

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

THURSDAY, 29TH JULY, 2021

[CORRECTED COPY]

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THURSDAY, 29TH JULY, 2021

The Parliament met at 9.39 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present, except the Honourable Adi Litia Qionibaravi.

MINUTES

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Wednesday, 28th July, 2021, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to today's sitting - those attending in person and those attending virtually. I also welcome all those watching the live proceedings on television and the internet. Thank you for your continued interest in the workings of your Parliament.

Rugby Sevens - 2020 Tokyo Olympics

Honourable Members at this juncture, I wish to congratulate our Rugby Sevens gladiators for a well-deserved win and a successful defence of the gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics. I join all of you in thanking Captain Jerry Tuwai, Coach Gareth Baber, and the Team, for a job well done.

The achievement is a testament to the perseverance, sacrifice and humility of these young men and women working hard behind the scenes and it certainly serves as an inspiration to our young Fijians - that no matter how small we are as a country, we can work hard to be amongst the best in the world.

Thank you Honourable Members we will now move on. I have been advised that there are no Bills for consideration today.

Honourable Members, Parliament will now resolve into Committee of Supply to resume debate on the Heads in the Budget Estimates.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE 2021-2022 APPROPRIATION BILL 2021In Committee:Head 22 – Ministry of Health and Medical Services

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for any comments on Head 22-1-1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification on Programme 1-1(1), we note that there is an increase of \$10 million in the Established Staff grant but that is probably relating to new recruits as announced in the Budget. But my question, Mr. Chairman, is regarding the payment of overtime for existing cadre within the Ministry, those who have worked very hard day and night in terms of addressing COVID-19. I just wanted to get a clarification.

Also, for the other Ministries and Departments that we have discussed previously, the issue of overtime. I know the last time we raised this, we were advised that it was pay in lieu or something like that, which has been given to staff who have worked overtime. But in this situation where staff have been away from their families and friends to address the issue of COVID-19 in respective medical centres, I just want to seek clarification on the issue of overtime. Will they now be able to be paid in cash for the overtime hours that they have worked?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The \$10 million increase in SEG 1 is for the:

- new doctors who are currently medical interns to become fully-fledged doctors and to be able to do that, there is a pay difference of about \$15,000 in between their salaries;
- recruitment of more than 100 medical interns who are currently Year 6 medical students to become doctors with us; and
- recruitment of nursing staff of about 200 and about 40 midwives.

The issue of overtime is right throughout the Civil Service. As you are aware, Mr. Chairman, that in this current budget year, that was removed. Subsequently, we have not done any reductions in the salaries of any civil servant. There is provision for meal allowance in instances where there is no meal provided and we have been able to provide that. But, certainly, this is a challenging time, we are asking our staff and I am sure all other Ministries are asking their staff, to be patriotic and to be able to get us through this. So, once this is over, certainly we will be able to give them adequate rest.

Finally, we are looking at a system of actually being able to provide staff to work on rotational basis. We have staff from Lautoka and Labasa, who are currently in Suva to support FEMAT, to ensure that they take some of the strain away from the staff in CWM in Suva. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Kepa.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Mr. Chairman, can I ask a question on that same SEG? What the Honourable Minister said was that, that allocation was for new doctors. Which doctors are being paid from that allocation and which ones are being paid from the Ministry of Economy?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All the doctors who are working within the Government services are now being paid from the Ministry of Health budget. The doctors who are in the new programme, the General Practitioners (GPs) and there are 17 of them, throughout Viti Levu and who have been engaged to look after those who are unwell but may not necessarily be COVID-19, they are being paid for differently through the Ministry of Economy appropriation. Thank you.

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA.- Mr. Chairman, just a follow up question on that, because these people were asking, why was the cadre of doctors paid from a different allocation from the Ministry of Health, where they have always been paid from? Why was it that they were paid from the Ministry of Economy? Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, if I could clarify that, that is untrue what Honourable Kepa has said that they have always been paid from the Ministry of Health. We have never had the engagement of GPs in the manner in which we have just had done now, so that is untrue for her to say that.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the allocation for the engagement of private GPs is not from the Ministry of Economy's Head, it is from Head 50-Miscellaneous Services. And because we have individual contracts that we have engaged, as you would have heard, our insurance provider that actually specialises in medical insurance oversees and verifies those claims that are being made by these GPs so it is a very rigorous process. For example, as an individual, if I go and see a private GP in Votualevu, then that private GP in every seven or 14 days, whatever the case may be, files a claim and gives an invoice to the Government of Fiji. But before they do that, they have to give it to our verifier which is the insurance company, to see whether all the claims they have made is actually correct, whether these invoices actually exist. They match it up against the various identification numbers whether there are healthcare cards, et cetera, and then they submit that to the Ministry of Economy for payment, and that they will see allocated in Head 50.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- A supplementary question to the Honourable Minister on the overtime issues, we note that there are other cadre as well. Student doctors and nurses who have yet to complete their Programmes are involved in frontline working activities, so they are also working overtime. How do you account for the overtime that these student doctors and students nurses work for?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I WAQAINABETE.- Thank you. The only formal arrangement that we have at the moment is with Fiji National University (FNU) and we have asked them to have some of their final year student doctors help us with the backend data processing. As you may be aware, we have had some issues where we are testing so many people and we have had some challenges in being able to turn around results within 24 hours. So it was imperative that we bring in the so-called volunteers, who actually understand the medical language and that is why we went into this discussion with the FNU and they have been able to provide us with that.

Just recently, we have had some discussions with the TISI Sangam on that note and we have looked at some of their graduates to be able to bring them in. As you aware, we have also got funding in the next Budget to be able to do so. But engaging medical students and nursing students in the frontline, looking after COVID-19 is what we do not do at the moment.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Honourable Minister has confirmed that those who are utilised, even student medical doctors and student nurses are not paid any overtime for the extra hours that they work for.

HON. DR. I WAQAINABETE.- No, actually nursing students have an allowance as part of their training programme. That has been there ever since. Ever since we were students, we always knew that nursing students had allowance.

Mr. Chairman, this discussion about overtime is interesting because if I remember correctly that yesterday, Honourable Tabuya was suggesting that we cut by half the salaries at SEG1 in the Prime Minister's Office, which simply indicates that, that possibly was a policy for SODELPA - to actually look at cutting, rather than paying normal salaries and normal overtime. So, this is ironic in a way.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, if I can also clarify from Civil Service perspective two things and what the Opposition is talking about is the extra hours. So, the recruitment of new doctors and new nurses will obviously reduce the burden on the existing staff, so there is less overtime for them.

Also, as a general rule across the Civil Service where people who used to get paid overtime previously are no longer get paid overtime but they get time-off in lieu. So, any extra hours they do work, they get time off for that. You know that it was announced two Budgets ago and also it has meant that we will not cut anyone's salaries.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Rasova, you have the floor.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Mr. Chairman, SEG 10 - Kidney Dialysis, can we get a clarification on that? Is that for equipment only or for the payment as well?

HON. DR. I WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, the equipment for Kidney Dialysis is met through a different programme and that is through the Fiji Pharmaceutical Biomedical Services. This is specifically for supporting those who need dialysis and who meet the criteria under a certain salary, and this is to be able to pay for the \$150 that the Honourable Minister for Economy had alluded to in his Budget Address.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Dr. Lalabalavu, you have the floor.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, through you, just a point of clarification from the Honourable Minister; in order to increase Personal Emoluments, that includes both the new staff and also the filling in of vacant posts for those Medical Officer positions that are under acting. Also on SEG 3, we note that overseas medical and consultancy services has decreased by \$780,000. Can we have a point of clarification on the reduction in these services and if it means that the services are available locally?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These are for new staff. The current staff (all the 700 or so staff) that we have, all their salaries are budgeted for in the next financial year. If the question is, does anyone lose their position? No one does, and as long as they have a contract that is viable, they carry on. This is a new addition that we are talking about here, to the Ministry of Health so we are going to be bolstered and our staff numbers will be more than 7,000 by the end of this year, for example.

With regards to the second question on SEG 3, in terms of overseas medical and consultancy services, one of the issues which we have had this year is the difficulty in travel. So, we have made an approximation with Ministry of Economy on really the possibility of being able to get someone across. Secondly, the Honourable Minister for Economy has discussed about Health Care Fiji which is the public private partnership kicking off in Ba and also in Lautoka in March, and we are hopeful that, that will be able to look after the referrals that are needed. So, we expect that number or quantum to decrease as more functions of PPP become very complex and comprehensive. *Vinaka.*

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, I will give the floor to the Honourable Tuisawau. You have the floor.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We note that the budgetary allocation was increased by \$10 million. Considering the crisis in our midst and the role of the Ministry in its effort to contain and spread COVID-19, we feel this is not sufficient in terms of the efforts and services.

The other issue, Sir, regarding the comments on overtime and we have been directly approached if there needs to be another arrangement regarding time in lieu, if that could be apportioned so that some is time off in lieu and some is paid in cash.

Just a clarification on SEG4 and SEG5, could the Honourable Minister explain the tender processes for those? The Pest Control Services - \$70,000 in 2021 and \$55,000 in 2021-2022, and also the tender for security and laundry services - \$3 million in 2021 and \$1.2 in 2021-2022. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are so many questions at one time, so I will try and answer them. The first question in regards to overtime, we have discussed that in detail and I think we need to understand that, that is the policy. That was also discussed during the Budget last year, so this House passed that in last year's Budget, that there is no overtime but we keep the salaries of all civil servants below the Permanent Secretary. That is already a policy in place and time in lieu takes care of that.

Of course, there are challenges because of the difficult times that we have at the moment, especially within the Lami-Nausori corridor that may not be much of a challenge, Taveuni or in Lakeba, for example. But as I have alluded to, the supervisors are working with the teams and we constantly meet to find ways to keep on regenerating the teams that we have.

The second one that I had which has been discussed was the tender process. Mr. Chairman, the tender process is independent of the Ministry of Health. There is a tender committee, they make their own advertisements, they vet it and they discuss and award tenders based on that. It is independent of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, or any other Government Ministry. *Vinaka.*

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. We will move on.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, in SEG 7, there is a reduction in terms of the allocation that has been given there, of \$7 million. But I note that some of the works that are listed there: Navosa Subdivisional Hospital, final payment of \$3.6 million; Savusavu Hospital Land Stabilisation - \$1 million; Labasa Hospital interior works - \$2.5 million; Lautoka Hospital Operating Theatre - \$1.1 million and the CWM Hospital Emergency Department final payment of \$74,000.

Can we get a clarification from the Honourable Minister on the stages of work that have been listed here, say for Navosa, is it operational or whether it is operational in bits and pieces? For CWM Hospital, the final payment there, what particular work has been done at the CWM Hospital Emergency Department, given it is listed there, which shows final payment as \$74,000 and all the other stabilisation works for respective Divisions. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, if we divide it into two, those that have final payment are the ones in which the work has been completed and as part of the contractual agreement, there is a specified period of time in which we utilise the building or the facility and if there are any other defects that are noted, then the company that actually came in and built it has to repair it. Once they have repaired it and we are satisfied after that period of time, then we give the final payment.

