—

[Pupils of the Oasis International School were acknowledged]

Let me go to Mr Sampson Ahi, a cocoa-growing area man.

Mr Sampson Ahi (NDC — Bodi): Mr Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute to the three Statements made by our Colleagues. I think today is a special day and let me take this opportunity to wish all women in the Bodi Constituency a Happy Valentine's Day, and by extension, all women in Ghana particularly women in this Chamber, a Happy Valentine's Day.

Mr Speaker, in all the Statements we are encouraged to consume more chocolate. I want to take it through the dimension of creating jobs when we eat a lot of chocolate. We have the Cocoa Processing Company (CPC) which is responsible for producing chocolate. The more we eat chocolate, we create jobs and opportunities for Ghanaians. We support the company to grow so that people can earn their livelihood.

Mr Speaker, I have observed one thing and I want to make a

recommendation. Any time we attend conferences, on the programme, we see coffee break. Today, as we are being encouraged to eat chocolate, I want to recommend that henceforth, on the programme of all our conferences, we should rather have cocoa break instead of coffee break, so that we will be encouraged to inculcate the consumption of cocoa in our people.

Mr Speaker, during the tenure of President John Evans Atta-Mills, he initiated a lot of cocoa roads programmes. When he left office, cocoa roads that were supposed to be constructed were abandoned. If one goes to my Constituency for instance, cocoa roads from Bodi to Ahibenso was abandoned. Cocoa roads from Amuoya to Kelo was abandoned and I want to believe—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Deputy Minister-designate please do not take us to—

Mr Ahi: Mr Speaker, but we have been assured in our manifesto that President Mahama's Government is going to continue the construction of cocoa roads in cocoa growing areas to support cocoa farmers so that it will improve their economy and support them to do more so that Ghana can get more cocoa for export. Cocoa has supported the economy of Ghana for a long time, and it is about time we took into account those who grow cocoa and support them.

Mr Speaker, there are a lot of agricultural incentives that COCOBOD offers to cocoa farmers. It supplies them

with farm inputs, chemicals, and so on and so forth.

1.08 p.m.

I want to believe that as we celebrate the Chocolate Day today, President John Dramani Mahama, who introduced most of these farm practices will continue, so cocoa farmers—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you—

Mr Ahi: Please I spoke for only three minutes.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Ten minutes?

Mr Ahi: Three minutes—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: But you have already spoken for six minutes and you are saying three minutes?

Mr Ahi: Mr Speaker, I spoke for three minutes.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: All right, you can conclude. You have two more minutes to speak.

Mr Ahi: Mr Speaker, let me conclude and say that, all of us must embrace this important day, so it becomes part and parcel of us and not to only buy or eat chocolate when it is Valentine's or Chocolate Day. But we should make it a part of us, so that day in and day out we try to buy chocolate. This will improve our health as it has been stated by some of the medical doctors,

and highlighted by the Minister for Trade, Agribusiness and Industry on the health benefits of eating cocoa.

Mr Speaker, with these few words, I want to thank you and wish all of us a Happy Valentine's Day.

Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Dr Stephen Amoah—Please, I will give all Members the opportunity to speak. One Member from each Side would be given the opportunity to contribute.

Some Hon Members: — *rose* —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Dr Sandaare, I would take one contributor from each Side.

Dr Stephen Amoah (NPP — Nhyiaeso): Mr Speaker, thank you so much for the opportunity.

Mr Speaker, I would like to place emphasis on a few selected extracts from the good books, the Bible and the Qur'an about love, since we are talking about love, chocolate and anything that will unify us as a House to build this country with one purpose. In 1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16, 1 Corinthians 13:13, Qur'an 85:14, they all talk about the fact that God is love. Even when it comes to hope, faith, and love, the Bible says that "love overrides all these virtues." Today is a special day that as Parliamentarians, we need to have a special segment of our time resource to ponder over a lot of issues, to redefine a new relationship

between Minority and Majority, and treat certain national issues with love that would benefit the young ones out there.

Mr Speaker, today is a day that all of us should develop a new form of love for the poor children out there. Our love should be shown and illustrated in what we say here, what we do in our various offices as Parliamentarians and Appointees—The resources that the State gives us and the kind of comments we make. Love is not just by words, but by actions. So, I say that for today, I extend my special love to all the wives of the cocoa farmers in our country, to all the former and the present First Lady and to all our beautiful women here, both in the Minority and Majority—*[Interruption]*—

Mr Speaker, this is not about whether or not I am married. I know marriage is important, but Ecclesiastes says that "there is time for everything". So let us take our time. *[Interruption]*—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Please, why are Hon Members making Dr Amoah unstable?

Dr Amoah: Mr Speaker, I think this destructive interference of waves would impair the flow of the conversation when it comes to love. I admonish Members to take their time. I can assure them that at the appropriate time, I will laugh. But before I sit down, allow me to extend this to my 100-year-old mother these wishes. She does not understand the English Language. So, with your indulgence, *mepɛ sɛ me ka kyere me maame sɛ me do no, na me wishie no* Happy Valentine's Day.

The last thing I want to say is that—My Brother from the other Side, we are not debating but I want to assure him that with the continuity that they want, we will support them to continue growing and expanding all factors that will ensure that our cocoa farmers and cocoa industry will expand. But I want him to understand that in the last eight years, we did about 70,000 acres or hectares—I think we are already through with about 40,000 acres or hectares. So, it is something that they would continue. I know Hon Eric Opoku is a good man and also very intelligent, and would continue that—

Mr Speaker, apart from that, may God bless Ghana and shower his blessings upon us. Let us love each other now and begin a new wave of love that the outsiders would follow us.

God bless you and God bless Ghana. Thank you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member for Kintampo South, let us hear you.

Ms Felicia Adjei (NDC — Kintampo South): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity—

Some Hon Members: — *rose* —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Please I would give all Members the opportunity. Please be snappy. You can see a lot of our Colleagues are desirous to speak.

Ms Adjei: Yes, Mr Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Statement made by our Ministers and the Deputy Majority Whip.

Mr Speaker, once we are acknowledging the importance of Ghana's cocoa contribution to the economy on a special day like this, let us not forget about our farmers who produce the cocoa. I watched a documentary on Cable News Network (CNN) titled *The Coconomics* in which a farmer could not even recognise chocolate. On this day, I wish to tell and appeal to our Leaders and Ministers to find a way to reach out to the farmers on a day like this to also enjoy the taste of cocoa.

Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. [*Hear! Hear!*]—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Let me now call the Hon Member for Kwabre East Constituency.

Mr Akwasi Gyamfi Onyina-Acheampong (NPP — Kwabre East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to today's discussion.

The National Chocolate Day is a very important day since it also doubles as Valentine's Day, which is a day of love. I would like to extend my heartfelt love to the good people of Kwabre East and also by extension to all the women and market women of Kwabre East. In the same spirit as yourself, I would like to also extend my heartfelt love and a Happy Valentine's Day to my beautiful

wife, Adiepena Akosua Serwaah Oduro Gyamfi and also to my mother on this august day—[*Interruption*].

Mr Speaker, they said I should say it louder and clearly. So, to my beautiful wife, Adiepena Akosua Serwah Oduro Gyamfi, I wish to extend my heartfelt love on this day.

1.18 p.m.

Mr Speaker, we cannot talk about National Chocolate Day without talking about cocoa. Cocoa plays an important role in the daily economics of this country and we know that cocoa has been an important cash crop to Ghana.

By far, Ghana is touted as producing premium cocoa, which is of high quality. However, the farmers and all the people in the value chain, in my opinion, are not being looked at critically. As a country, we have to celebrate our heroes and these gallant farmers by looking at a few areas that I would like us to go through.

Mr Speaker, for instance, in the area of pensions. Cocoa farmers go through all these daily hassles of planting, harvesting, fermenting, and bringing the produce to the mats to dry them. Even to the extent that, they go through a serious process at the stage where they are about to sell because some of these purchasing clerks have adjusted their skills so much that it is to the detriment of the cocoa farmer. So, we need to recognise them. At the end of the day, after they have gone through all this and have retired after 60 or 70 years, and are no longer able to go to the farms and produce, there

is no pension for them. If we take a look at a cocoa farmer who has planted cocoa for about 20 to 40 years and has gone into pension, it is quite an eyesore.

