Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Statement made by the Hon Minister for the Interior, Hon Ambrose Dery on the Bimbilla situation in the Northern Region.

I note that he led a Government delegation to Bimbilla on the 14th of February. Ideally, next time, we would be happy to contribute to the delegation in order that we all share and have the full facts on the ground and to make appropriate recommendations.

Mr Speaker, may I refer you to page 6 of the Statement and express concern.

“Resources are required to support the effort to achieve peace, security and safety in Bimbilla. Hon Dominic Bingab Aduna Nitiwul, Member of Parliament for Bimbilla has been very supportive. The Government has also been very supportive in this regard.”

Mr Speaker, we know that Hon Nitiwul is the Member of Parliament Member of Parliament for that area, but for this purpose, he is a Minister of State of the Republic and not just any portfolio but the Minister for Defence. We should have a better appreciation of how he is collaborating with his Colleagues to maintain peace and order in that particular area.

On other concerns, I refer to page 2 of the Hon Minister’s comment:

“On Wednesday, 8th February, 2017, REGSEC in Tamale, received intelligence information that a planned enskinment of one Mumuni Haruna as Bimbilla Kumabi by the Regent of Bimbilla had the potential to adversely impact the peace of Bimbilla and its environs.”

Mr Speaker, what happened to our early warning signal and the urgency of deployment? This is because if you go further into the Hon Minister’s Statement, he says:

“Later, on the morning of 9th February, 2017...”

So, when you received intelligence, military training — decisiveness. You had intelligence on the 8th and this is already a security threatened area and zone known by the developments of 2014, 2015 and 2016. It means that there was a lapse in acting because that was why you had already stationed police and military presence in Bimbilla.

I say so to guide what future action and intervention should be. Suffice it to add that Naa Abarika Andani was murdered even while there was security presence in that particular area in 2015. Justice has not been done.

Mr Speaker, bear with me to share some details. Following even the death of Nakpa Naa Salifu who has not been buried since 2014, what are the underpinning cultural issues? We need to understand, even as I see the road map that the Hon Minister for the Interior has shared.
I am sure that both cultures are similar, whether Dagbon, Nanumba or Mamprugu, who aspires to be Bimbilla Naa, aspire to the paramountcy. If it is dedicated, as I know by my little anthropology of Dagbon and Nanum, it is dedicated to sons. Sons of a Bimbilla Naa can become the Naa Bimbilla. Not nonsons.

Therefore, the Hon Minister must be interested in knowing. Even the conflict between Bangyili and Gbimayili — There have been instances where even though intra, there have been attacks from one side onto the other where members of Gbimayili have issues with the Bangyili persons. That also must engage the attention of the Minister for the Interior and the Government’s security agencies.

Nakpa Naa and his burial, the body — Mr Speaker, I share this because I happened to be in Tamale around the West Hospital. I saw military presence at the morgue of West Hospital. So, curiously, I walked there to find out why the military were at the mortuary.

I was told that the body of Nakpa Naa Salifu was in the morgue. That was when I took interest to understand what the problem is. They said it has to do with the regent chieftaincy conflict.

The Hon Minister is right that the undercurrent of Bimbilla and its conflict is chieftaincy and succession. More importantly, our inability to deal ruthlessly with the murders of 2015 of Naa Abarika who succeeded to the skin as paramount chief of that area —

Mr Speaker, it is also a fact that both the Regional House of Chiefs and the National House of Chiefs have ruled in favour of the Naa Andani Gate, which is now the matter pending before the Supreme Court. So, at least, within the judicial organs of the House of Chiefs, there is a decision which has not been respected.

In the first decision, there was favourable ruling from the Regional House of Chiefs. It was contested and went to the National House of Chiefs. That has also ruled favourably. In fact, the National House of Chiefs upheld the decision of the Regional House of Chiefs which is the matter which has been referred to the Supreme Court. However, there is no respect for those decisions. That itself contributes to the tensions and conflicts of Bimbilla.

Mr Speaker, REGSEC and DISEC in times past and not to hold — What were DISEC and REGSEC’s roles in this particular matter. The Hon Minister must be seen working on them.

As I indicated, in Dagbon, Mamprugu and even sometimes Gonja, you can determine the succession gate to the paramountcy. I know he is sitting with my Hon Colleague who comes from Savelugu, where I properly in Dagbon culture hail from.

For instance, in Dagbon, we know that anybody sitting on the Mion throne must have his eyes heading towards the Yen Naa to become the Yaa Naa. When you get to Mion, without bearing any difficulty, you are to succeed in becoming the overlord of Dagbon.