Even though they have been finished in this Budget here but the defect period may go into next year's budget which is beginning 1st August. That is why the payment has been put into that year. The ones that do not have the final payment are all those new ones that we are going to be doing. We had already begun with Savusavu Hospital the year before last year. We had started some work around, there were discussions about moving Savusavu and then where do we move it to, noting that the place that we are going to move to was actually on lower ground and we are mindful of issues such as climate change, with sea water rise, so the final discussion with us was actually to keep it on the hill. Then beginning of last year, we did a consultancy which then found that we can keep it as long as we bolster the current hill and that is the \$1 million that has been set aside. *Vinaka*.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- What about the Navosa Hospital? Is it fully operational or partly operational?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- The Navosa Hospital is fully operational. It is a subdivisinal hospital so we, again, divide subdivisinal hospitals into two or three. Obviously, it is not the same as Sigatoka in terms of the functions but it has the capability to do dental, x-ray and blood tests.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, just for clarification to add what the Honourable Minister said. It is that we have what we call a defects liability period which is what the Minister is referring to on construction. It is DLPs and it depends on the size of the construction itself where DLP sometimes can be for one year, it can be even for six months or nine months depending on the size of construction so we hold back the last payment. Once the actual building is being used functionally and we will see if there is any defects, et cetera, we hold back the last payment, should it be completed within that period, if there is any remedial works that needs to be done then we make the payment once it is all done. That is why hold back on the last payment.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.-The Outsourcing of Laundry Services - \$1,200,000, can the Honourable Minister explain in which hospitals these are? Are those laundry also used by the public or is it just for the hospitals, because we know that it has to be very special with the hospital laundries? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is predominantly for CWM Hospital. As we are aware, we had a fire in the laundry and the boiler service. The boiler has been

again budgeted for in the next year's budget. We were not able to buy it in this year's budget, and I have alluded to that in one of my Ministerial Statements.

The laundry services at CWM Hospital is being undertaken by a private laundry and I know for sure that predominantly most or nearly all of their work at the moment is providing services to us. So, I may not be able to answer whether they are also providing service to the general public, but what I do know is that predominantly, most of the services that they are doing at the moment is for CWM Hospital. *Vinaka*.

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- So you will find out?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Yes, Honourable Member.

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- Thank you, Honourable Minister and Mr. Chairman.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, on

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have already asked a question, Honourable Member. Do you wish to take the floor again?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Yes, Mr. Chairman, on SEG 8, if the Honourable Minister could explain, given the increasing demand and issues with the people, particularly Nausori and Wainibokasi Hospital refurbishment, because I do not see those there in terms of refurbishment and some announcements had been made in the past.

In Wainibokasi Hospital, the in-patients are still in the old Hospital (the wooden part) and the top floor that was supposed to be for in-patients, but I am not sure what the issue there is, whether it is being used as storage or something. Wainibokasi and Nausori refurbishments are critical for the people of Rewa, Naitasiri and Tailevu, if that could be explained on what the plans are there for them? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, still on that SEG 8, if you look at the top, there is Upgrade and Maintenance of Urban Hospitals and Institutional Quarters (\$562,000) and Maintenance of Sub-Divisional Hospitals, Health Centres and Nursing Stations (\$270,000). We have already begun work at the Nausori Hospital. If the Honourable Member had visited Nausori Hospital lately, he would realise that it has changed dramatically from what it was before. This is a two-year, three-year process, we cannot just close a health centre for a period of time, which is very busy like Nausori Hospital. That is why we have taken two to three years to slowly change the face of Nausori Hospital. That will hopefully be completed in the next budget cycle.

In respect of Wainibokasi Hospital, we have discussed this before, we are looking at other options in terms of what other hospital needs will be in the greater Nasinu-Nausori area, and once we have more information where the direction is, we will let the Honourable Member know. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Matanitobua, you have the floor.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On Programme 1-1(5), can the Honourable Minister enlighten the House on the Outsourcing - Security Services (\$2,951,438), is this for Suva only or for the whole of Fiji? Thank you.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- The Outsourcing - Security Services (\$2,951,438) is for all over Fiji. Again, there may be some health centres or nursing stations that may not have security and they have not had security in the past. But if one does go into Navua Hospital where the Honourable Member is from, there is security service (Grid Security), that is providing security services and that is the outsource that we are talking about here. Thank you.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Honourable Minister, in Programme 1-1(10), there is a Kidney Dialysis Treatment Subsidy (\$1,500,000), can we just get a clarification on this allocation?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That's already been answered.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The Honourable Minister has already answered that.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- There is also, Mr. Chairman, the Direct Payment: Fiji COVID-19 Emergency Response Project (World Bank) (\$5,374,894) that makes up the total for SEG 10 on Page 130, if I get it right, it says \$6.8 million but only \$1.5 million is listed on the details.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- I am trying to understand where you are bringing that from, Honourable Member.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- On Page 130, there is \$6.8 million listed there.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Yes, \$6.874.9 million.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- SEG 10 - Capital Grants and Transfers.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Yes. On your Summary of Listings on Page 131 is only \$1.5 million.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- No, the Capital Grants and the Transfers, Honourable Member, is actually much more than that because it also includes some of the work listed in 8 above.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Does that include under Direct Emergency COVID-19 Response Project?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- No, the COVID-19 Response, some of that comes from that and some of them comes from the Contingency Fund of \$25 million which is under (R). I want to make it very clear that even in this present Budget, we have had no challenges with being able to utilise that funding and as you can see, some of the strategies that we have used in terms of utilising hotels, in terms of engaging rental cars and rental vans - all that have come through by engaging the Contingency Fund.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- I am sorry, Mr. Chairman. Can we just get a clarification on this different listing here about \$6.8 million which is listed in the summary but the detail is only showing \$1.5 million, that if, Programme 1-1.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- We should also be mindful of the fact that we also have multilateral funding support. Some of the moneys are still there, for example, the response project through World Bank UNICEF Funding.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- So, can we get a clarification on this?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, if I can make a clarification, Honourable Member, if you add Kidney Dialysis Treatment Subsidy (\$1,500,000) and you add the Direct Payment: Fiji COVID Emergency Response Project (World Bank) (\$5,374,894), you will get exactly \$6,874.9 million. If you add that direct payment, it will give you that \$6,874.9 million.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Qereqeretabua, do you want to have the floor.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Not at this point in time, I just have the motions later, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on to Programme 2-1. Honourable Members, do not ask your questions, like a jumble saying - 1,2,3,4 all in one. Ask one question at a time and be very clear on exactly what it is you want so that the Honourable Minister responsible can answer that question, not having to pick one and then another, so let us get on with it. Programme 2-1.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Qereqeretabua, you have the floor.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move:

That Head 22 be increased by \$1 million in Programme 2-1-1 with respect to Personal Emoluments.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have the floor, Honourable Qereqeretabua.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As we know and as we have witnessed over the last 15 and 16 months, our frontline workers have had to sacrifice a lot for the sake of the country. We have sadly lost frontliners to COVID-19, many, many of them have been separated from their families for months on end. I have people that I know who were transferred from Labasa to look after COVID patients in Lautoka and from Lautoka they have moved to Suva. So, the reason for my motion this morning, Mr. Chairman, is to increase Personal Emoluments in regards to Risk Pay for our frontliners and this is probably only for the next six months.

With so many of them becoming sick, so many of them needing hospitalisation, I really would like to ask this House to vote in favour of this increase to Personal Emoluments to the Public Health Services staff so that they are able to have some financial security, especially when we hear of nurses passing away, leaving behind children and there are also other frontliners like policemen, policewomen, fireman, firewomen, those in the Armed Forces and Disciplined Forces that would really be able to have some financial security from having Risk Pay added to their salaries. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Professor Prasad, you have the floor.

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- No, Mr. Chairman, it is Honourable Tikoduadua who wants to speak. Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Chairman, I would like to speak in support of the motion by the Honourable Qereqeretabua to raise the provision of SEG 1 under Activity 1,

Programme 2, on Personal Emoluments, for the amount that she has already put before the House and to support strongly the views that she has expressed.

Mr. Chairman, I had noted in (I believe) more than one of my interventions that tired workers, particularly frontliners, pose a risk to themselves and also to their family and to the nation, and we witnessed examples of that lately. There are good ways of improving morale in this issue. Yes, we are talking about people being patriotic, they are patriotic already. People have been standing on the checkpoints now for more than one year. Teams have been going out for vaccination more than one year, they are not going to see their family, much of which they are making these sacrifices because they have been called upon now - a decision that they have not made themselves.

Now, all good leaders know that morale is a very, very important issue, particularly when you are expected and you know, Mr. Chairman, that this is an integral part of leadership whereby that you look after their welfare so that they can do their job promptly. So, we need to look after our people so that they are motivated to look after us because if they become sick, then they are useless to us. So, I support this motion in that regard, that we should give more to our health workers, our frontliners not only nurses, doctors, healthcare workers but also soldiers and policemen, who stand up there every night when we are asleep, and they do not have to be worrying about their family in the meantime because they will be looked after by additional allowance that they will be given. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, my question is on all the items that are under 'R'.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, could we, please, just deal with this matter too because I have already comment on the motion moved by Honourable Qereqeretabua.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- All right, I will wait after we finish.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I have got your name down for this motion, that is all.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- My apologies, it is on another issue on SEG 10 ...

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Well, we are not on that. We are on this one at the moment.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Attorney-General, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Sir. Honourable Qereqeretabua has got the wrong programme and wrong activity. She thinks that Programme 2-1 Public Health Services is about frontline workers - it is not actually. There are 17 admin staff. If she wanted to increase it, she should have spoken about it on the previous programme and previous activity, not this one. They obviously do not understand what public health services is about. These are simply administrative staff who implement public health policies and there are 17 people.

Mr. Chairman, also Honourable Tikoduadua is now talking about the Police and the Military because they are frontline workers and not just the health workers, so why did they not, yesterday, seek to amend the RFMF budget and the Police budget, if they wanted to also care about the frontline workers because the Military and Police are also frontline workers.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Well, that is being proposed now.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This is much of an afterthought, we cannot go back. We have already approved it, Honourable Tikoduadua. We have already approved those heads. So this is more like an afterthought, woken up this morning and decided to do this.

The reality of the matter, Sir, is this - the meal allowances are still being paid. These frontline workers, no one is denying that they are not doing a good job or that they are sacrificing a lot. At the moment, we do not have the capacity to be able to give anything more than what we are currently doing.