Mr Speaker, another issue that we have to also concentrate on is illegal mining. Our yield has been dropping for the past three years because of the encroachments of illegal miners on our cocoa farms. It gets to a point where farmers, who are not willing to cede their farms to illegal miners, are forced to give up their farms because of the illicit operations. This is to the extent that it gets to a point where they cannot even get access to their farms. We need to ensure that this thing is stopped. Otherwise, in the near future, we are going to have a situation that will be at the detriment of farmers and Ghana's cocoa yield will fall drastically.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at our input and also the improvement of yields. There have been some programmes like, Cocoa Rehabilitation Programme, and the Cocoa Hand Pollination that was started by the previous Government. These were very important catalysts that were leading to improving and increasing the production of cocoa. Mr Speaker, we need to go back to these basics and ensure that—We also had the cocoa mass spraying, and all those things, so we need to go back to these basics.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, the price of cocoa now in the world market is around US\$10,000 per tonne, and we are in the right space to ensure that we give enough to our farmers. Mr Speaker, let us also concentrate on sustainability.

I thank you so much.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, let me give the opportunity to Dr Eric Afful. Yes, Dr Afful, you also come from a cocoa growing area, right? Let us hear you. *[Pause]* Mr Onyina-Acheampong, please, put off your microphone.

Yes, you can now make your contribution.

Dr Eric Afful (NDC — Amenfi West): Mr Speaker, let me thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution to the three Statements that have been made today on the Floor.

First of all, let me wish all Ghanaians a Happy Chocolate Day and Valentine's Day as well. Most of you should go to the Amenfi West Constituency like the Samreboi Cocoa District and Asankragua Cocoa District. Let me put on record that out of the 276 constituencies, my Constituency leads in the cocoa production in this country. So, I use this occasion to wish them well, bless them, and to tell them that most of their problems, with respect to cocoa production in this country, most especially Amenfi West, will be solved as early as possible.

Mr Speaker, with respect to cocoa roads, I know I have been asked a lot of Questions when I was sitting there—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: This is not to cut you short, but the Minister for Roads and Highways is just looking at you with a smile, so I know your roads—

Dr Afful: Mr Speaker, free supply of fertiliser will be in place. There will be enough chemicals for cocoa mass production and the price of cocoa as well.

Mr Speaker, the reason I stood up is to let us use this day to revamp the internal marketing of cocoa in this country. I am talking about the license buying companies. Most of them are down because of how they were treated by the previous Governments. As we speak, Produce Buying Company (PBC), Federated Commodities PLC (FEDCO), Adwumapa Buyers Ltd, and Cocoa Merchants Ghana Limited are all down.

Mr Speaker, what is more particular about this is that these licenced buying cocoa companies help to grow the rural economy in this country. So, when they are down, it means that the rural economy is broken. Let us use this day to revamp the cocoa sector and the internal marketing of cocoa. Most of the cocoa employees are now at home, unemployed. Let us look at PBC now.

Mr Speaker, I will not speak so much, but to say that we should use this day to revamp the internal marketing of cocoa, so that our rural economy will grow.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: When I get to the Hon Minister for Food and Agriculture, I believe he will address those pertinent areas that Dr Afful talked about.

Yes, let me go to the Hon Member for Manso Nkwanta.

Mr Tweneboa Kodua Fokuo (NPP — Manso Nkwanta): Mr Speaker, I will use this opportunity to extend my greetings to the good people of Manso Nkwanta, many of whom are cocoa farmers, and I am sure they are watching me. They have been watching our programmes these days. Mr Speaker, I also take this opportunity to confidently extend my love to my beautiful wife, Belinda Fokuo, who is a staff of Bank of Africa. I know some are not happy. Belinda Fokuo, my regards to you; I love you so much— **[Some Hon Members: Eii!]**

Mr Speaker, Valentine's Day has come to stay and even the anticipation of it is just exciting. When the 14th of February is getting close, the news, media space, and everywhere gets exciting. So, just anticipating it gets interesting.

Mr Speaker, allow me to use this opportunity to also commend our legend, Mr Jake Obetsebi-Lamprey, for rebranding Valentine's Day as National Chocolate Day. That was a great innovation and I commend him for that.

I would want to ask that the people of Ghana to use this day to do other things besides the love of sharing chocolates and exchanging pleasantries. Could we look at using this day of love to call for the feuding factions in areas where we have hostility in this country to consider this day of love to lay down their arms? At least, on the day that we celebrate

love, can they sit face to face or mediate to bring peace to the pockets of areas where we have challenges in this country? Be it Bawku, Hohoe or wherever we have challenges. Could we use the benefit of this beautiful day to bring peace in these pockets of areas?

Again, Mr Speaker, on being intentional with this day, just like we have had the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts do its best to rebrand Christmas in Ghana as a day for people across the world to come and spend Christmas with us here.

1.28 p.m.

Could we look at doing a similar thing so that Ghana, which is the second largest producer of cocoa, becomes a hub for chocolates during Valentine's Day. So that people around the world will be excited that on the 14th of February, they can go to Ghana to enjoy chocolate. And it should be chocolate that is made in Ghana.

Mr Speaker, what I am saying is, let us be intentional with it. If Germany has what we call "Oktoberfest" where people go sit together to drink beer, and this attracts tourists around the world, then Ghana, which has this commodity with all its health benefits, could rebrand it to also make Ghana a hub for chocolate. And we can also have a Chocolate-fest, just like Germany has the "Oktoberfest".

Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Let me go to Hon Member for Pusiga.

Hajia Laadi Ayii Ayamba (NDC — Pusiga): Congratulations and bye-bye to all those who take chocolate.

Some Hon Members: Bye-bye.

Hajia Ayamba: Mr Speaker, Hon Members have seen that I have continuously tried to come up and say something about chocolate. I have overheard some Colleagues just jokingly say that I do not produce cocoa in the Northern sector or something. But suffice it to say, we are talking—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, just ignore them and address the Chair.

Hajia Ayamba: I am only making it some fun for us to all enjoy it, because today is a day that we should all be happy and cherish one another.

Mr Speaker, originally it was called St Valentine's Day, and it has been used for so many other things. In this same Chamber, around 2015 and 2016, we discussed and agreed that we would also incorporate something that would move Ghana forward and enhance our economic values. So, what we discussed was our chocolate. Mr Speaker, let us ask ourselves, what have we done since then to actually ensure that we implement the discussions that we had? There are a lot of people in this country, especially the Northern sector—Upper East, Upper West, Northern region, and what have you. They do not even know how the cocoa pod is, not to talk of the beans, and whatever we can get out of it like chocolate.

We had agreed that due to the benefits of chocolate, we would let students have a feel of it through school feeding, even if it is half a bar, so that they would have a feel and see what is referred to as chocolate. We should be able to do that even if it is once a week. We said all these things; we have not done any of it. We continuously carry our cocoa out. Sometimes we hear about trafficking of cocoa, that is, carrying it out, and we want to get value, money and economic benefits from it? I think we need to rethink and make sure that our factories work more and that our children grow to appreciate what we are talking about. We are lucky, especially some of us from where cocoa is not grown, but I know that there are people or some people from the cocoa growing areas who have never tasted chocolate. This is because the cost of a bar of chocolate on the market, like what has been distributed here, is so high that individuals around there who do not have that money may use that money for ingredients and other things rather than buy chocolate. What are we doing about it? Are we going to ensure that not only the cocoa growing areas, but also other areas that cocoa is not grown—On days like this, our farmers, especially the women and children, have a feel of it.

Colleagues have mentioned the love that we need to show on this day. That love is not the way people have perceived it today, like running around and saying, excuse my language, “my boyfriend has not given me this, my husband has not given me that.” No, it is

a love that we need to show to individuals who do not have that opportunity. Let us go out there; let us see what is happening, especially those who have mental problems, as mentioned earlier. If we go out there, it is a pity. Some of them stand like stooges; some of them walk and fall. One simply does not understand. Let us extend that love to them and share whatever we have today with them. I think it will go a long way to help all of us to realise what is referred to as St Valentine's Day.

With this, Mr Speaker, I extend my love to all my Colleagues in this Parliament, both men and women, all Ghanaians, and everyone alive. With St Valentine, we love everyone, and I wish us all the best. And for this day, we live together and then we share together.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Alhaji Nurideen Muhammed Mumuni (NPP — Nalerigu/Gambaga): Mr Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity. I would like to first of all use the opportunity to thank the maker of the Statement and also wish my constituents, that is Nalerigu/Gambaga a Happy Chocolate Day.

Mr Speaker, Ghana is seen as the second largest producer of cocoa, but if one goes to some of these cocoa producing communities, one would realise that these communities are lacking basic amenities. The poor farmer

who goes to the farm every day, works day and night to get the cocoa beans, the children of the poor farmer and the poor farmer himself or herself does not get the basic amenities to enjoy in the community. Basic amenities like water. When one goes to some of these cocoa producing communities, good drinking water is a problem for some of these farmers. One would also realise that the children of cocoa farmers do not go to school because in some of these communities, one cannot even find a primary school for the cocoa farmer's child to go.

Mr Speaker, as a country, we have to look at that aspect to improve the life of the cocoa farmer and their families.

