Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Statement ably made by the Hon Majority Leader and Leader for Government Business in paying tribute to one of our senior Hon Colleagues, the late Hon J. H. Owusu-Acheampong. Mr Speaker, we know that even though the late Hon J. H. Owusu-Acheampong was an NDC Member of Parliament and stalwart, the Hon Majority Leader led the way so that Parliament would be seen honouring him in unison in death.

Mr Speaker, I would describe the late Hon J. H. Owusu-Acheampong as a very practical, principled and progressive politician with dedicated public service. As a young person and a young Hon Minister then, I recall that anytime he found difficulty with something one did or said that was wrong, he would raise his hand and say, “young man”, and then we would appreciate that he conveyed that his preference would have been that one dealt with it in another way. Mr Speaker, his friends, relatives, family, Parliament and Ghana would miss him.

Mr Speaker, I am compelled to take us through memory lane. In paying tribute to him, may I refer to the Hansard of 5th August, 1994, and with your indulgence, I would like to quote. It was on a fine day like this; the closing Meeting of Parliament, and this was what he had to say: “I must also on my own behalf and on behalf of leadership of the House express our sincere thanks to all Hon Members of the House for their active participation in the work of the House throughout the Meeting. We have done this under difficult conditions, we have also gone through hardship by way of what appears to be insufficient remuneration or allowance which we had to bear in the interest of the nation.

We know that as Hon Members of the House who have committed themselves to their respective constituencies and who have pledged to serve their nation, they would go on and do the good job that they have done so far and we hope that sooner or later the appropriate remuneration and allowances would be restored and they would be happy to continue to do the good work.”

Mr Speaker, this can only be the mark of self-sacrifice. In his commitment to serve his country, he was a selfless person. Mr Speaker, when I heard of the sudden death, I accompanied Hon Ahmed Ibrahim and the former Hon Minister for Power to his home. There are two things, as I get to the end of my tribute to him.

Mr Speaker, I would wish, if there is an opportunity, that within the Brong Ahafo Region, we should find a road that forms a T junction, and name one after the living Hon J. H. Mensah and the other, which ends at the T junction after Hon J. H. Owusu Acheampong. This is in order that we would begin to appreciate the roles they played at some point in their national lives and service, even though they belonged to different political philosophies and values. This is so that tomorrow, the young people of the Brong Ahafo Region could learn from them. We could have one of the roads ending on the other, whichever way higher authority may want to consider.

Mr Speaker, I also commend the Hon Majority Leader, and in particular, the Rt Hon Speaker of Parliament and the President of the Republic. Indeed, when the Hon Majority returned home, I
had attended the one-week celebration of his death at his residence with Hon Ahmed Ibrahim. The Hon Leader invited me to a meeting and asked what we could do for the former Hon Majority Leader. I was with the family members in Berekum, and I think that we should strongly recommend a State-assisted funeral for him. I understand that has been granted, and we should commend the Government for accepting to support the family to lay him to a peaceful rest. Mr Speaker, in concluding, I would also refer to the Hansard of 9th February, 1994.

I am sure one of the lessons we could all learn is that it is not always the case that when an Hon Member from our sides errs on a matter that is wrong, we should just jump to support him or her because they belong to our political party. I would want to make this significant quote of the late Hon J. H. Owusu-Acheampong. As the Hon Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Hon Ken Dzirasah had said something that Hon Owusu-Acheampong was unhappy about even though he belonged to his Party and Caucus. This is what the late Hon J. H. Owusu Acheampong, as the then Hon Minister for Parliamentary Affairs said, and with your permission, I beg to quote:

“Mr Speaker, much as I wish that this House would at all times comply with every provision of the Constitution of Ghana, I wish to draw attention of the Hon Member (Mr Ken Dzirasah) to the fact that there is an existing situation in this country which needs immediate attention of this House and the Government of Ghana. Thousands of people are being killed. There is nothing more of disintegration of the nation than this and it is this House that has to take measures to ensure that these things stop. What the Hon Member wants us to do is to keep quiet over the situation.”

Mr Speaker, so he fundamentally disagreed with one of his own in pursuit of the general good and peace of the country and we should eulogise him with this. I share the view that we may want to name something in his memory. He served his country as an Hon Minister, Regional Minister, Hon Minister for Agriculture and Hon Member of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, I think that even the institutional building of Parliament today, and the improved Standing Orders that we have, we owe it to the likes of Mr J. H. Owusu-Acheampong and the sacrifices they made and contributed for the effective and efficient Parliamentary democracy of our country. As we look back and even as Hon Members are challenged with poor conditions of service, ours compared to their generation, is better and I think that we should also learn the sacrifice from their service to the country and service to this House.

I hope that as many Hon Members as possible, would join me in Berekum so that we could do him the honour of laying him to rest. I trust that many of us could learn more of the interface that happened in the days of the year 1994 till he exited Parliament in the year 2000.

I know that he was a former Hon Member of a Parliament which ended up with some change that we all said no to for the future good of our country. Mr Speaker, so, I thank him for his contribution and I am sure if he was strong and healthy today, he would probably be among persons who should be aspiring to lead the great National Democratic Congress (NDC) party from the Brong Ahafo region. We love him but God loves him most. May his soul rest in perfect peace.