We have not cut anyone's pay and what we are saying Sir, is that it is not just staff at Ministry of Health or just the Police or the RFMF, they are all there but we have drivers, we have other staff from other Ministries who also are in the frontline whether they maybe behind the scenes in the frontline or at the frontline itself. We have staff from other Ministries going around and doing public relations work in squatter areas. Some of them actually have caught COVID-19. We have people who have actually been involved in the food distribution programme. They are from other Ministries too, they have also caught COVID-19. We know some of them, a lot of them actually, so you know, you cannot just simply ring-fence it to just one or two Heads. In fact, it is across Government itself, so, I think it is a bit late now to do this.

Yes, of course, there is no denying that we want to be able to reward them, they have been publically-recognised and in the future, god willing, if everyone gets vaccinated, the economy picks up then we have the ability to go back and help people and perhaps reward them financially if we have the capacity to do that. That is the main focus at the moment, but I think it really is more of a political stunt.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- No, it is not a political stunt.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is a political stunt, Honourable Tikoduadua. We know that.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- No, it is not.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- If you are concerned about the RFMF and the Police, why did you not make a recommendation yesterday? Why did you not do it yesterday? It is a simple question. Honourable Professor Prasad, please direct him so he would know.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- I have always been raising it, more than once.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You did not raise it yesterday.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- It does not mean that I ...

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, do not carry on a conversation between you two, through the Speaker. Yes, Honourable Qereqeretabua.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am sorry that it is being taken as a political stunt. It was well-meant for the frontliners and for risk pay and that is all I want to say at this time. *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Qereqeretabua, for your next amendment, you have two here, on the same Head.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thought we were going to vote on my first motion first before I went onto the second motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Take your amendments and then we will vote at the end of all this.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will go onto my second motion. I move:

That Head 22 be increased by \$5 million on Programme 2-1 (5) - Fiji Suicidal Prevention and Programme 2-1(7) - Mental Health Awareness.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. LT.COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- I beg to second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Qereqeretabua, you have the floor, but before you do that, there are two other motions here on the same Head, same Activity, and same SEGs from Honourable Tabuya and Honourable Gavoka. You two sort that out, which one we will take. We will only take one, not two.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My motion, as I have said, is to increase Programme 2-1(5) and (7) by \$5 million, and the reason I move this is on the ground, as evidenced from increased calls to various crisis lines, from Lifeline Fiji Suicide Prevention Advocacy and Awareness, Empower Pacific, whose core business is to provide counselling support and psychosocial support for those affected, infected and impacted by COVID-19.

The CEO of Fiji Women Crisis Centre, Ms. Shamima Ali, in May 2021, reported 800 plus calls from clients requesting assistance on domestic violence, grievous bodily harm, et cetera. There is also Youth Champs for Mental Health, who deal with suicide prevention and advocacy groups with youth. Because of the limited services that are available right now, especially with the COVID-19 crisis, Mr. Chairman, for youth mental health, they have the largest percentage of suicide, drugs and sex offences. They also have a lot negative-coping strategies and they also lack the awareness of how to seek help.

I also want to point out that there is a need to promote mental health to all frontliners by giving them access to psychosocial support. Promoting mental health will, no doubt, ensure long term protection and the promotion of mental health and wellbeing. Studies have also shown that it takes an average of three years for people to recover mentally from a crisis, like Ebola and SARS crisis.

There is also a need to get Psychological First Aid (PFA) training for all frontliners, stressing the three basic principles of look, listen and link, so that each and every one of us need to have some basic PFA training. We need to get professionals to support all our frontliners and have a budget to do this kind of training. The PFA training can and should be provided to all frontliners and all the phone operators, as we know the phone lines, even at CDC, is just being swamped and I am sure that all the people at the receiving end of all these calls are under tremendous mental stress - every policemen and women, every fire men and women, every health worker in our public health system and in the community, just to ensure that they are able to provide the first most basic health to someone that is in need.

Our human resources are limited, especially in the mental health sector with the specialist. It is true that services are decentralised but I believe that specialist are only in the main centres. We need

more decentralised advocacy and education programmes for the rural and maritime areas, who do not get the targeted exposure that those of us in cities and towns do.

To add to my motion, Mr. Chairman, I think we also need to increase Psycho Social Messaging. The messages that will inspire hope, that will encourage health-seeking behaviours that will dispel the myth about vaccine hesitancy that will promote our relationships in the home and the families and communities. I need not tell us just how much stress is being felt by every man, woman and child.

I think it is also important as we speak about children too that we really need to also increase the awareness of mental healthcare and mental health issues within our school curriculum so that from an early age, children are aware that this can happen not only to themselves but to adults even around them.

I also want to add, there is a need for more facilities to be offered at St. Giles Psychiatric Hospital which apparently has a six-bed unit for rehabilitation, specifically focussed on drug and alcohol rehabilitation. But this is apparently not sufficient for the demand that has increased since the COVID-19 crisis hit Fiji.

So, all in all, Mr. Chairman, we really need to support mental healthcare amongst all our citizens and also all our frontliners. I think we really need to also boost the Budgets of the professionals who are working in the Mental Health Care Space by giving them money. In fact we should be paying the volunteers who have worked tirelessly in places like Life Line.

I wanted to tell you a very quick story, Mr. Chairman. A few weeks ago I received a call asking for my help to please expedite a curfew pass for a group of volunteers who were manning suicide lines. They had been waiting and waiting for their pass and it had not come through and the volunteers were getting very tired, needed to be refresh and could take the amount of calls that they were receiving. Thank goodness, Doctor Fong expedited this and they were able to refresh the volunteers that weekend.

I hope that this shows just how much more Mental Health Care needs to be funded in this next Budget, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR I. WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, if I may, if the Honourable Member will look at Activity 1(6), there is a grant to NGO of \$500,000. This is the where we have NGOs such as Medical Services Pacific (MSP), Power Pacific, they paid for this grant. We also have support with working through Ministry of Women and Social Welfare. Also the multilateral partners they give us support separately and in some occasions they support the CSOs that are involved in this space. That does not include the money that we set aside for St. Giles which will be on a different activity and I think that comes St. Giles Hospital Programme 2-6. So, that is also cover through the work that the St. Giles Hospital is also doing.

So, all in all with that funding for Fiji Suicidal Prevention the funding that is for CSOs, the funding that goes to St. Giles and the support that goes to CSOs itself from multilateral partners at the moment, is perhaps sufficient. What I am interested in is what the Honourable Member would like us to take away from the Ministry of Health and Medical Services budget and replace with that \$5 million. *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tikoduadua, you have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to speak in support of the motion by the Honourable Qereqeretabua on increasing the allocations on the SEGs that she had referred to earlier.

Mr. Chairman, mental health has always been perhaps, a poorer cousin in the whole general aspects of healthcare because in my view, the stigma that it carries is always been at the bottom end, the state of St. Giles Hospital and probably reflects also the view of how people view mental health. When times were good, they were always at the back, now we have COVID-19, they are even more pushed back further. So, in light of Government's current policy of leaving no one behind, we should be looking after those who are most vulnerable and I have always been talking about this, and those who get looked after by our health services represent the significant population of those who are very vulnerable and need to be taken care of.

So, any recommendation, I have heard what the Honourable Minister is saying why would the Minister be saying take away something from the Ministry of Health and then so as to victimise that to give to Mental Health Care Services, No. This is not about the Health Care Services, we are trying to increase the allocation for your Ministry in this particular health. It is the targeting and it has been put to government through the Ministry of Economy that is allocating the funds. We are not suggesting for any reason at all that we should take it away from any other of your services, we are saying you should raise this up, you should get more.

So, Mr. Chairman, those who are our most vulnerable and needs the greatest of our care and because of COVID-19, this is the unseen, the unheard cost of this problem or issue that is currently engulfing our nation today. Those families who get physiological and emotional problems that need to go to hospital because of what they have suffered. They fall-out through the cracks.

I believe the reason why I am supporting this is because it is pointing towards that and Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services, any addition to your budget on this area, I think would be welcomed and does not need to be taken away from any other of your allocation which you showed a need very much. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Salote Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I speak in support of the motion by Honourable Qereqeretabua and I also noted the response from the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services. The motion is specifically to increase the budget for Mental Health Services, even though the Honourable Minister had suggested other allocations to NGOs and to St. Giles Hospital.

The motion is specifically to increase the allocation for Mental Health Services and I would like to respond to the issue raised by the Minister for Health and Medical Services in asking which allocation can be reduced to cater for this specific Mental Health Services SEG and I suggest Honourable Minister for Health and Services that we bring in that \$5 million from SEG 10 of the same Programme 2-1, which is COVID-19 Contingency Fund - \$25 million, to go to Mental Health Services, bearing in mind as alluded to by Honourable Qereqeretabua, the trauma faced by our frontline workers in all Departments and Ministries and it is important that specific training be undertaken for them, that non-government organisations and civil societies engagement are strengthened so that they carry out this specific role in our various communities.

Mr. Chairman, I note from my community visits right from *TC Winston*, *TC Ana* and *TC Yasa* and even COVID-19, that this is an important area that we are not addressing and it is time now that we address this mental health issues, particularly during this crisis that we are going through. So,

Mr. Chairman, that is my contribution and I trust I have made the suggestion where the \$5 million will come from and that is from SEG 10 under COVID-19 Contingency Fund. Thank you, Chair.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, I had alluded to the many forms of support that are going to mental health, including the mental health awareness of \$60,000. I have also discussed how our multilateral partners are supporting directly civil society organisations (CSOs). For example, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is supporting AUS\$200,000 directly to Empower Pacific for counselling services for our Ministry of Health staff. These are the many areas in which support is coming through and in terms of the contingency fund, we need it.

There are a few things we need to understand. First, there is now growing evidence that we are looking at in terms of vaccination of children. The European Union has begun and we believe that, that will be the way forward, so we need to be able to have funding for that.

We also have to realise that we are also, at the moment, through DFAT funding, a building that is being prepared in Nadi and we want to have a border health unit that will look at the many complex issues of travel in the new normal. So, we want to be able to fund that also.

Also, there is growing evidence that possibly at some stage, we might need to give a booster dose of the vaccine that might be six months, might be one year, might be 10 years, so there is still research happening. If that does happen, we want to be able to provide that as well.

Again, the intricacies about quarantine, it is expensive. When we bring our people in and quarantine them, even though they may be paying, however there are other things that has to be paid by Government so that is why we need the contingency fund. And again, as I have reiterated, there are many areas in which at the moment, support is coming through for our staff. The Empower Pacific, I believe, is being funded through DFAT which is AUS\$200,000. *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Attorney-General, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sir, it is interesting how the Opposition Members are saying, to throw a \$5 million here, \$1 million there and we have seen that happened in the past but you have to be able to roll that particular programme out and to do that, you actually need people. I mean, that is one of the main issues.