Mr Speaker, one can look at the contribution that this industry is making to our economic growth, but a lot of it is going through illegal means, that is smuggling. A lot of our cocoa beans have been smuggled. So, I would like to call on the relevant authorities, especially the Ghana Cocoa Board and the security agencies to take this seriously. If not, day in day out, cocoa is being smuggled out of the country.

Mr Speaker, if we also look at the price of cocoa products, it is making it difficult for the ordinary Ghanaian to enjoy the cocoa products. Mr Speaker, this one [*raises a bar of chocolate*], in certain shops, they sell this for GH¢20. Some sell it for GH¢18.

Mr Speaker, how can the poor man on the streets afford GH¢20 on this particular day to enjoy this particular

chocolate? As a country, we have to look at this aspect and add value to our cocoa products before exporting. Because for some of this chocolate, the cocoa beans would be exported outside, the chocolate would be produced and it would be imported back to us. At the end of the day, the price would be so high for the ordinary Ghanaian to purchase.

Mr Speaker, I would like to call on the Hon Minister for Agriculture to also look at the other sectors of the economy, that is the shea nuts. In as much as we are talking about cocoa, if one goes to the northern part of the country, that is, Savannah Region, Upper East, Upper West, and Northeast Region, especially my Constituency, Nalerigu-Gambaga Constituency, there are a lot of shea trees there. But attention has not been paid to the shea trees.

1.38 p.m.

I would want to call on the Minister for Agriculture and the relevant authorities. Let us give attention to this particular sector. It is a sector in which a lot of women are involved, and most women are very vulnerable. But when we give attention to this sector, these women would get better living conditions by engaging in the shea industry.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, my Brother, let me hear you.

Hon Members, after this, I would take—

Apostle Daniel Keshi Bessey (NDC — Sege): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the Statements ably made by the Minister for Trade, Agribusiness and Industry; the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts; and then the First Deputy Majority Whip on the Valentine's Day and the Chocolate Day.

Mr Speaker, we have to re-look at the celebration of the day like this because the youth of Ghana are giving a different meaning to the originality of the day, which we are forcefully celebrating now in this nature. Unfortunately, the youth of today see Valentine's Day as a day of slaughtering something without a name. By the end of the day—The day ends up slaughtering them and they go nowhere. You would not be surprised that, by tomorrow and a year by this time, a lot of things would happen this night that would bring issues to be reckoned with in the years ahead of us, and they will be singing “had I known”. So, on this very important day, let me use the opportunity to admonish our youth that the great Saint Valentine meant this day for good, at least, for platonic relationships, not erotic ones.

Mr Speaker, again, as we celebrate this beautiful day, may we be reminded that, the day in and day out, we celebrate it; it goes down, and nobody talks about it. Would it be possible, as a House, a very august House like that which we have, to re-look at just the celebration of it and put in measures that may allow us to have special events to celebrate or commemorate when a day like this comes in a year's time?

Mr Speaker, if it is possible, maybe, Members of Parliament (MPs) may be allowed, if it happens to be a working day like this for us, to go to our various districts and have it celebrated with our people, just like I want to post-date my own in two communities on Monday: Talibanya and Teheɣ, so that we may use that day to educate the youth that it is not about a bedroom matter, but an issue of conscience to remember that we must express love towards one another without strings attached. I am sure when we put in that education, the youth will revise their notes.

Mr Speaker, as I was driving to work this morning, looking at the streets, everywhere was choked. If we look on my phone, the messages are massive. And everybody is talking—Being Valentine and where they are going—**[Some Hon Members: Ei!]**

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, let the youth out there know that it is not for what they are thinking, but that we should reach out and express our love, the normal love and not the one they are thinking about. That would end up leading them where they are not supposed to be.

Mr Speaker, with this, I thank you very much and wish my beautiful wife, Mrs Akosua Nyantakyiwaa Bessey a Happy Valentine's Day, and say I am coming home, so she should wait for me.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: I am looking at the constituencies of all of you.

Colonel, we have a lot of cocoa from your area so let me hear you.

Col Kwadwo Damoah (NPP — Jaman South): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to also make my contribution towards the celebration of Love or Chocolate Day and, for that matter, Cocoa Day.

Mr Speaker, Ghana had depended on cocoa for a very long time and was the leading producer until we were overtaken by La Côte d'Ivoire. That notwithstanding, we still produce the best cocoa in the whole world, so it is incumbent upon us to ensure that we continue to play a very significant role in the production of cocoa. These days, we are having serious challenges with our cocoa production. The youth we want to encourage to go into cocoa production are gradually running away from that industry. It is the old men and women who still manage our cocoa farms, and, as they grow old and they are not getting their younger ones to take over from them, we risk losing our position to other countries.

Mr Speaker, governments, over the years, have been trying hard to provide the necessary incentives to make cocoa production viable and attractive, but the challenges still persist. Now, we are also having challenges about our environment, cocoa is a special tree that requires some shade, and it needs vegetation. With the current destruction of our forest, if we do not take pragmatic steps to ensure that we continue to have our forest preserved, we may end up, one day, losing our second position to other countries. We have research services, extension services, and other incentives

that our governments have been providing. But we also need to go beyond that and ensure that the vagaries of the weather may not continue to be detrimental to the production of cocoa.

We need to do a little more sensitisation and education on how to preserve our forest and improve cocoa production, so that we will continue to have cocoa beans, which will be used to produce the chocolate that we may wish to have for ourselves, our children, and everybody in the country. It is also a fact that we produce cocoa, but we do not consume much of cocoa by way of drinks and chocolate. Now that we are promoting intra-African trade, taking advantage of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), it is our expectation that we would encourage more trade between Ghana and our sister countries in Africa, which are not fortunate to have the vegetation that makes it possible for cocoa production to take place. That will also help us to improve our economy.

Now, all those who are involved in cocoa production and related industries, we say *ayekoo* to them. We cherish our cocoa farmers, and we should do everything possible to encourage them to remain in cocoa production, in spite of the challenges. My Constituency, Jaman South, and other constituencies in the Bono Region have taken to the production of cashew. Cashew does not require so much of shade, and, in recent times, we use cashew to provide the shade that cocoa needs. So, when we go to cashew plantations now, they are planting cocoa trees under them, and that

is helping us to have the shade that cocoa requires to grow extensively. So, we encourage other areas where cashew production is possible to improve and expand cashew production and, at the same time, use that as a cover for cocoa production.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

1.48 p.m.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, let me give the opportunity to Rev Ntoso. I think that will be the last one. Then I would come to Leadership, then I would give the last opportunity to the Minister to at least give us—

Rev Helen Adjoa Ntoso (NDC — Krachi West): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. As we are talking about love, I want to go a bit spiritual and talk about biblical love. The Bible says in 1 John 4:20 that,

“If anyone says I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

Mr Speaker, on this day as we are celebrating St Valentine, a martyr, I just want to speak to Colleagues that the spiritual meaning of Valentine is about recognising the power of love as a transformative force in our lives. It is a day for celebrating the positive connections we have with others and acknowledging those connections. We have to extend the love that we have not only to our family members, not only for

our friends, but we should also consider the needy, and the downtrodden. In celebrating this day, we should not forget about them. The former President promised to give school children chocolate, but unfortunately, it did not happen. I pray that with the coming of our Minister for Agriculture, Mr Eric Opoku, cocoa farmers will be given the desired health so that they will be able to produce more, in order to provide the opportunity for parents who cannot even afford to buy chocolate for their children to now be able to buy some for their children so that the children can also have a taste of the chocolate that we are producing in this country.

Mr Speaker, I also want to say that the men who stood up, recognising their wives and sending them messages—My prayer is that all the men who are married, if they leave here today would go straight home. They should go straight home and show their love—*[Laughter]*—To their wives. They should not just say it here in the Chamber. They should go straight home and celebrate their wives so that their wives would know that they actually appreciate them. The women should as well go straight home, appreciate their husbands, show them love, and show their children love. Hon Members should not forget their parents on this day. They should celebrate their parents.

Mr Speaker, let me also use this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation to my husband for his—*[Interruption]*—I would go home—For his unflinching love. My husband, Rev Dr Kingsford Asamoah, I appreciate his love and I pray that—

Mr Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity. May the good Lord bless you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Now, let me come to Leadership. I hope you are yielding yours too.

Mr Okyere Darko, let me hear you.

Mr Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah (NPP — Takoradi): Mr Speaker, thank you very much for this rare opportunity.

First, we have to congratulate all the three makers of these Statements; they were all women. Clearly, it shows that love matters a lot to women. But on this day, as we celebrate it as a Chocolate Day, I believe that Ghana's love should go to our cocoa farmers all across the country, and also to encourage the young ones to enter into the cocoa business.