I am sure in Gonjaland, I hope to get it right, Kpemgbe — When you move from a certain stool, we know that you are heading towards Yogbon which is also established culturally. Within
Nanum, there is the same establishment. The problem is those who are not associated with this succession, wanting to impose themselves on it.

If you are not a son, you are not a son. If you are not a grandchild, you are not a grandchild. However, where you purport that now you want to succeed though you are a non-son who now wants to occupy the position dedicated and reserved for sons, you would have a problem.

I just thought that I should share this, so that the National Security and the Hon Minister for the Interior — I know he means well and we would support him.

Mr Speaker, I am sure my able Hon Chairman of the Appointments Committee is here. He would now understand why when we were vetting the Hon Northern Regional Minister, I chose to speak Dagbani and he kept insisting that I should translate it. I dealt with this same matter and admonished the chiefs and Imams of that area to help Government find a lasting solution to it.

If Mr Speaker welcomes you, that is all right. But I am contributing to the Statement.

Mr Speaker, the number of deaths —

Mr Speaker, I would be guided but I would be guided only by the truth as I know it and read it and know about that culture. If we do not stop burying these issues, we would only be dealing with the scare of the wound; we should go deep inside. What informs these developments is what I have shared and let any student of Nandom, Dagbon or Gonja challenge the facts that I have shared.

Mr Speaker, there is a book I would share with the Hon Minister for the Interior. David Tate has a good anthropological writing on understanding the acephalous societies and he makes very insightful researches on many of these groups.

Mr Speaker, there have been rulings on Regional House of Chiefs and National House of Chiefs that have not been respected and that is part of the source of this conflict.

Mr Speaker, with the roadmap the Hon Minister shared, we would need to support him. What is important and the primary responsibility of Government is to maintain law and order and to save property but more importantly, to use the State system to punish wrongdoers. So, if there have been murders and persons have been arrested, let us see them walk through a process. The impunity must stop and it must stop with excessive punishment —

Mr Speaker, in concluding, another fact I would put across so that it is interrogated in order that we find a solution to this problem is burial of the Nakpa-Naa. Whether he should be buried in Bimbilla or Nakpaa is the source of the problem. [Interruption.] — I have not said that I have the answer.
Mr Speaker, if you knew the cultures, Nakpa-Naa means, “a title to Nakpaa”. So, the conflict is where he would be buried — whether in Bimbilla or Nakpaa. That is why since 2014, he has not been buried. This is because one of the Gates is resisting the burial at Bimbilla against the other Gates who say that it should be done at Nakpaa — I am sharing facts and what one does with the fact is one’s decision.

Mr Speaker, finally, when they are deploring, Dagbon, Yendi and Bawku must all be on red alert. What we expect is responsibility from Government that law and order would be maintained, safeguard properties and enforce the law. Nothing more. That is our expectation from Government on all these. But in areas where they have picked up early warnings —

I have read the security briefing and yesterday, I listened to the brilliant lecture of Prof. Henrietta Mensah-Bonsu on Ghana and she shared some positions. Mr Speaker, your colleague at University of Ghana (Legon). We must respect some other contributions to resolve this.

Mr Speaker, I would want to tell the Hon Minister to be assured because we would support him and his team at National Security to deal with it.

Mr Speaker, with the example I gave, even when the issue in Gushegu happened, I recall I was in the helicopter with then Dr Amoo-Ghartey, Hon Kan Dapaah and others, so, these flash points are known.

What I have said is that, we should put our eyes on Yendi and Bimbilla, so that tomorrow we would not be told that there would be no loss of lives after there are loss of lives. We have counted 15, we have counted 10 now — but justice must be seen to be done and the perpetrators must be seen hauled to court and prosecuted. That would end the impunity. But whatever it takes on the quiet to assist the Hon Minister, I promise we would do.

I have sought to do this to provoke his attention to get the material facts that would get him into getting into a decision. Peace Council or whichever structure cannot deal with it, if they cannot deal with the truth, because the parties would not cooperate.

Hon (Alhaji) Boniface would share his experience in Dagbon when he came in. Initially, he had his ideas but later on we gave him and Mr Francis Poku the adequate briefing to understand the issues.

Mr Speaker, I know what I have talked about. I am from that region and therefore, we must work together to get these conflicts in a preemptive manner, not waiting until deaths and we would come and pontificate and bemoan and say it would not happen again. No! Bawku and Yendi should have red alerts. There are other areas within the Buipe and Gonja areas, Makpon and Buipe which is sitting on a time bomb.

Mr Speaker, I associate myself with the Statement and associate with his road map. But the road map must be dealt with in accordance with a commitment to end the impunity.