You do not just simply say, “We will give \$5 million and suddenly all the mental health issues will be addressed.” You need professional counsellors, for example. This is precisely the reason why in the Budget, in the Toppers area, we have now given specific and more targeted scholarships for people to go and do counselling. We know and everyone knows - Honourable Qereqeretabua, Honourable Radrodro and Honourable Tikoduadua also knows, that there is a shortage of professional counsellors in Fiji. Therefore, we need to ensure that you simply just do not allocate funds. We do not want anyone to suddenly overnight become a counsellor, they need to be trained professionally.

This is why, for example, the Minister for Women has her Ministry pays \$200,000 to the Women’s Crisis Centre, they have a contract with us. The Ministry of Women cannot provide that, so the Women’s Crisis Centre are professionals in that area, so they provide their 24 hour helpline for domestic violence issues and child abuse issues. Of course, the person we had at the Women’s Crisis Centre must an expert in other things, which is not, but in that area, definitely she is an expert in that. They are now being used by FNU to provide counselling services. It is not a question of just simply allocating funds, we need to have the programme to roll it out and the people to roll it out

Secondly, as the Honourable Minister for Health highlighted, if you look at SEG10 - Contingency Fund, contingency basically means that the Ministry of Health has the latitude to essentially spend that money whichever way they think they should in respect of COVID-19. As he said, if something pops up tomorrow, they do not have to come running to us or come running to Parliament, we have already allocated \$25 million for them. If they feel there is a need, for example, to do x, y, z, with the young people, and it may well be, that he may decide that, "alright I need some more money for mental health issues, I need more counsellors," so he can actually use that funding from the Contingency Fund.

We have not, sort of, locked in funds specifically for one area, so that is the latitude we have given to the Ministry of Health because we know that they are in a state of flux regarding information, the signs, vaccines, et cetera. Of course, the Honourable Minister for Health and his Permanent Secretary decide there is a need, for example, to provide more focus areas in respect of mental health issues, and they have the people to deliver it, then they can use that funding from the Contingency Fund.

There is no need to re-allocate as such but as he has said, they have obviously given it a priority. Also, apart from the NGO funding, they decide as to which NGO can actually work together with them to roll out these programmes. There is no need for that specific reallocation because it can be sourced from Contingency Funds, should there be a need for it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Professor Prasad, you have the floor.

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to speak on SEG 10 but now that has been discussed and related to the motion, I obviously support the motion. I understand what the Honourable Attorney-General is saying, but it is also important to ensure that we have a very specific allocation. The question I want to ask to both, him and the Honourable Minister for Health; in last year's allocation, we had \$25 million allocation for the COVID-19 Contingency Fund.

This year, again, we have \$25 million and, of course, there would be argument about whether it is enough or not. Even if we are able to achieve the vaccination target by October, November or even December, we will still have people sick and dying because COVID-19 is out of control. That, we have to understand and every aspect of how we are going to address the issue of dealing with COVID-19 patients and dealing with people who might have long COVID-19, which include areas of mental health awareness and areas of counselling.

I am quite surprised and I know the Honourable Minister for Health earlier on, alluded to public private partnership. He talked about some company - Health Care Fiji and suddenly, we are out of Aspen and I see that \$20 million has been allocated in Head 50 for public private partnership for health. All these, in my view, is all over the place. What we need to understand is, what is this \$25 million contingency for? What sort of plan have we got? How are we going to see ourselves in terms of responding to COVID-19 in the next one year, not just next two months or three months? Whether the COVID-19 contingency fund of \$25 million is enough and whether that \$20 million allocated in Private Public Partnership is going to be enough to deal with this crisis?

I think in that context, the motion that Honourable Qereqeretabua has put forward makes sense. Let us allocate a little bit more because that is an area that is going to be a real issue and we do not seem to pay a lot of attention to it. We might have given grants to NGOs and that is where the expertise reside in many cases, and I know many of them are struggling, particularly with the financial resources that they need to deal with these issues. So, Mr. Chairman, when we come to

Head 50 we will have more discussion on the Private Public Partnership. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, but I support the motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, if I could provide clarifications.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Sir. Honourable Professor Prasad is incorrect. He is saying everything is all over the place, well it is not. This is a Contingency Fund that we have allocated previously where the Ministry of Health can deal with, as stated, the contingency matters as and when they arise.

To say that Aspen is all over the place, well it is not actually, that is why we have made the allocation of \$20 million as announced in the Budget - Ba Hospital by December of this year; March of next year - Lautoka Hospital; Open Heart Surgeries will be available from 1st March. That \$20 million is obviously to cater for the period from that period till the end of the financial year to pay for annuities and other things like that.

We are already talking to the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP). They are very keen on this, they are very keen to fund it, even they are already talking to FNPF which is the majority shareholder of this PPP, which is Health Care Fiji (HCF) and all of that is on track.

Obviously it has been slowed down because of COVID-19, doctors, et cetera, could not come and now because we are in a good space of vaccination numbers, et cetera. They believe that they can be on the ground to deliver their services and part of it, as we all know, the secondary stages of building a new wing at Lautoka Hospital, so it is not all over the place.

If you look at Head 50, Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have allocation for the food, we have allocation for the GPs and these are all separate but directly related expenditures to COVID-19. So, it is not going to come out from this Contingency Fund of \$25 million in Head 22-2-1, but they have been separately itemised. This is separately in respect of contingency and as we have said, as and when the need arises, as we have seen in the past one year when the Ministry of Health requires something immediately they were able to access these funds and that is precisely what is here. It is not, in any way, to say that there is any derogation of our obligation in respect of meeting the mental health requirements of the people of this country but the Ministry of Health will make the call, and they are the experts to make the call of it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Qereqeretabua, you have the floor.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. My right of reply, I just want to say 'thank you very much' to the Honourable Members who spoke in support of my motion. I just want to remind us all as we are watching the Olympics, we have seen that quite a few gold medallists have decided to give up competition because of mental health issues. So mental health issues are not just with the high echelons of society where you are facing sporting stress.

I am sure the Honourable Ministers on the other side face a lot of mental stress and I take my hat off to them because they are shouldering a lot of burden but these issues go right down to our communities and our societies. When a woman who has given birth in a village is facing postpartum blues or postpartum depression, no one can diagnose that sort of mental stress. This is why we need to be putting money into the hands of the smallest of the advocacy groups, like Lifeline and Youth Champs for Mental Health because they are the ones on the ground reaching to the homeless, the

youth who really need to be supported, children especially, who really need to be supported at this time. So, I want to say 'thank you very much' to the Honourable Members who spoke in support of my motion and I will leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on. I give the floor to the Honourable Gavoka for your motion on Head 22-2-1(10), you have the floor.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will also be speaking on SEG 10 but what I am proposing is a significant increase to that allocation.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Member, this is for your motion. You wanted a motion?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You move your motion first.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I move, Mr. Chairman:

That we increase the allocation by \$275 million. Thank you.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chair, I second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Gavoka, you have the floor.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Mr. Chair, quite a bit of discussion has occurred on COVID-19 Contingency Fund. Mr. Chairman, I want this to be increased because there is an absence of a modelling to tell us how much it cost Fiji to lockdown for 28 days, for 21 days or for 14 days. We need to know how much it will cost the country to go on lockdown. Our Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions that lockdown will change Fiji forever. I ask the question, says who?

Not long ago, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, sharing their experience with us had said that lockdown helped New Zealand overcome COVID-19 and what she was implying really, Mr. Chairman, was that, Fiji you need to go on lockdown. But knowing what it is like with neighbouring countries she said, "But it is up to Fiji". But I think the message was very clear, lockdown worked in New Zealand and lockdown will work in Fiji and they must be wondering - the leadership within the neighbourhood, within Australia and New Zealand, on why Fiji cannot find the resources to go on lockdown. Our approach is one day national and it is all on vaccination whereas we know that hard lockdown plus mass vaccination, the two will work together, of course, with the other elements that need to come into this.

Mr. Chairman, we need to get our health first, it must come right first and I am proposing a huge increase and you will ask the question, where are we going to get it from? This Budget is full of `R` - request and Head 50 has about \$700 million. What it tells me, Mr. Chairman, is that someone has all this money in his back pocket. It is up to him when we are going to spend it. At a time like this, Mr. Chairman, no one should be having money in his back pocket, it should be put on the table and a decision made on how to save the country immediately.

Already, we have \$200 million on Unemployment Benefits which is good. I am all for that but the health people must be given all the resources to defeat COVID-19 as soon as possible. At the way we are going, we are hoping that by October, we have herd immunity, we will be on the way to recovery but it is not sure. We need, Mr. Chairman, to be very definitive with this and say 'lockdown must happen'.

Honourable Professor Prasad has said COVID-19 is out of control. When it is out of control, are you going to continue with the same old solutions? No, we need to go on lockdown. We do not believe in, 'it will destroy this country' as the Prime Minister continues to say. We believe it will help us combat COVID-19, we all want to have a normal Christmas. We want to enjoy our Christmas with our family. At the way we are going, it will not happen. We need to bite the bullet, we need to make the hard calls and we need to find the money and give it to those who need it to help combat COVID-19.

Mr. Chairman, this is the way to go about it and the very tentative nature of the way FijiFirst is going about this is very alarming. We are not going to get out of this at the way we are going now. We need to say today, "We will find the resources, if it costs another \$300 million". As I am saying here, we can find it within what is already allocated in this Budget. That is why most of us are saying that with better and more imaginative budgeting, we can find the money to combat COVID-19.

Mr. Chairman, that is where I am coming from and I have said in the past that we are known to come up with budgets like \$3 billion but we also know that at the most, we can only spend \$2 billion, we can prove that from the figures that are available to us, figures that are official. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- On that note, Honourable Members, we will suspend proceedings for half an hour and when we resume, we will continue with this. We suspend proceedings.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.08 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.42 a.m.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, before we continue, I would just like to wish the next Rugby Team that will be playing at 12 o'clock today, the Fiji Women's Team, the very best. Honourable Attorney-General, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is in response to what the Honourable Gavoka had mentioned earlier on. This is a very interesting scenario that we have here now, the position taken by SODELPA, and it would appear in NFP also.

Last year, when the Honourable Prime Minister, after the first case decided to do a lockdown in Nadi and Lautoka, they objected to it. This year, when we now have targeted lockdowns, they are now saying that we should have a complete lockdown. When we pointed out to them that we cannot actually lockdown a country completely, even in Australia and New Zealand, when they say that they have a lockdown, they actually have people still going to supermarkets, and pharmacies, all those facilities are still open, but movement is restricted. So, when we pointed that out, then they are saying that we should have managed lockdowns. That is precisely what we are doing.

There is targeted lockdowns. Here, we are providing food, et cetera, to people who are in lockdown situations. He compared Fiji with Australia and obviously you cannot. Their economic makeup is very different, their population number are very different and the demographic range across which the population has strewn across, we have 110 islands inhabited, they have only three islands that are habited.

The GEP per-capita is completely different. They are upper middle income countries or OECD countries, so you cannot compare us with them. And as we pointed out previously that no developing country has had a successful lockdown for the period in which they are proposing. We of course have lockdowns for five days we actually have given people food.