Mr Speaker, I believe that one of the issues that have come up over here about our cocoa farmers is the value we give them for the work they do in the cocoa industry. If we take the industry in Ghana, it is just around US\$3 billion. Meanwhile, the world's value of cocoa processed is about 140 billion going into 170 billion. Clearly, I believe that we need to change the equation of how we create value for our cocoa farmers.

First, I do believe that we need to start looking at ways of making sure that all the cocoa we produce in Ghana are processed fully in Ghana; not just semi-processed, but fully processed in Ghana.

We should also look at ways of giving Ghana's cocoa to the producers free of charge, and we taking a percentage of the profit from the manufacturers. If, for instance, we give the cocoa, and then the profit is about, say, US\$20 billion, we can get about US\$10 billion instead of getting US\$3 billion. It is better than this business of selling it at low value to them, and not getting anything. When we are able to create that value, we would be able to pass a lot of it on to our cocoa farmers so that more people would gain more in the cocoa industry, and they would be ready to invest more in their cocoa farms. In situations where cocoa farmers are known to be selling their cocoa farms to *galamsey* people, thereby reducing the production of cocoa in a lot of villages all across the country, I believe that we should have a market mechanism to make sure that they see more value in cocoa farming than the other way around.

Thank you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: I would now come to Leadership.

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Mr Speaker, you granted one there, and I signaled to you that you should grant one here before you go to—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: I know, but I would give Mr Eric Opoku a lot of time to respond to all the issues. So, Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib, just conclude.

Second Deputy Minority Whip (Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib): Mr Speaker, I thank you very much for this opportunity.

On this very special day, which is the 14th of February, 2025, I want to wish my one and only sweet wife, Mrs Josephina Abena Shaib, a happy Valentine's Day. Unlike those who are making noise that I should go home, I will go home.

Mr Speaker, I also want to take this opportunity to wish my mother, Gifty Naa Adoa Nunu, the one who gave birth to me, a happy Valentine's Day. There are three solid women who are doing very marvelous things in my Constituency, Weija-Gbawe. One is Apostle Lilian Kumah; she is in charge of the Disciples of Christ Ministry. Mr Speaker, do you know what she is doing? She is showing a lot of love, affection and care to the less privileged. She is doing this also in support with the Weija Manye, Naa Amakuma and Gbawe Manye, Naa Yaaniedi II. I wish them all a happy Valentine's Day and to just express my love and gratitude to them.

Mr Speaker, I am not forgetting my beautiful children. I just want them to understand that Daddy loves them very much.

Beyond all of this, I am a beneficiary of the Cocoa Board Scholarship and I know what cocoa has done for this nation. We must continue to support the processing of cocoa and also push policies that would benefit this nation for the very important promotion and innovation of cocoa, and for the benefits that come out from cocoa. We need to strengthen infrastructure, and enhance the capacity of farmers. We also need to offer incentives to local manufacturers.

1.58 p.m.

We need to come to the understanding that we need value addition within our country, which will promote and preserve job opportunities, create wealth and also solidify Ghana's reputation as one of the major leaders in the cocoa value chain.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, as we celebrate today, the National Chocolate Day, let us recognise that there are far-reaching impacts of processing cocoa in Ghana, and I am very excited to see the Minister for Food and Agriculture here. It is a sector that strengthens our economy, enhances our global competitiveness, and provides sustainable livelihoods for many Ghanaians.

Mr Speaker, I urge all stakeholders including the Government, industry players, and farmers, to continue working together to ensure that Ghana maximises the full potential of its cocoa industry for generations to come.

Mr Speaker, I thank you very much for allowing me to contribute to this Statement.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you so much. Let me now come to the Majority Leadership.

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Mr Speaker, since it is National Cocoa Day, I would like to yield the contribution of Leadership to the Minister for Food and Agriculture.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: The Minister would get his opportunity to contribute.

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: The Minister would get his opportunity to contribute?

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: So, that is why I said you should conclude so I give the final slot to the Minister.

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Then the Hon Mintah Nyarku would take the slot because he wanted to make his contribution.

Dr Kwamena Minta Nyarku (NDC — Cape Coast North): Mr Speaker, thank for the opportunity to contribute to the Statements on Ghana's Chocolate Day —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: So, the Hon Member for Cape Coast South is yielding to the Hon Member for Cape Coast North? I see.

Dr Nyarku: Mr Speaker, I want to appreciate all cocoa farmers in Ghana and beyond. The reason is that they have been very pivotal when it comes to cocoa production across the world. If indeed the consumption of cocoa is on the increase, then there is the need for the Government of Ghana to also look at how we can push in some investments towards more cocoa production.

Today we are talking about Valentine's Day, and I am also looking at the cost of the celebration of Valentine's Day. In America, when it is Valentine's Day, families share flowers, candies and

cards. When you come to Ghana, and it is Valentine's Day, it is not an act of giving, but an act of mandatory requirement that you need to make sure you honour.

Mr Speaker, I think that Valentine is the act of giving, and if indeed, it is the act of giving, the giver is supposed to provide what they can willingly give to an individual. So, if I can afford a chocolate—since we are talking about chocolate today, Ghanaians who are supposed to be recipients should also get chocolate. Instead, they would give you a list of items you need to buy for Valentine's Day. This is raising a lot of concerns. If some of them are not able to fulfil—Yes, they give you a prospectus and if you are not able to fulfil that, then that becomes problematic. There are so many relationships that are breaking up because of requests for Valentine's Day celebration.

Mr Speaker, I want us to appreciate the fact that Valentine is not only about the act of giving, but also, the act of taking. But as much as possible, we should also look at how Parliament would be able to direct that on such occasions, we would visit orphanages, hospitals, and areas where our act of giving would have very big impact.

Mr Speaker, let me add my voice to the other contributors who are certain that indeed, we need to look at psychiatric hospitals, orphanages, maternity homes and any area where our act of giving would have the needed impact. I think when we do that, we would be able to give more than we take.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Very well. At least I have taken from your contribution that Valentine is the act of giving, and not an act of demanding. Hon Minister for Food and Agriculture, let us hear you.

Minister for Food and Agriculture (Mr Eric Opoku) (MP): Mr Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute to the Statements on the floor of the House.

Today is Valentine's Day, a day for the expression of love. We in Ghana chose to celebrate the National Chocolate Day today, to coincide with the Valentine's Day so that we can use chocolates to express love because of the enormous benefits that we derive from the consumption of chocolates. I wanted to do that to promote consumption of chocolates in this country.

Mr Speaker, the benefits are enormous. We are told that it lowers blood pressure, prevents liver damage, boosts good cholesterol, keeps our heart healthy, boosts brain power and makes us feel good. So, as a way of expressing love, we share chocolates among one another and that is why the day is a unique day. But while celebrating, it is important for us to pause and reflect on the chocolate industry globally, and in here in Ghana, and also to look at the key ingredients that go into the production of chocolates in the world and Ghana in particular.

Mr Speaker, in the global environment, the global chocolate industry is estimated around US\$119 billion in 2023, and it is estimated to grow at 4.1 per cent between 2024 and 2030. But unfortunately, African's share is just 1 per cent in this huge market, this multi-billion industry. When it comes to the production of raw cocoa beans, Africa contributes 70 per cent to cocoa production in the world. But when it comes to the chocolate industry, our share is just 1 per cent.

Now, when you come to Ghana, we are the second largest producer of cocoa in the whole world; globally, the second largest producer of cocoa. But the only cocoa processing company that is partially owned by Government of Ghana is the Cocoa Processing Company of Ghana. The Cocoa Processing Company of Ghana has a processing capacity of 64,500 tonnes. But in 2023, they processed just 6,614 tonnes, and in 2024, they processed just 2,886 tonnes. The Company is now operating far below its capacity. It is no wonder that in the first half of 2024, they recorded a debt of US\$ 9.5 million. So clearly, the processing company is on the verge of collapse and this is attributable to lack of cocoa beans. The second largest producer of cocoa in the world is unable to supply enough cocoa beans to its processing company. That is the paradox. So, there is the need for us to look at how we can increase cocoa production in this country. Mr Speaker—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister, hold on. I did not want to do that, but probably—

Mr Vincent Ekow Assafuah: Mr Speaker, I rise on Order 64(3) which is

“A Member may draw the attention of the person presiding at any time during a sitting, that Members present in the House constitute less than one-third of the number of all the Members of Parliament.”—[Uproar]—

Mr Speaker, when you count the number of people in the House.

2.08 p.m.

Now, we are not up to the constitutional requirement of one-third of the Members and for that matter, I am drawing your attention to the effect that we do not form quorum.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, while another Member is invoking Standard Order 64—I am not even ignoring it, but we will go through the procedure. So, Hon Minister, you can go on while I ask the Clerks-at-the-Table to ring the bell—Mr Assafuah, you have invoked the Standing Order, so allow me; I know what I am doing.

So, Hon Minister, let us hear you.

Mr E. Opoku: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to continue. I said that the Cocoa Processing Company of Ghana is unable to produce up to capacity largely because of lack of cocoa beans. And, I was lamenting over the paradoxical situation

where the second largest producer of cocoa is unable to deliver beans for processing in its own country.

Mr Speaker, this comes to cocoa production, and Hon Members who contributed earlier alluded to the need for us to look at how we can increase cocoa production. The first point raised by one of our Colleagues on the other Side had to do with the producer price of cocoa. His view was that we should give the cocoa farmers competitive prices to motivate them to produce more cocoa, so that we can have enough to feed our processing factories. I agree perfectly with our Colleague, and these are some of the issues we have raised over the years.

Mr Speaker, at any point in time, the cocoa farmer must be given not less than 60 per cent of the world market price. And we would recall that I have stated this here more than a million times, especially when we realised that in the past years, especially last year, that cocoa farmers were being given 30 per cent of the Free on Board (FOB) price. We spoke against that and stated categorically that given the opportunity, we would ensure that farmers are given more than 60 per cent of the world market price.

Mr Speaker, the former Western Regional Minister—**[An Hon Member: Sit down.]**—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Who is that? Please! — **[An Hon Member: Which village does he come from?]**— Hon Member, please do not say that. Withdraw that, please.

Mr E. Opoku: Mr Speaker, the former Western Regional Minister indicated to me that I have the opportunity now, so I should increase the producer price. And I said, Honourable, I will respond to that. Mr Speaker, my response is this: we are fully determined to give cocoa farmers more than 60 per cent; we want to give them 70 per cent. *[Hear! Hear!]*

But they know they have set a trap for us. The trap is that in their handing over notes, they indicated that COCOBOD owes their creditors an amount of GH¢27 billion, and that GH¢5.37 billion is due for payment this year. What that means is that this year, if we get the money, we must set aside GH¢5.37 billion to pay for the debt before we proceed to determine the producer price of cocoa; that is what they have bequeathed to us. So, it is surprising that after creating this mess, the Minority has the courage to mount pressure on us to increase producer price today, while at the same time, they are urging us to pay debts.

Mr Speaker, I am making a contribution to a Statement, but because he invited me to respond to that, I decided to seize this opportunity to let the Minority know that if Ghanaian cocoa farmers are unable to get the 70 per cent they deserve, it is because of the huge debt that they have given to us; they have created it.

Again, Mr Speaker, one of them raised the issue about PBC, and I remember you said, when it gets to my turn, I should respond to that.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr E. Opoku: Mr Speaker, yes, as we speak, PBC is on its knees. It is completely dead, and we have to do a lot of things to bring it back to life. In 2016, when we handed over to the Minority, it was prosperous and vibrant. In 2015, PBC made profit, and part of the profit was invested in the rehabilitation of Golden Beans Hotel in Kumasi; Mr Assafuah knows this—[*Laughter*]

Mr Speaker, within the last eight years, PBC has been reduced to nothing; to the extent that in the past two years, they were unable to buy one bag of cocoa for this nation. PBC was the largest purchaser of cocoa in Ghana in 2016. They purchased 30.1 per cent.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister, I thought you would just explain without actually moving into politics, but it is like you are debating now.

Mr E. Opoku: Mr Speaker, I was just responding to the issues raised by our Colleagues, and also proffering solutions to solve the very challenges we are lamenting about.

Mr Samuel Abdulai Jinapor —
rose —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: All right; let me hear the Hon Member for Damongo.

Mr Samuel Abdulai Jinapor (NPP — Damongo): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, what is before us this afternoon is a Statement. A Statement has been made about St Valentine's Day and chocolate. It is pursuant to this Statement that has resulted in Members contributing to it. Mr Speaker, our Standing Orders are very clear on this matter that a Statement should not elicit a debate and contributions to a Statement should also not elicit debate.

Mr Speaker, what the Hon Minister has been doing is really raising very contentious issues. Mr Speaker, we will respectfully call upon you to have the Minister be guided and not make comments which will elicit a debate. There will be an opportunity for that and we will be ready to have the debate with them. Let him be guided.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. In actual fact, I decided to ask him to sit and listen to all the comments since most of the comments were directed towards his Ministry, so that he could also try to address some of them. But please, Hon Minister, while addressing them, just be guided, not to actually move into it.

Mr E. Opoku: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, these are issues, as you rightly said, raised by our Colleagues, and there is the need for us to indicate to them measures we are putting in place to address them. But for them to have a better appreciation of the measures, they must know the true state now, so that they will all agree that these measures are good measures to address them.

Mr Speaker, somebody also spoke about cocoa roads, and that is a serious matter we are looking at. The argument advanced was that to be able to increase cocoa production, we have to fix all the roads leading to cocoa growing areas. This is a Statement made by one of our Colleagues from the other Side.

Mr Speaker, you would recall that in 2017, when the NPP assumed office, one of the issues that became topical here in our country and was discussed extensively throughout all the media outlets had to do with cocoa roads. This is because at that time, we had awarded contracts amounting to GHC5.1 billion. Based on this, a Committee was established to audit all cocoa roads in Ghana to ascertain whether there was value for money in the award of those contracts.

2.18 p.m.

Mr Speaker, it would surprise Hon Members to note that in the handing-over notes, we are told that cocoa roads awarded in the last eight years amounted to GH¢21 billion. Mr Speaker, Government is recommending that we do what they call rationalisation. And when we asked them during the transition, their explanation was that by rationalisation, they are saying that we should terminate, repackage, and then re-award.

Mr Speaker, the problem on our hands today is that we have over-awarded the contracts and Ghana Cocoa Board does not have the capacity to pay. So now they are asking us in the

handing-over notes to do rationalisation. And then rationalisation has begun. So very soon, some of these contracts would be re-looked at and then terminated to ensure that we make progress in the field of cocoa roads. But the assurance we are giving to Hon Members is that we would sanitise the process and ensure that roads in cocoa growing areas alone are fixed with moneys from cocoa.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr E. Opoku: Then the last point that I have to respond to has to do with cocoa production.

Mr Speaker, Hon Members would recall that one of our Colleagues made mention of cocoa production, which has increased to 6,000 something. I was asking whether he is speaking from a different world or what. I was wondering whether he knows what he is talking about. Cocoa production increasing?

Mr Speaker, cocoa production peaked in 2021 at 1,047,000 tonnes, unprecedented in the history of Ghana. 1,047,000 tonnes. But as we speak, it is around 500,000 tonnes. The lowest in the past two decades was recorded in 2024. And so, what we have to do now is to come out with policies that would ensure rejuvenation of the cocoa sector, to reset the entire cocoa sector, and increase cocoa production so that we can maximise the benefits for our cocoa farmers.

Mr Speaker, we thank you very much for the opportunity. This is a great day; it is a day that we have to show love.

Chocolates have been distributed to Hon Members, and our expectation is that Hon Members would also share the chocolate we have given them to their wives, children, constituents, and then all the other things that they can talk about.

On this note, thank you very much.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon Members, my younger Brother raised an issue on quorum, but the time is not up. So, we take the last Statement. We take the last Statement from Hon James Gyakyé Quayson on Black History Month.

Hon James Gyakyé Quayson, you have the floor now.

STATEMENT

Black History Month

Mr James Gyakyé Quayson (NDC — Assin North): Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to elaborate on Black History Month.

Mr Speaker, I am very honoured to have the opportunity to commemorate Black History Month, a time to celebrate the achievements, struggles, and contribution of black people throughout history. I want to thank the good people of Assin North for entrusting me once again to represent and serve them.

Mr Speaker, Black History Month allows us to reflect on the perseverance of our people throughout history, slavery, institutional racism, and the ongoing fight for equality. I am inspired

by the immense contribution of black leaders like Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, Barack Obama, and a host of others, whose efforts have shaped history and inspired progress.

Mr Speaker, Africa, despite being rich in natural resources, remains paradoxically underdeveloped due to centuries of exploitation, colonisation, and unfair global systems. Our continent was stripped of resources and labour, which fuelled the advancement of other nations while leaving us impoverished. Even today, economic dependency and the influence of global financial institutions continue to hinder Africa's progress.

Mr Speaker, I believe Black History Month is a call to action. It reminds us of the need for unity among black people worldwide, both on the continent and in the diaspora. We must strive for self-sufficiency, ethical leadership, and collective responsibility. By learning from the past and building solidarity, we can right the wrongs of history and create a future of hope, dignity, and empowerment for generations to come.