But let me put into perspective, Mr. Chairman, a normal GDP is close to around \$10 billion. That is an average about \$12 million per day. So, if you lockdown for 14 days that equates to \$350 million just in GDP loss. That is direct to a loss to income. Indirectly we lose more as there will be permanently damage that will flow out for more than 14 days. Apart from that you will need at least \$300 million for income support if you want to support formal and informal sectors.

Now, I am only talking about Viti Levu. I am not talking about Vanua Levu. If you are going to provide formal support (you are already looking at about \$1 billion), there is also an assumption that all the people need is just food. When people do not access their places of employment they have other commitments they will not be able to meet. People have rents to pay. People actually have mortgage repayments. They may actually have a Bill of Sale on a vehicle. They may have their courts and various other repayments that they have to make which they do from their sources of income. So, it is not a question of whether you have factored this in or not. How will you factor in the cost for the individuals? We know that we do not have a society that builds on the culture of savings. We have people that can actually sometimes only buy food on a weekly basis or every three days as and when they get paid.

You know it is alright to sit somewhere we have in the upper middle class and say I can buy my food for one month and I am alright. What about those low income people? What about their needs? What about their car repayments? What about their home loan repayments? What about Courts hire purchase, et cetera?

You have to look at the entire situation, plus we have had warnings also from the garment industries, for example, and also even our BPOs which are slightly different. For the garment industry, if we shut them down for one more month, and they are not able to fulfil their orders from overseas, and guess what? The people who placed their orders will move to some other destination and that is precisely what would have happened.

At the moment as we speak, the garment factories are actually playing catch-up by getting their staff to work in the weekends so they can fulfil the backorders, otherwise they will lose those orders. It is not a simple equation of telling us what the cost is and you know we will take it out and let us allocate \$300 million we will be able to pay for the lockdown. It is actually preposterous to even suggest that.

Here is the Opposition – made absolutely no contribution in their Budget debate, failed to turn up for the Budget consultation that we had offered them as we did last year and the years before that and now they come along with these ideas which are absolutely preposterous, trying to gain some sort of ground on the budget debate. So to look at these issues, you simply just do not pluck figures out of the air and say, oh, therefore let us allocate \$300 million everything will be hunky-dory. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wish to speak in support of this motion and really look at the overall planning of the Government in terms of budgeting and raising the issues about the need to cut down on expenditure and to focus more on the COVID crisis at hand, thus the suggestion for the increase in funding.

Now, Mr. Chairman, because it has been alluded to regarding the overall spending of the Government, I had put forward a motion which is now absorbed into this one about Programme 2-1(10) and included in it an amount that would cope or cater for certain segments of the community that need specific help during this time of crisis. But before I address that, Mr. Chairman, I wanted to raise an issue because it was raised by the Honourable Minister as well as the Honourable Attorney-General about the motion to reduce the emoluments at the Prime Minister's Office. I just wanted to clarify what was raised earlier that I had suggested to reduce 100 percent of civil servant's salaries there which was a lie on the FijiFirst *Facebook* page and they need to withdraw that but more important Mr. Chairman, the Attorney-General himself knows.

The Prime Minister in his salary and perks earns well over \$700,000 than he has his housing et cetera and car allowance. He also has his FNPF entitlements. So he knows I was referring to that because the reduction in the Prime Minister's salary and perks not to pick on the civil servants at the office. So, when they go out and publish, Mr. Chairman ...

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Member stick to the motion that is here.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- I will, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We are not talking about the Prime Minister's salary, et cetera, so stick to this motion

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Yes, I just wanted to clarify, Mr. Chairman, that it pivots onto this particular motion in that the need to reduce expenditure was the consideration of the Prime Minister reducing his salary, not the civil servants. When I withdraw that motion, that was the reason because

he was threatening that it would be the civil servants that would be sent home and the Prime Minister would not even consider reducing his own perks.

Now, for this particular finding Mr. Chairman, an allocation I had sought for yesterday which is \$175,000 reduction in the overseas travel allowance of the Prime Minister was to be put in this particular Contingency Fund \$175,000 because Mr. Chairman, there is a segment of the community that is missing out on government assistance that needs to be looked at. Please, this is the COVID-19 response for expectant and new mothers. Now, Mr. Chairman, I have been working with these mothers since April and the Honourable Minister will confirm about the COVID-19 isolation for our mothers namely at the moment we have the Samaj Hall in Toorak, we have got Natabua High School, Makoi Maternity as well as now the Vunimono High School.

We have well over 40 mothers catered at these facilities and when I say expectant new mothers Mr. Chairman, they have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are in these facilities. They were there for 14 days at a time and yes while the Ministry of Health provides their meals, they are still lacking in the needs specially for the new mothers - their babies need diapers as well as formula and bottles because they are experiencing stress being in these facilities and it is affecting their breast milk supply so they had to turn to infant formula and bottles, especially baby clothing because we have appealed a few times for the stores to be open for the purchase of infant clothing during this time and all our babies and toddlers grow out of their clothes so fast, but this still has not happened, we still only have them available online so, it is very hard for mothers to access that.

But we have also heard in the news that two pregnant mother have died from COVID-19 which is most unfortunate and my condolences to their families. Now, Mr. Chairman, we need to please look at these mothers in isolation. They also need support equipment to look after them at these facilities. The front line workers are doing their best to appeal to the community. I want to acknowledge a group of young mothers who all come together to raise funds for this purpose and also the Frank Hilton Organisations that is providing maternity kits for mothers.

That is the request in supporting this motion that, that particular amount be allocated here Mr. Chairman so that we can cater for these mums. With that amount of money if we roll it out in the next 12 months, we are looking at about \$14,500 a month and from there with the number of mothers that are now on average in these facilities comes to about 50 mothers a month, we will be looking at \$300 a month per mother which would be adequate to provide for these mothers and newborns.

Now, you have got to note Mr. Chairman, Sir, that a few of them are coming from outside the Suva-Nausori containment zone and Lautoka. They have come out from their families and they are here and so they hardly have any family access and support. So, if the Government could please consider providing this funding under this particular contingency fund, specifically for those mothers.

On that note, Mr. Chairman, I support the motion before the House. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Gavoka, you have the floor.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Chairman. Now we have some indication of how much it will cost for a hard lockdown across the country. The Minister for Economy says something like ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You should have done it yourself!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- ... a billion dollars.

Mr. Chairman, we believe we can sharpen our pencils, we can go close to the bones and do it with less the amount. About two weeks ago, the leaders of political parties - SODELPA, NFP, Unity and Freedom Alliance had written to the Prime Minister offering assistance, our help in the spirits of cooperation to say we are willing to work with you, we are willing to help in any way we can but we were very adamant that a solution to all these is a hard lockdown and in our midst we have an economist, a former Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji, we know that it can be done. We know that a lot of the allocations in here, there can be savings and we can come up with the funds to put in place a hard lockdown and help Fiji on the road to recovery.

The Honourable Minister for Economy is talking about the economy, an indication of the mindset with FijiFirst is that, it is concerned that the garment manufacturers should meet their contractual obligations. I am flabbergasted. He is saying that at a time when the mortuaries are full, when the health system is collapsing and we have lost count of the number of positives in this country. It is totally out of control, so that is indicative of the mindset and it is quite tragic that we cannot face this head-on and say this is what it will cost, we will find the money and we will overcome COVID-19.

So, Mr. Chairman, the message is very clear. It is going to be hard lockdown that will save this country from COVID-19 together with mass vaccination and we can find the money from within the Budget that we have and from within our resources. This belief that our economic make up is different from Australia and other countries is not true. Within our structure, there are people who will be able to survive without the support but we can find the money to look after the others, who need the support.

Mr. Chairman, the need is there to up this contingency fund or wherever we can find, maybe this is the wrong allocation. But the message should be very clear, with no ambiguity, we have to find the money, to put Fiji on a lockdown, on the model that had worked in other countries. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, if I could provide some clarification, please.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Attorney-General, is this on other issues in Programme 2-1?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sir, it is in response to the submissions being made by Honourable Tabuya and Honourable Gavoka. Just to provide clarification on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Attorney-General, he had his right of reply and we will move on.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on.

Honourable Members, we will now move on to the motion by the Honourable Qereqeretabua, that Head 22-2-1(1) in respect to Personal Emoluments be increased by \$1 million.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The second motion by the Honourable Qereqeretabua, that Head 22-2-1(5) & (7) in respect to Fiji Suicidal Prevention be increased by \$1 million.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The motion by the Honourable Gavoka, that Head 22-2-1(10) with respect to COVID-19 Contingency Fund be increased by \$275 million.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

Head 22-2-2-3

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On Head 22-2-2(3), I seek clarification from the Honourable Minister with regards to SEG 3 - Programme for Overseas Laboratory Test Referrals. Can the Honourable Minister just elaborate, since the amount has been increased, what are the number of tests referrals being included in this programme?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These are the tests that the specialists often would like. As we are getting more specialists, some of them are returning from their attachments overseas, they have been exposed to certain diagnostic tests, so sometimes we need to send across for example, DNA type testing, those that we need for SLE. So, these are the areas in which we are asking for having that funding.

These tests are actually quite expensive when you send it overseas. They are different from the normal laboratory clinical tests that we do here and that we actually sometimes outsource in to the private sector, which is why the funding is there. Also as some sort of contingency, in terms of, at the moment, we have been supported with some of our COVID-19 complex testing in terms of Geno- and Phenotyping through Melbourne. In case that will not be able to come through, then we can have the funding to able to send the tests across.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- I am just seeking clarification from the Honourable Minister regarding SEG 1, where there is an increase. I just want clarification on whether this includes medical staff or just general administration staff in terms of established staff at the CWM Hospital? There is also a reduction in SEG 2. Can you just give a clear clarification on the increase, is it relating to medical staff or is it a general cadre administration staff?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- This is predominantly the new nursing staff that we will have and the doctors are centred around the main Ministry of Health Head Quarters. But what we do is once they have been accepted into the system, we then push their salaries occasionally back to the place where they are working but this is predominantly for the nursing staff.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Qereqeretabua.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to get some clarification through you from the Honourable Minister on SEG 5, Outsourcing Cleaning Services at

CWM, \$2.4 million. I am just wondering if the Honourable Minister could clarify the KPIs of this cleaning services. I was with a family that needed my help at CWM Hospital last year and one of them basically told me that there are rats in the wards and this was before the second wave in April.

I also want to ask this because of the state of the kitchen which has already been made public. Who is looking at the KPIs of the cleaning services, especially when we giving them \$2.4 million and we know that there are rats in the wards?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Because of the inconsistencies and the deficiencies we found in the previous company in the renewal of tenders a new company has now working at CWM Hospital.