Mr Speaker, this year's celebration of Black History Month carried a powerful message of unity, resilience, and progress for the people of African descent across the world. It reminded us that the African story is one of triumph in the face of adversity, of collective strength, and of an enduring vision for a brighter future. As the world celebrates the contribution of our ancestors and contemporaries to global history, Ghana

reaffirms this position as the gateway to Africa, a home for all people of African descent, wherever they may be.

Mr Speaker, the Year of Return in 2019, followed by the Beyond the Return initiative, became monumental in positioning Ghana as a welcoming home for African-Americans and the global diaspora. This initiative not only reignited cultural connections, but also brought tangible economic benefits, with tourism contributing significantly to our Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Mr Speaker, African-Americans and the global diaspora have made substantial investment in Ghana's economy, particularly in real estate, hospitality, tourism, and many other sectors, further strengthening Ghana's position as a leading destination for cultural tourism. These contributions have created jobs, boosted local businesses, and fostered global networking opportunities, all of which are vital to our national development.

Mr Speaker, for far too long, the issue of dual citizenship has clouded our political discourse, dividing us when we should be united. I am a firm believer that Ghanaians in the diaspora are brothers and sisters scattered across the globe, and they are not only part of our national story, but an integral part of our future. Their expertise, their investments, and their patriotism are invaluable. I stand here not as a victim of political challenges, but as a testament to the resilience of every Ghanaian who believes in the power of democracy and justice.

Mr Speaker, the fight against dual citizenship restrictions and political ambition is not a personal battle, but a national conversation. Our Constitution, while a beacon of democracy, must evolve to reflect the global realities of our people. How do we marginalise those who have sought better opportunities abroad, yet remain deeply connected to Ghana? How do we exclude them from leadership when their hearts, skills, and resources are dedicated to building our nation?

Mr Speaker, it is important that we expedite action on this passage of the Dual Citizenship Amendment Bill to remove these restrictions and create a more inclusive governance framework. The Bill represents a critical step in acknowledging the contributions of Ghanaians in the diaspora, and ensuring that they have equal opportunities to participate in our democratic processes. I therefore urge this august House to lend its full support to the Bill when tabled again. Together, let us take this bold step towards inclusivity and progress.

Mr Speaker, as we deliberate on policies and development strategies, let us embrace the vision of our noble President, H. E. John Dramani Mahama, as outlined in the National Democratic Congress (NDC) manifesto, The Black Star Experience.

2.28 p.m.

This initiative would not only serve as Ghana's flagship brand for culture, arts, and tourism, but also, it would redefine and reaffirm national identity

while attracting investments, creating jobs, and boosting tourism. It includes a year-round celebration in arts, film, fashion, literature, and more, strengthening ties with the African diaspora, including the Caribbean, and positioning Ghana as the cultural hub of Africa. The initiative will enhance tourism revenues, foster transfers, support local businesses and drive economic and creative innovations across the country.

Mr Speaker, in recent years, Ghana has become a beacon of hope and opportunity for many Africans, diasporans, and other nationals, who have chosen to call our country home. By extending citizenship to them, we are acknowledging their immense contribution to our society, economically, culturally, and socially. Many of these individuals have decades of professional experience, global networks, resources, and valuable perspectives that can benefit our governance and institutions.

Mr Speaker, as we welcome them as citizens, we must also recognise the potential for their political aspirations. Leadership is not confined to nationality by birth, but it is defined by the ability to serve, innovate, and uplift communities. These new citizens are now an inseparable part of our Ghanaian story, and their ambition should not be stifled but celebrated as part of the diversity and richness of our democracy.

Mr Speaker, this moment calls on us to rethink the structures of inclusivity in our governance. If we as a nation are bold enough to welcome them as citizens, then we must be equally bold in

creating pathways for their active participation in shaping Ghana's future, including in political leadership. Their global experience, combined with their commitment to Ghana, can only strengthen our democracy and accelerate our development.

Mr Speaker, the journey ahead is long, and the road will not always be smooth, but I pledge to work relentlessly to ensure that no Ghanaian feels left out of our national vision. Whether they live in Accra, Kumasi, Assin North, New York, or Toronto, today, we can redefine what it means to be a Ghanaian, create a nation where everyone has a stake, and build a future that our children will be proud of. Let us not be deterred by the challenges of today, for they are but stepping stones to a greater tomorrow. Let us work together to create and reset our nation again, where opportunities are abundant, justice is unwavering, and security is assured to every Ghanaian, who regardless of their circumstances, can dream, achieve, and strive.

I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.
[Hear! Hear!]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Let me go to the Hon Member for Damongo.

Mr Samuel Abdulai Jinapor (NPP — Damongo): Thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute to this very important Statement ably made by the Member of Parliament for Assin North.

Mr Speaker, black people have travelled a long journey, and indeed, from the days of slavery to colonialism,

all through to the days of civil rights, the struggle for independence, post-independence struggles of nation building, and our contemporary challenges of unleashing the needed prosperity to our people, the black people of the world have travelled a long journey. That is why I believe the Statement commemorating black history is absolutely important.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, in our country, Ghana, we have had great leaders, and great forebears who stood up to fight for Ghanaian independence, and Ghanaian freedom. But allow me to focus on land administration as a testament to the struggles and triumphs of our forebears, and by that, I refer to the likes of John Mensah Sarbah, and Co, who established the Aborigines Rights Protection Society, which unlike other African countries, particularly Eastern African countries, were able to mobilise our compatriots and our citizens to stand against the Crown Lands Bill of 1894, which sought to appropriate Ghanaian lands.

Mr Speaker, and that is why today we have a situation in Ghana where lands are owned by the Ghanaian people, are owned by stools, owned by skins, clans, among others. Indeed, across the world, there have been notable personalities who have fought for the dignity of the black man. Dr Martin Luther King is a classic example. All through history, black people have championed black promotion, promoting the welfare and the dignity of black people.

Mr Speaker, let me conclude by touching on the very important point that the Hon MP for Assin North spoke about so passionately. And I can understand why he spoke that passionately about that subject, which is dual citizenship, and the need for citizens to have the right to representation and also have the right to participate in the governance of our country while holding citizenship of other countries.

Mr Speaker, I only want to point out that it is a welcome call and all of us should support it, but while supporting it, we also have to be mindful that rights go along with duties. And as the Hon Member may be familiar with, the tax jurisprudence of our country, for example, is a source-based tax system, which means that one is taxed only when their income is sourced from the Ghanaian jurisdiction. Unlike other countries where taxation is based on citizenship and therefore if one is a citizen of a country like the United States', it does not matter where one is or where one earns his or her income, the United States tax regime will catch up with them and they have to pay tax.

In Ghana, if one is a Ghanaian citizen and his or her source of income is not within the Ghanaian jurisdiction, one is not obliged to pay taxes to the Ghanaian state. Therefore, while we call for and support dual citizens to have certain rights, I believe that there is also a gamut of other duties we have to examine. One of them that I am also passionate about is the question of taxation, so that if one is a dual citizen and one is entitled to be a Member of Parliament or a Chief Justice,

and one is earning his or her income from, say, the United Kingdom, the Ghanaian tax regime should be able to catch up with the person as well.

Mr Speaker, with this, I thank the maker of this Statement for making this important Statement.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, let me come to Hon Member for Madina.

Mr Francis-Xavier Kojo Sosu (NDC — Madina): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to this very important Statement on Black History Month by our Colleague, Hon James Gyakyee Quayson, Member of Parliament for Assin North Constituency.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, this Statement is very timely because it reminds us of a number of things, starting from local to maybe, global. I think the first thing it reminds us of is the duty of the nation to pass that very important dual citizenship law that was introduced by a private Member in the Eighth Parliament. Unfortunately, we could not pass that law before the Eighth Parliament dissolved. I am hopeful that the new Attorney-General and the Minister for the Interior will come together and ensure that that Bill is re-laid on the floor of Parliament so we can look at it speedily.

2.38 p.m.

Mr Speaker, of course, there is justification for this. The mere fact that a person has moved from Ghana to another

country or picked citizenship from another country does not mean the person has lost his original citizenship or where he was born. Mr Speaker, not only that, research and data available from the World Bank, Bank of Ghana and other financial institutions show that the remittances that come to this country, the amount of financial contributions that our diasporans make to this country is unimaginable. So how on earth do we accept all these remittances and support, yet when it comes to ensuring their rights to participate in our local governance structure, we tend to discriminate against them.

Mr Speaker, I really believe that the time is ripe for us to critically look at the dual citizenship law and then amend it. Secondly, the Statement again reminds us of a collective responsibility as Africans and African citizens. Mr Speaker, you would realize that most of the world leaders or the forebears, for example, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, were people who had opportunity to study beyond the four corners of Ghana. So it means that the diasporan experience is also very important because it opens our world view; it helps us to understand what is happening in other jurisdictions so that we can move out of our own idiosyncrasies or our own limited view of things.

Mr Speaker, today we are in a global village; it means that knowledge everywhere or knowledge transfer is so key for us to develop new strategies and new approaches to overcome the challenges that we have as a people. Before I end my comment, Black History Month also

places an overwhelming obligation on each and every one of us as Africans. This week we have been speaking about Africa because of the Summit going on in Addis Ababa, and we have made several Statements on this Floor this week as far as Africans are concerned.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the time has come for Africa to give true meaning to the statement made by our first President, Dr Nkrumah, that Ghana's independence is meaningless unless it leads to the, complete independence or emancipation of the African continent. That emancipation is not only political emancipation. From 1963 to date, all we have succeeded in doing is weaning ourselves off our colonial masters by virtue of not being their colonists anymore. But when it comes to our economies, we are still in some form of slavery. When it comes to integrity in governance, look at how our democracies, — very weak democracies — sometimes even fake democracies, because every time, people are looking for opportunities to cheat just to get to power. So I think African leaders will have to do a true reflection, and as we do this true reflection, one of the things we also have to understand is that we must move from the aid dependency of African leaders and African countries, and develop local and indigenous solutions for African problems. If we are able to do this, then the Black History Month will make a lot of meaning to all of us as Africans.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute to this Statement.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Let me now turn to the Hon Member for Offinso North.

Dr Fred Kyei Asamoah (NPP—Offinso North): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity and let us thank the maker of the Statement regarding the Black History Month. This started as Negro History Week in 1926. It was President Ford that in 1976 officially recognised the Negro Week as the Black History Month and in the 80s, it was backed by law to celebrate Black History Month in February each year.

Mr Speaker, it is no wonder today we are celebrating cocoa day and we know cocoa also came from Fernando Po, now Equatorial Guinea, to Ghana in 1895 from the black soil. So, as we are contributing to this Statement, I would not want to leave out the people of Offinso North, from Nkawkaw to Afrancho, to wish them a happy Valentine's Day and a Cocoa Day as well. I also wish my wife, Joyce Asamoah, and the family.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: So, you are taking advantage of that to—

Mr F. K. Asamoah: Mr Speaker, you want me to take that advantage? But, Mr Speaker, on a serious note, blacks have struggled for a long time, and we have contributed immensely to the growth of this world. But what do we get in return? We know we always talk about the fact that it was Blacks who discovered America, but what is our role as Blacks right now? We also know that Africa is endowed with a whole lot of

resources, but we tend not to benefit from it. So, this is a call on us, even as we are celebrating the Black History Month, which is African American and Labour, it calls on us that, is the Black man only good for labour, or is he also good to enjoy what God has endowed us with? Africa has so much resources, notwithstanding what has gone out of our continent, that if we are to focus on labour improvement and local economic improvement, we will have more Blacks having to stay in Africa and not run out of this continent.

Mr Speaker, coming back to the issue of dual citizenship, a lot of African countries have benefited from dual citizens, because our ability to learn and unlearn and learn is one that countries develop with. If one looks at what is going on in China, China had the opportunity to even go and learn a lot of things from the Americas and from Germany, and they have gone back to help their country with it. So I think it is the right time that we in Ghana and in Africa, give our dual citizens the opportunity to contribute fully to the development of our nation, recognising the struggles of most of our leaders who have led this country. If you look at the history of our first President, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, he had the opportunity to live in the United States, the same way most of our leaders that have led this country did.

Mr Speaker, I would like to support my brother, the Hon Member of Parliament, that we would have to really look at this dual citizen law and see how best we can bring meaning to it, so that the power and the resilience of the black race can contribute to the development of our nation, Ghana.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Let me now acknowledge the Member of Parliament for Essikadu-Ketan.

Prof Grace Ayensu-Danquah (NDC — Essikadu-Ketan): Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me to make a comment on this Statement. I also thank the maker of the Statement, Mr James Gyakyere Quayson, the Member of Parliament for Assin North Constituency.

The issue of Black History Month is a very important month for Africans and Africans in the diaspora. I want to bring this Black History Month issue back to the medical industry, as a medical doctor and a surgeon specialist myself. When we look at blacks in the diaspora, there is a lot of expertise that Ghana can benefit from medical experts in the diaspora. They cut across from Brazil, to Middle East, to the Caribbean, to America, to Canada, to the UK. All across the world, we have blacks who are experts in the medical field. These are some super specialised experts. As we sit here today in Ghana, we have issues with medical expertise. Where we have experts, we do not have enough of them. What happens in most of our hospitals is that we see the same experts rotating in all the medical centres. We have a deficit of medical experts. Some of the medical experts are in areas where there is only one or two of them in the entire country. So, in celebrating Black History Month, I would urge this House to make it easier for medical experts in the diaspora to come and support our health system. Often times, it is very difficult to even transition.

2.48 p.m.

For instance, when one comes from elsewhere, there are certain examinations one has to take, which are usually done once or twice a year. There is an oral examination, which all of us had to do, and the process of getting a medical license is a bit tedious and may be sometimes inconvenient. So, as a House, I would recommend that we look into those and see how best we can make it easier for Africans in the diaspora to come to Ghana to support our health industry.

Mr Speaker, I would like to also say that even if these experts are not coming here permanently, we can use them on a rotational basis. We have Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that can bring doctors and experts, may be every three months, to help and support the Ghanaian health system. Most of these experts, because of their patriotism, would probably do it, and for free. This would almost be at no cost to the Ghanaian medical system; yet, we would benefit from their great expertise.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to thank Mr James Gyakyee Quayson for bringing up this very important Statement on Black History Month. I would also like to use this opportunity to thank the people in the cocoa growing areas of my constituency, Essikadu-Ketan: the people in Mmeredane, Atiase, Bowohomodien and all the cocoa growing areas in Essikadu-Ketan. I would like to wish them a Happy Chocolate Day. Hopefully, this weekend, I would bring chocolate to all of them in the villages and we can enjoy the end product of their hard work.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to highlight what is happening with our cocoa. Most of the cocoa plants are being cut down to make way for *galamsey*. I think that we should also look into that because cocoa is a very important product for the country and it brings in most of our income.

Mr Speaker, I thank you so much for allowing me to make this contribution.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you. So, now, when everybody gets the floor, they want to take advantage.

Yes, Hon Minister for Education?

Minister for Education (Mr Haruna Iddrisu) (MP): Mr Speaker, I would like to thank Mr Gyakyee Quayson for making a Statement on the Black History Month, and to call on us to recognise the monumental contribution of Dr Kwame Nkrumah to the economic, social and political development of our country. As well as the contribution of Nelson Mandela, in not just breaking the walls of apartheid, but ensuring that South Africa was ushered into a democracy, which gives more power and rights to persons with black background, and to also celebrate Dr Martin Luther King.

Mr Speaker, in commending him on his Statement, may I refer us to the paragraph at the second page where he talked about the issue of dual citizenship. The onus lies on us, as a country, to decide whether we are ready to make the best use of the expertise acquired by Ghanaians who have lived and worked abroad for several years, but for good

reasons, had to give up their citizenship for other countries.

We know that the motivation for many who travelled at the time to the United Kingdom (UK) or to the United States of America (USA) and acquired those citizenships was because they did not want to be chased around like they are being chased around today. So, they had to switch citizenship in order to gain some of the benefits associated with being a citizenship of that country.

Mr Speaker, however, in 1993, when the Constitution was promulgated, and with your indulgence, I beg to quote Article 8(1) of the Constitution which was repealed; it says:

“A citizen of Ghana may hold the citizenship of any other country in addition to a citizen of Ghana”

Mr Speaker, this is constitutional. If one is a Ghanaian and chooses to hold the citizenship of another country, our Constitution permits it; it is lawful.

Mr Speaker, in Article 8(2) it reads, “Without prejudice to Article 94(2) of the Constitution,” and this is the emphasis,

“No citizen of Ghana shall qualify to be appointed as a holder of any office specified in this clause if he holds the citizenship of any other country in addition to a citizenship of Ghana.”

So, if one is a dual citizen, he or she cannot be an Ambassador, a High

Commissioner, Secretary to the Cabinet, Chief of Defence Staff or any service chief, Inspector General of Police, Commissioner of Customs, Excise and Preventive Service, Director of Immigration Service, and any office specified by an Act of Parliament; so, what Parliament chooses to do —

Mr Speaker, when one is a dual citizen, even in Parliament, what we need to do—I am particularly happy that you are in the Chair. What is the difference between allegiance to the state and citizenship? They cannot be the same legally. If one follows the *Bilson v Apaloo Case*, in the early days of the 1992 Constitution, when one owes allegiance to another state, the assumption is that when one is a dual citizen, his or her allegiance has shifted and they may not owe allegiance to the country of their birth or country of their nationality.