From my own personal visits and also reflections that are coming through from the hospital they are doing a better job. Their supervision is actually undertaken by the matron in the Wings and also the Sister-In-Charge and at this moment in time, certainly with COVID one of the blessings that has happened to the Ministry of Health and CWM Hospital *per se* is the increase in infection protocol guidelines and they are certainly help and also the advice has come through from WHO and ASPEN that have come. So, that's all lifted the game in terms of the expectations are in the cleanliness and what we need in terms in preventing hospital acquired infections and reducing the transmission of COVID.

MR. CHAIRMAN.-Thank you, Honourable Members, I have got three on my list who want to take the floor on this Programme 2, Activity 2 and we will go in this order. Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Attorney-General and Honourable Tikoduadua. Honourable Prime Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- No, my areas has been covered, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tikoduadua, you have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are dealing with the CWM Hospital and I have the question for the Honourable Minister. Around CWM Hospital because I am looking through the SEGs and I am trying to attach this because it is a COVID related issue. I was trying to gather your attention, Mr. Chairman, because of SEG 10 under the previous programme. I just want to ask because I am not looking at here and I can foresee some issues coming up during the cyclone season. All these temporary tents that are outside of CWM Hospital. You will not be there if there is a tropical depression or a cyclone, if any of this Programme 2, Activity 2 allocations. Is there a view to look at a more permanent temporary structure that would be in the shape of an ICU capability for COVID that would look after patients thereby they will not be in these tents if the weather turns worst then what we are currently experiencing? So, I cannot find it here and I am asking maybe he could enlighten me. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Member, if it is not here then it is not the subject we are talking about, that is as simple as that.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Then it is very unfortunate on those who are in those tents right now.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Attorney-General, you have the floor

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, Sir, I do not have any further comment to make, it has already been covered. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on. Programme 2-5, Honourable Dr. Lalabalavu, you have the floor.

HON. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, just a suggestion to the Honourable Minister with regards to Tamavua Twomey Hospital, if the Ministry can liaise with FRA on the upgrade of the road going down to Twomey, to be in the state that it was in before and during your time in Medical School. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is ancient history. We are not talking about ancient history here. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, certainly, we have had discussions and I think the other important thing to realise is that, we have moved majority of our services away from the old part of Tamavua Hospital to the Tamavua Twomey Hospital below. So, that is no longer an OHS risk at the top with the wooden building and majority of the work in Tamavua Hospital is now centralised in the Tamavua Twomey Hospital. Thank you, but a bit of a below belt there from Honourable Dr. Lalabalavu, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We move on. Programme 3-1, Honourable Qereqeretabua.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- This is in relation to the Central Division, Programme 3-1, I just want to ask the Honourable Minister about the power supply at Vunisea Hospital. I understand that the power supply cuts off at 10.00 p.m. every night and patients need to use their mobile lights, mobile torches or their diving torches to get to the bathroom. Can the Honourable Minister update us on power supply at Vunisea Hospital? Thank you.

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- The Eastern Division.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- The Central Division.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-1.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- We are still in the Central Division, Sir, if I am correct.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Central Division.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Central Division is not Vunisea.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Mr. Chairman, the map health.gov.fj has Kadavu in the Central Division.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- No, Eastern.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- I did not hear that!

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Your medical map.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- I am looking at a map, Mr. Chairman, and in it, Kadavu is in the Central Division unless the colours are too close to one another.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- That map is wrong.

HON. DR I. WAQAINABETE.- That map is wrong, Kadavu is in the Eastern Division

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Then I shall bring that up in the next

HON. DR I. WAQAINABETE.- Kadavu and Moala are in the same Division, wait for that turn.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I wonder why they are in the Division. Honourable Tikoduadua, you have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I may be encountering the same issue here because I want to speak on Korovou Hospital and wonder whether that is Central or Eastern? I just want to make that clear first, please.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Central.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Do you want me to confirm that?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I want to raise a question in terms of Programme 3-1(3) on Vehicles' Spare Parts and Maintenance with respect in particular to Korovou Hospital that has not had a vehicle or an ambulance for almost a year now in that respect, because it affects the accident and emergency capacity of the hospital, because people have died, they were not able to be treated on time for accidental and emergency care. In light of the vehicle, particularly the ambulance, is this allocation, I would like to ask the Minister also to bring and repair the ambulance that was brought to Suva and is still in Suva. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Sir. The only ambulance services at the moment are centralised under FEMAT with the retrieval system. That includes the three ambulances that came from Australia.

In addition to that, the Nayavu 4-Wheel Drive is working and the Nayavu 4-Wheel Drive services both Korovou and also Nayavu. Also, DMO Central has a group of vehicles based in Tamavua, they can also support Korovou. At the moment, with the COVID-19 response, there are other vehicles from other Ministries that are working with our Subdivisional hospitals. *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification from the Honourable Minister since we are dealing with the Central Division, I just wanted to highlight the conditions of the morgue system in Vunidawa. I think it is also the same situation in Mokani and Wainibokasi - all in the Central Division. The status of those mortuaries, sometimes when deceased bodies are put in the mortuary, they gets worsened when they get removed from the mortuary by the relatives.

I just wanted to inquire with the Minister, given the conditions of the mortuary, say for Vunidawa, that looks after a majority of the province of Naitasiri can we get an update because I do not see any provisions here so we would just like to get an assurance that that will be attended to in

terms of the mortuary services in the Vunidawa area and also probably other Central Division as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Sir, that is covered under Programme 3-1 in terms of the workings within that, so refrigeration services, spare parts and those areas are actually covered. But this also gives a good opportunity to discuss that.

I have said it before this august House that when one of our loved one dies, when they are taken to the mortuary which runs at four degrees or less, the process of the body actually just going through the process of deteriorating happens, continues, it does not stop. That is why we are always advised to pick up our relative early, take them and bury them.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Rasova, you have the floor. You are mute.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, can the Minister clarify the rationale behind the difference of allocation in SEG 7, on the outreach programme for the four geographical divisions like Central, Eastern, Western and Northern? On the outreach programme, there is a difference there, can you just clarify the rationale? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Yes, Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- The outreach programmes are pre-determined in terms of what they are going to be doing throughout the year and this, we are talking about the Divisions here but the hospitals too have their own programme and funding to be able to support out these programmes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We move on. Programme 3-2. Honourable Qereqeretabua, you have the floor.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, because I picked the wrong Division before, Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to now ask the Honourable Minister if he could just clarify. I see power supply has got a budget of \$130,000. I want to ask in particular about the Vunisea Hospital and their power outages. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, for the whole Vunisea Government Station, the power goes off at 10 o'clock. We have our own backup generator to support that. Of course, there have been incidences in the past, but we made it very clear that that is available for them.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Qereqeretabua.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Does that mean that a head of the Hospital at Vunisea is just not accessing the backup power, Honourable Minister?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, it is within the job description of the SDMO and the DMO to ensure that the backup generator for the Sub-Divisional Hospital is available and it works. We also have the generators that we have bought and that have been granted to us and they are available, as long as they let the Central Ministry of Health's Asset Unit know that there are issues with the generator.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-3.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Mr. Chairman, just a question to the Honourable Minister in terms of laundry, which I had asked for previously under Programme 1-1, and this is for the various Divisions. I noticed that there are laundry facilities for all the various Divisions, plus Lautoka Hospital and Labasa Hospital, but there is none for the Central Division. What the Honourable Minister had said that they only cater for CWM Hospital. My question is, why is there none for Central, and then you are giving it to the other Divisions when the Wainibokasi and Nausori look after the three? That is just my question; what is happening to their laundry services?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, the \$2.4 million money that is allocated to the laundry outsourcing is for the CWM Hospital and the Central Division, and that is because of the fire that I have alluded to earlier. Those in the other Centres have been there from before and the repair works does happen when they need to be repaired, but that covers the CWM and the Central Division, including Wainibokasi.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Salote Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is in regards to SEG 5 with boats and outboard motors. I noticed, particularly, in Eastern Division and Western Division, the allocation is very small and if the Honourable Minister could just quickly tell us, particularly for the Eastern Division for Programme 3-2, whether these are for replacements or for new ones, because for a new set of boat and engine, it will cost about \$40,000?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, if the Honourable Member had seen the last year's Budget and the Budget before that, there was considerable money for the Eastern Division for the purchase. Those purchases have been done, which includes Kabara, Vanuabalavu, Lakeba. This is predominantly for either new purchases that may break down or repairs, but significant purchases have been done in previous budgets, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Leawere, you have the floor.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is just on SEG 5 on outsourcing training services of \$794,000. Can we have some clarifications on this as to how this outsourcing is carried out by the Ministry?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Already have been answered.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- I am asking the Honourable Minister, not you.

HON.A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I am telling you. You should notice that.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- So, you are the Honourable Minister for Health?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, do you have a reply to this?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Sir, I cannot hear him properly and that is why Honourable Attorney-General replied to him because he can hear him. I cannot hear him from here.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I can hear him but I cannot see him.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- So stick to that answer, Honourable Member.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- It is alright, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-4, Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just on Programme 4-1, if the Honourable Minister could confirm to us now the new advisory of no testing, what about the reagents, is it because they are not being ordered under this under Programme 4-1 or what is the issue?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- The Honourable Member certainly has not been listening to Dr. Fong. We are still testing about 4,000 a day, RT-PCR and Genexpert. In addition, we are doing RD antigen test. All we are doing is free focusing the test to those who actually need it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 4-1. Honourable Dr. Lalabalavu, you have the floor.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, through you just need a point of clarification from the Honourable Minister in regards to SEG 5 on the allocation of Consumables, Medicines and Laboratories. Those allocations have been the same from the previous Budget, especially with Consumables and Medicine in 2019-2020.

With regards to the ongoing issues with the shortage of medication and all, is this amount sufficient to cater for shortages of medications that are usually plague the Ministry?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Sir, the medicines are supported by the Free Medicine Scheme, which is another programme that we run so that should be sufficient.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you, Honourable Minister for Health, under SEG 9, I note some of the purchases regarding dental equipment and biomedical equipment. Can we get the list of urban and subdivisional hospitals that will be delivered this equipment? I note that last year, still the same amount - an increase of \$300,000 so I take it that the purchases of these dental and biomedical equipment is work in progress.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- I do not have the list with me at the moment, Sir, but that can be done as a written question or question time, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, we will move on. Honourable Members, the Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Head 22 agreed to.

Head 23 – Ministry of Housing and Community Development

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for any comments on Head 23-2-1. Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, just a point of clarification from the Honourable Minister on Programme 2-1-6 regarding the current policy for PRB tenants. I know that there have been issues with the number of tenants that are currently in the PRB flats and because of the movement of people, I know you are dealing with that issue where families are exceeding the numbers that are supposed to be there. With this current budget allocation, is there an allocation made to help these families and to allow them perhaps, to help these family members who are taking care of each other and we are seeing two or three generations in one particular flat because of the unemployment, because of what we are going through? What is the policy for the Ministry in terms of helping these families to stay? What kind of assistance are you providing from this particular budget for these families? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, the allocation given there is purely for the rental subsidy so we subsidise family's rent and the rent ranges from \$5 a week and it goes up to \$40 a week. There is a variation in the rent depending upon which flat they are living in. I believe the rental subsidy that is been given is quite substantial, because the families are paying \$5 a week. It is barely \$1 a day and you have seen while the government is subsidising the rent on the other hand, the problems that we see in flats like Mead Road, people are drinking, families are not looking after each other so there is a lot of social problems there as well. This is sort of a sign that they do have extra money.