So, what we need to do, which one of our Colleagues, who I believe was the Chairman of the Committee on Roads and Transportation, tried to do in the last Parliament—We almost got it through. Mr Speaker, it was Mr Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu and myself who discussed this and probably, that is why I am raising it. It came as a Private Member’s Bill to amend the Constitution, but the Constitution is weightier. If one wants to amend the Constitution, let it be the decision of the state. That is why the President is the Head of State, so the initiative must be that of the President. That he seeks to amend the Constitution in Article 8, and to allow for dual citizens to hold certain category of public offices.

Mr Speaker, my concern, which we can deal with when we get to the law-making is that, it cannot be open to every other office. So, for an elected Member of Parliament (MP), he or she cannot be a dual citizen, and at the same time be an elected MP. But should we not amend the Constitution? As I said, allegiance of state is not the same thing.

Mr Speaker, while commending the maker of the Statement, I would like to conclude. Again, in paragraph 4 of his Statement, he says that “to assure this House that sooner than later, H. E. John Dramani Mahama would launch the Black Star Experience”. I met him tasking the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts to take this initiative up and do what is appropriate so that it becomes an essential part of Ghana’s Independence Day Celebration.

It was the view of the President that this year is too close, but at least, into next year, the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts would lead the President’s policy reforms in making the Black Star Experience a model to attract more tourism and tourists into our country, and for us to celebrate our culture and values as a people.

Mr Speaker, finally, today, the image of Ghana is soaring very high, and that is why we must work to preserve it. Just the transition of political power from a different political party to the other, adds to Ghana becoming a beacon of hope in the pursuit of multi-party constitutional democracy. What we need to do is to preserve our respect for the fundamentals of the rule of law and pray that Ghana does not move into the annals

of a banana republic tomorrow, where we are not governed by law, but by the weight of some other person.

2.58 p.m.

So, I would like to commend Mr James Gyakye Quayson for the Statement, and to urge him to take part when the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts is leading the Black Star Experience initiative of the President, to drive his resetting agenda in the tourism sector.

So, we have to amend Article 8(2) of the Constitution and probably, when we get there, we may have to look at Article 94. Again, the Constitutional Review Commission can take advantage of it, and citizens of Ghana abroad who feel strongly about it, including Professor Stephen Kwaku Asare and co., who were the team that kept coming to the Rt Hon Speaker and your good self, urging us to make sure that we took off that path from our loss.

I thank you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Can I now reach out to Leadership?

Second Deputy Minority Whip (Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib): Yes, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much for this opportunity. I commend highly the maker of the Statement.

Mr Speaker, if anyone paid attention to issues of Black History Month, I think the NPP did so very well with reference

to the celebration of the Year of Return, and Beyond the Return. I also take a cue from my very senior mentor, who had to go into details of discussing issues of allegiance and citizenship.

Mr Speaker, we also are very well-versed with the knowledge that every citizen has responsibilities. So, if a citizen also wants to serve his state, there are due obligations for him to take up, including paying taxes and ensuring that whatever the person is doing in another country that he has taken up citizenship in, he is also providing same allegiance to his original country. We know as to whether one is allegiant or not cannot be measured.

Mr Speaker, we are here today to believe that the Constitution — looking at Chapter 3 of the Constitution, and in particular, Article 8(1), (2) and (3), there have been some amendments that we also have to pay attention to and understand that it is very important for anybody who wants to be seen as a Ghanaian to do so in whole, but not partially. Whole to the extent that they are true Ghanaians, and can be the Speaker of Parliament when they decide to do so tomorrow because they are qualified to do so.

Mr Speaker, as we are here today, we want to believe that if we put everything in proper perspective, tomorrow anybody who qualifies to have dual citizenship should have so without any problems. And such a person should also be able to contest an election without any problems. That is why on this note, I

commend the maker of this Statement and more especially my senior learned Friend for also bringing in an aspect of the issue of allegiance. How does one prove allegiance? That is a matter which is very critical and we all have to pay attention to. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to contribute to this Statement.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, Deputy Majority Leader?

Deputy Majority Leader (Mr George Kweku Ricketts-Hagan): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I would also like to thank the maker of the Statement, Hon Gyakyé Quayson, for making this important Statement.

Mr Speaker, the issue of Black History Month is a global one which is not for only Africa, but Africans in the diaspora and it is worth celebrating. That is why Americans have made it an important month for the history of the African people.

Mr Speaker, Africans or people of African descent have gone through various experiences in over a century. They have also excelled in many walks of life. Mr Speaker, wherever one goes in the world, there is an African who is doing something important. Therefore, it is no doubt that Africans are capable of doing what other races or shapes of people are doing in the world, but we do not celebrate ourselves enough, and it is important that we do so. In any field that is mentioned, there is an African there who has done extremely well.

At the top end of diplomacy, of politics, we have seen Africans who have occupied global positions, like the former United Nations Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan and many others, and they are still doing it. Mr Speaker, it is worth celebrating that—Nkrumah said, Africans are capable of managing our own affairs but sometimes we look like we are not capable of managing our own affairs. But we have managed affairs of other people, therefore, we should be capable of managing our own affairs. We are just not getting something right and those are the things we need to look at, and not have doubt in ourselves that we are actually capable of managing our own affairs.

Mr Speaker, some perspectives have been shared by my Hon Friend, the Minister for Education, on the issue of this dual citizenship. The maker of the Statement, who we know had a personal experience of this, was right in making the Statement. I do pray that eventually, we are able to revisit this Bill and make sure that Ghanaians, wherever they are, can come back home and make significant contributions to Ghana's economy. Mr Speaker, we get a lot of remittances from Ghanaians who are working and living abroad. Yet, when it comes to certain positions, the same Ghanaians who are making significant contributions to Ghana's economy cannot participate because of the citizenship issue.

We do have Ghanaians who have dual citizenship and do other things. I believe we have Ghanaians who have

dual citizenship who play for the national team. So, if a person is good enough to play for the national team and is representing Ghana, and we have faith in him to do the right thing and make sure Ghana wins the matches, why is it not possible that the same Ghanaian can serve as a Member of Parliament or hold any political position without being suspected that that person will either not act in the interest of Ghana or that we have something to worry about? So, I think that issue needs to be revisited.

As the Minister for Education said, this Bill coming as a Private Member's Bill, I think in itself was a bit problematic. It needs to be weightier; I do agree. It is an issue that we need to look at because every now and then, it becomes a problem which, I do not believe, serves the country well. We are losing people with certain expertise that can contribute to the country, but they fall short of doing so because of the challenges that they may encounter when they make that attempt to come home and help.

Mr Speaker, I take the opportunity again to thank the maker of this important Statement. With these few words, I would like to end here.

Thank you very much.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Members. With regard to this issue of dual citizenship, our brother, Professor Stephen Kwaku Asare, has always been reaching out as to how we can get this Bill done.

11.48 a.m.

I think a lot of our brothers and sisters sitting elsewhere who are desirous to not only come to take part in the management and the development of the country but would also want to take part in our elections are pushing so many discussions on board.

Going forward, when we revisit that particular Bill, we could look at it from all these angles. People have even suggested that why can we not have diasporan constituencies, where Ghanaians in Europe or America have constituencies set up for them. So, the Ghanaians in the diaspora would contest in an election and whoever is elected, would be part of our legislative body. There are so many discussions going on, and I think that once we revisit that particular Bill, we could look at it from all these angles.

Mr James Gyakyé Quayson, we thank you for bringing this to the fore. And to our Hon Ministers, Mrs Elizabeth Ofosu-Adjare, and Ms Abba Dzifa Gomashie, and Deputy Majority Whip, who made Statements with regard to the day, we thank all of you.

On that note, I think we would draw the curtains down for the day. So Hon Leader, since we have not exhausted our five hours, you can move a Motion for us to adjourn the House.

Second Deputy Minority Deputy Whip (Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib): Very well. Mr Speaker, I do not know if I have the floor. *[Pause]*

Deputy Majority Leader (Mr George Kweku Ricketts-Hagan): Mr Speaker, yes, but we are tired, and I would like to move a Motion for us to bring proceedings to an end today and adjourn till next week Tuesday.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Very well. Yes, Minority Leadership?

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Mr Speaker, I propose 12 noon on Tuesday.

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, we are not against the Motion. We would only take this opportunity to wish each and every person a Happy Chocolate Day. I would also like to wish the people of Weija-Gbawe, a Happy Chocolate Day.

Mr Speaker, we thank you very much.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, even though the Majority Leadership proposed 12 noon, my directive from the Rt Hon Speaker is to come to the Chamber by 10 a.m. So, the House is adjourned to Tuesday at 10 o'clock in the forenoon. The House stands adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

The House was accordingly adjourned at 3.11 p.m. till Tuesday, 18th February, 2025, at 10.00 a.m.