Recently, requests were even made to the Honourable Prime Minister that some families wanted to put up a Sky dish, so we should not be assuming that people who are living in the PRB flats may not have that kind of income to look after themselves. The reality is something else because for each and every flat we do socio-economic survey just to find out how they are doing. Whether their income has remained the same, whether the income has gone down so that we can provide that kind of assistance. That assistance is adjusted through rent subsidy.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Waqanika, you have the floor.

HON. T. WAQANIKA.- Mr. Chairman, on the same issue but just on Programme 2-1(8) on the Formalisation of Informal Settlements - \$2 million, can the Honourable Minister, please, elaborate which informal settlement will this \$2 million be allocated to? Thank you.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, the \$2 million that is being allocated is for preparatory work for certain informal settlements but for the construction phase, we are going to enter into the construction of Wakanisila and Sakoca. These are the only two settlements that is going into the construction phase. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. We will move on. Parliament will now vote on Head 23.

Question put.

Head 23 agreed too.

Head 24 – Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for Head 24. Programme 2-2?

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-2(6) - Social Pension Scheme, last year, they introduced the life certificate for the pensioners. Is this still a requirement? Every six months, do they still have to fill out this life certificate or not? That was the question that was being asked from the pensioners. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The question is really irrelevant to this particular Budget but certification was done last year and we will advise when it happens next. It will not be in the next six months.

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- This is what people are asking about.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I give the floor to the Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On Programme 2-2(6) and even SEG 7, there is a huge amount of about \$120 million or more all held under 'R'. In considering the situation or crisis that we are in and the reduction in the allocation for social welfare by over \$4 million, can the Minister explain whether all these allocations held under 'R' are going to cause administrative delay and thus delay services to the people? What kind of mechanism do they have in place to ensure timely access to these funds so that it does not affect the recipients receiving their benefits in a timely manner? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These budget lines have always been under 'R' and it is required to ensure that proper rules in relation to financial management are followed every month during payment. It does not affect the receipt or the amount of allowances that go to each individual beneficiary. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Head 24 agreed to.

Head 25 - Ministry of Youth and Sports

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The floor is now open for comments on Head 25.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- On Programme 1-1(7) - Leasing of Multifunctional Copiers (\$12,000), it is a reduction from \$15,000. Can we just get an update from the Honourable Minister what sort of copier is this multifunctional copiers and why is there a reduction?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Can we get the update from the Honourable Minister, there is a reduction in terms of the allocation that has been given there from \$15,000 to \$12,000?

HON. P.K. BALA.- We have negotiated with the supplier and that is why there is a reduction. He has given some discount on that.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- What sort of multifunctional copier is this? Is it based in the Head Office or it is linked to every other office? Why is it an expensive financial arrangement?

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, I have just said that it is a colour printer based at our Head Quarters and if he is not listening, it is not my problem. Thank you.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- No, you did not say that.

HON. P.K. BALA.- I said it.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- You did not say in your office.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- He said it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We move on. Forget about those two. Programme 1-2. Honourable Tabuya.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- On Programme 1-2(5), allocation of livestock expenses that has increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000 from the previous year. Can the Honourable Minister inform the House how this activity has been beneficial with the youth and what will this increase be used for?

HON. P.K. BALA.- No.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- The answer is not 'no'. Honourable Minister, can you explain why there is an increase in that allocation and how that is going to benefit the youth during this time and the youth are not moving around and why there is an increase?

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, when there is a decrease, there is a problem, when there is an increase, there is a problem. So, the answer to this is because the participant numbers have been increased, that is why there is an increase in the allocation. Thank you.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- A follow up on that, Mr. Chairman, can he explain in more detail what he means by participants, in what activities? Because he has not shown that, that is a very broad statement to make, but he has not shown specifically what he means by participants and what activities to benefit the youth under this livestock expenses allocation?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, the required budget for livestock expenses include the total stock that will be purchased in the new financial year with feed required to maintain the stock. That is what that allocation is for.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-3?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, I just want to inquire the Honourable Minister, through you, the Social Media Management of \$40,000. What is this relating to?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, this funding will assist the Ministry to engage in a Social Media Management to develop and implement the Ministry's Digital Policies across the number of social media platform and carry out the services specified as follows:

- To manage Ministry's Social Media Assets and engage audience with appealing content that reflects the Ministry; and
- Only the Ministry's present on social media and measure sentiments and effectiveness of Ministry's engagement, et cetera.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 2-1.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, through you, we need a clarification from the Honourable Minister on SEG 10. Is this is for the Central Division or for the four Divisions?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, this is for the four Divisions.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Rasova you have the floor.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Mr. Chairman, the question has been asked, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tuisawau, you have the floor.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, can I ask the question on Programme 2-1(6), can the Honourable Minister explain international tournaments there is nearly \$460,000 there? There is no international tournaments so why you are allocating that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Olympics are being held.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Is this locally or overseas? Hosting of international tournament \$460,000.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, this funding allocation will assist Fiji Rugby Union for preparation and hosting cost for the following:-

- World Rugby Pacific Challenge – June 2022 and July 2022;
- Test Series and;
- Fijiana Test Match – May 2022.

That is what this allocation is for.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, we will move on. Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Head 25 agreed to.

Head 26 – Higher Education Institutions

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Head 26, Mr. Chairman, there is a reduction from \$81.4 million to \$71.4 million for that Head. My question is on FNU which has been allocated \$44.35 million.

Mr. Chairman, there were 15 Technical Colleges and their programmes have been absorbed into FNU. My question is on the teachers who are in those Technical Colleges before the absorption. Can the Minister give us an update on what happened to those teachers; are they in FNU now? What has happened to those teachers from those 15 technical colleges? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, let me advise Honourable Kepa that this is a budget debate, it is not a Higher Education Institution. The question that she is asking can come as a Parliamentary questions later in the sitting.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Does she have those information or not?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on.

Question put.

Head 26 agreed to.

Head 30 – Ministry of Agriculture

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The floor is open for comments on Head 30-1-2.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification on this Commercial Farmers Equity Package in Programme 1-2 - \$500,000. I know it is a new allocation altogether. Can we just get some insights into whether the amount is enough for the number of farmers that are out there in terms of the equity packages?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is Programme 1-2(10). Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, of course, we have 83,000 farmers but not everyone would want to take a loan. We want the successful commercial farmers to go to the bank and take loan and we want to give them a leverage - their contribution to the development bank, so here we are opening up for them to go to the Fiji Development Bank (FDB), apply for loan, we will take them through and there is an equity component that they have to contribute. We will contribute that deposit to the Fiji Development Bank and they will get the loan from the Fiji Development Bank. So, we are looking at assisting 30 farmers who would want to take loan to buy a tractor or construct a farm house or a hydroponic system or a greenhouse, et cetera.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- On Programme 1-2, Honourable Kuridrani, I missed that out.

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Yes, Mr. Chairman, in fact, I was supposed to contribute to Programme 1-1 but I missed it. Can I just mention it?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No we have moved on. We go now to Programme 1-3

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Programme 1-3(5)m, I just need a clarification from the Minister for Agriculture about this Accreditation Fees. What is happening to the accreditation of our research

institutions since it has been running and the fees have been allocated during every budget? What is the progress on that?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, the accreditation of any lab is not something like getting a membership of a professional body. There are a lot of things that need to be placed on the ground, in the lab before accreditation is given, so from what I have got from the team down there, we probably are looking at maybe end of next year.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-4.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Yes, Chairman. On Programme 1-4(7) - Agricultural Show, can we have some clarifications from the Honourable Minister? Does this amount include schools in terms of this Show or is it only for communities that are involved? Thank you, Chairman.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- No, it does not include schools. It includes the Agriculture Show that we have now decentralised. For example, last year, we had it in the Northern Division, Central Division and Western Division. We were planning to have a show called Highlands Agriculture Show but it got deferred twice, once was due to the cyclone and second we were about to have it just before the second round of COVID-19 struck us.

It is about four to five decentralised agriculture shows that we are having, so we are trying to take this agriculture show in different areas closer to the people. We were looking at this year, holding an agriculture show in Rakiraki and also in Wainikoro, Nadogo, the central area where we got a government station, hopefully next year we will be able to have more agriculture shows closer to the people, closer to where agriculture is happening.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- A supplementary question, Mr. Chairman. Are there plans to include schools because we need children to be educated in terms of the using of land, compost, et cetera? Are there plans to include schools to be involved in this agriculture show?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, we have a separate support for the schools in terms of providing them with seeds and schools they have their own. I think in this Budget they have an allocation for that and, of course, we will discuss with the Minister for Education on how we could support them further in terms of getting the schools to have their own gardens and probably for them to participate in the nearest agriculture show. Of course, schools do visit our agriculture show when it is held and we have got competitions for them as well. This year we just could not do much. We will discuss with the Ministry of Education.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau, you have the floor.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Programme 1-4(7) - IT Operational Support (\$278,000), can the Honourable Minister explain that? We already have a huge amount on the government digitalisation programme. Is this a separate project and the objectives? What are the outcomes and timeframes? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-4 (SEG 7), Honourable Minister?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, we are developing an App for the Ministry of Agriculture, where we want to put all the data in the App in terms of support for the farmers that we are given. At the moment, it is all over and at the particular point in time when we get a request from a farmer, we want to see whether that farmer has been assisted at what amount and in what year. Part

of this will go towards that. In addition to that, we have got other IT activity that is happening in the Ministry of Agriculture which this allocation will pick up.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 2-1. Honourable Radrodro?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can we just get a clarification from the Honourable Minister on the reduction in the Taveuni Coconut Centre, and also the reduction in the Government Wage Earners? I think this is a very important programme in terms of crop and the administration. Does this mean that the reduction in Programme 2 will mean reduction in the services provided in terms of the men on the ground?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, no, that does not mean that there will be a reduction in the activity on this area. In fact, we have declared this year as the 'Year of Coconut', leading up to September's International Day of Coconut. The primary reason for that was to expand the coconut farms and possibly plantations in the Western Division. In fact, about the last eight months, we have established closed to 40 farms of coconut, unfortunately, no plantations, in the Western Division.

The activity on the ground, in fact, is happening more on coconut and the GWE depends on a particular programme, it is always programme-based. That is not an indication in terms of the reduction in support and activity in this area of coconut. We are very mindful of the importance of coconut for various usage, we are expanding the work for the coconut. Taveuni is our main place, but in addition to Taveuni, we also have coconut research in Wainigata and also in Dobuilevu in Ra.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Kuridrani, you have the floor.

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- In SEG 7, can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture enlighten the House on the progress of this maintenance of existing rural offices and staff quarters, since we have noticed the poor conditions of all these around Fiji? Even in Keiyasi, they do not have a toilet in the Agriculture Office.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, that is not true. The maintenance of existing rural office and staff quarters is an ongoing programme. Last year and the year before last, we have upgraded a number of quarters which was opened by our Honourable Prime Minister. It is ongoing and progressively we are dealing with the maintenance work.

This allocation that is there is to look at other quarters, for example, in Dreketi, where our Agriculture Extension Office is in a bad shape, we are managing it and this allocation is there to progressively deal with all maintenance work which will be required every year. Allocations are there, you will find it in there every year. That does not mean that maintenance work is not happening.

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Mr. Chairman, can the Honourable Minister visit the Keiyasi Agriculture Office to ensure that there is a toilet there?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, that is not true. I have been to the Keiyasi Office before the pandemic and I have used the toilet.

Mr. Chairman, if I can recall, the problem is not the toilet or lack of toilet, the problem is water connection, there was an issue I recall.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Mr. Chairman, I would like to say that all stations have toilets. If Honourable Kuridrani notices there is no toilet in Keiyasi, someone must have removed it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on. Someone removed it and it must be a portable one.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Stupid and irrelevant some of these statements, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wish to seek clarification on SEG 10. There were items that have been removed from the last Budget, removal of the Agro Input Subsidy (\$400,000) and Agro Processor Infrastructure Support (\$250,000). Can the Honourable Minister explain to this House why these capital projects have been removed, especially during this time of crisis? We need this. Why have they been removed from this particular SEG?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, I thought we are talking about in this Committee of Supply about the amount that has been given. That is not a relevant question, I think that question should be asked in a different session.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We are now dealing with Programme 2-1, that is what we have done. We will now move on to Programme 2-2.

HON. A. JALE.- Programme 2-2(8), can the Honourable Minister explain or expand on the Coconut Farming Programme (\$150,000), what does that entail?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Whenever there is an allocation under the Extension Service, then that means that, that allocation is for that particular crop or livestock activity or assistance to the farmer. So, this assistance - Coconut Farming Programme (\$150,000) is developing seed material which is seed nuts, delivering them to the farmers and if it requires land clearing support, subsidising the land clearing and if it requires land preparation for coconut, then we have a policy of subsidising land preparation in terms of ploughing, harrowing, et cetera.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tuisawau, you have the floor.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you. Mr. Chairman, SEG-9 - Farm Mechanisation. Some of the programmes there which have been related to my query, currently, we in Rewa, Tailevu and Naitasiri have been trying to access the Government tractors and diggers and there is a long queue there. There have been an increase in the number of farmers due to the COVID-19, they are coming back to the land. I would like to ask the Honourable Minister, please, is that covered under SEG-9, Farm Mechanisation, because there is always an issue with the availability of those.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, this is something that we are mindful of in terms of pending hours. This is a terminology that we are using in the Ministry. On a daily basis, we have got

a dash board, IT system where we are monitoring the pending hours. There are a number of areas where we are not able to reach because of the limited number of machines, part of this allocation will go towards outsourcing, hiring of machines from the private sector.

I tell you, Mr. Chairman, we have reduced pending hours substantially. If you look at today's stats you will find that there may be some places where there would not be any pending hour because we are outsourcing - we have got a list of vendors approved by Finance whom we outsource to. So, I do not know where the Honourable Member is coming from but do bring it to my attention if you see that there has been a delay so part of this goes to fuel, part of this for repairs of our existing fleet of machinery that we have.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Leawere, you have the floor.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, I just wish to thank the Minister for including the women in agriculture programme which is \$300,000 on SEG8 and also the farm access roads. Can we have some clarifications on these two items as to which roads are going to be assisted on this \$450,000 allocation? As well as some programmes on the Women in Agriculture please.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister you have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, with regards to farm access roads, we have a long list of roads that we need to do. The allocation that we have here it is to outsource the farm access road construction that we will not be able to deal with, considering the existing number of farm access roads that we need to do. We have also got allocations in different activities to use our machinery to construct or establish these farm access roads.

We have just completed a 4.5 kilometres farm access road using combined machinery from Agriculture and Waterways at Lekutu in Wainikoro, Kilikoso at a cost of \$5,000. There was a contribution of gravel from the nearby *mataqali* through EMP by Environment. Our excavator from Waterways and dump truck from Agriculture. We are establishing a separate section to deal with farm access roads and we are looking at doing a lot of farm access road in non-sugar agriculture this fiscal year.

On women in Agriculture Mr. Chairman, Sir, we call for expression of interest to support groups with regards to those women who are in floriculture or they have their own nurseries to provide them with nursery kits or other materials that they require for their particular activity - cut flower businesses which women are involved in and *voivoi*, we are supporting them through this particular programme.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Rasova you have the floor.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Mr. Chairman, under SEG 8, I would like the Minister to clarify how they are going to divide the amount of \$300,000 amongst the farmers?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, the main assistance that *yaqona* farmers require from the Ministry is cuttings and seedlings so we are establishing nurseries to provide them with seedlings. The advantage of providing seedlings is that germination is 100 percent with cuttings to germination sometimes is about 60 percent or 70 percent.

We will be establishing a nursery in Kadavu in the process and we want to establish a nursery in the Western Division. Unfortunately, one member from the Opposition at some point in time said that there was no kava being grown in the Western Division but they do not know that almost 90 percent of kava consumed in the Western Division is grown in the Western Division. So we are expanding kava growth in the Western Division as well and constantly we are getting requests to provide cuttings of *yaqona*. We are looking at providing seedlings so that we can ensure that germination rate is 100 percent and is faster.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you. Under SEG 10, the allocation for Rural and Outer Island Agriculture Development has been reduced significantly. The amount there - \$800,000 is being reduced by almost half. Just a question to the Honourable Minister about this - if we are looking at this time of COVID-19 and looking at developing agriculture in the outer islands and rural areas why has this been reduced and which activities have been reduced as a result? Thank you.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, in fact you know, all the dedicated programmes, I want to further reduce it because it is double-dipping. The Rural and Outer Island Agriculture Programme, that line item has been there for ages. You cannot be pumping in money in the same place and creating a dependent agriculture model. We also have land clearing support which is provided to rural and outer islands. We also have seedling nursery development programme pegged in here in the extension section for Kadavu and other places.

Basically, we are doubling the amount that is going there and we continue to create dependent agriculture models so we are streamlining this entire budget from the Ministry of Agriculture and saying that if you have a land-clearing allocation, let us increase that but that land clearing support should be for all the places and not only one area. That is the way to go. We have had an allocation for Valley Development Programme for many years, but now Ba is taking over as one of the vegetable production areas Mr. Chairman. We cannot be stuck with the model of allocation that was there about three decades ago.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-3.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Just a clarification from the Honourable Minister under SEG 8 - Goat Breeding Programme, Sheep Breeding Programme, Beef Breeding Programme and Poultry Breeding Programme, they have been reduced as compared to the last budget. Again, a clarification from the Honourable Minister who talks a lot about improving these programmes and the need to increase our local production on each of these meats because we import so much of it, in fact looking at increasing import subsidies, so can he tell us why this has been reduced in this current budget. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Chairman, I heard the word `subsidies`. I want to urge the Members on the other side to please get away from subsidies and grants. I have been saying for the last two years that we must drive production and supply via market signals providing a market to them, rather than this unsustainable way of driving production and supply by giving subsidies and grants because you cannot continue to do that. The moment you withdraw subsidies and grants, the farmers will say, 'it is not profitable for me', so I have made it very clear to farmers, if this particular crop or livestock is not profitable for you to grow or raise, do not do that, do not grow that, do not raise that, go and do something else which is comfortable, has expertise and is profitable, so that then, we can talk about what kind of support.

She is talking about demand, so we need to support - yes, then talk about the extension support, not the research. Talk about the extension allocation, this is the research allocation, you are talking about the wrong allocation. So, we will talk about that there.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Kuridrani, you have the floor.

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Mr. Chairman, I was supposed to comment on Programme 3-2. My apologies, I missed it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Just one question, Honourable Minister, on SEG 8. Is this only for Kadavu, this goat breeding programme?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- No.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I was told, I just wanted to clarify that.

HON. J. USAMATE.- We need some horse breeding.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on from the goats. Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 30.

Question put.

Head 30_agreed to.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will now suspend proceedings and Parliament will resume in an hour's time. Thank you.

The Parliament adjourned at 1.22 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.48 p.m.

Head 31 – Ministry of Fisheries

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The floor is now open for any comments on Head 31. Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On Programme 2-2(7) - Electronic Monitoring System (EMS), there has been a reduction of that amount. Can the Honourable Minister, please, provide an update on the status of this Programme - the reason for the reduction?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Chairman, the reduction of the amount is just to support the project. Equipment have already been purchased, so this reduction is just to support the services and the equipment for that project.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Rasova, you have the floor.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Mr. Chairman, I think my question has been answered. *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I hope you have enjoyed your lunch. Programme 2-3. Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On Programme 2-3(8), perhaps, I had asked this earlier of the Honourable Minister for Agriculture about the removal of the item for Makogai Mariculture Development Centre from this year's programme under SEG 8. This has been an ongoing capital project from 2012 until now. Can he clarify the reason why this has been removed from this year's Budget and also an update on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The reduction is about \$20,000. The provision is sufficient due to the reassessment of the engagement and the activities on the island. It is basically on the research side of the station and not infrastructure.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Programme 2-5. Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Programme 2-5(8) - Coastal Fisheries Development, again, we see a reduction there from \$772,000 last year to \$501,800. Why has there been a reduction in this project and what is the update on that, please?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These are ongoing projects and for them, it takes about three years for completion and when the ice plant is actually established, we then move our staff there. So, this is an ongoing cost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Jale, you have the floor.

HON. A. JALE.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-6(8) - Seaweed Development Programme. I wonder whether the Honourable Minister can elaborate on that. Where is your focus now in terms of seaweed development and would that be also covering things, like transportation to market?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is an increase activity that we are concentrating on this year. There was a problem with the market, actually, in the retail price of the seaweed. The price has come back and now it has increased, so there is enough funding now to ensure the commercialisation of the product and sustainability of seaweed production in Fiji.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Rasova.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Mr. Chairman, still on SEG 8 - Food Security Programme - Freshwater Aquaculture Small-Holder Farmers (\$500,000) and also On-going Construction of Multi Species Hatchery – Ra (\$417,766), both under RIE. In the RIE, it says about \$567,000 and there is a difference of \$100,000 each. Can you just clarify what is the difference in there, over here and in the RIE?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, can he ask the question again, please?

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- The ongoing construction of the Multi Species Hatchery in Ra, it states here that it is \$417,766 on the RIE itself, it is about \$567,000; \$500,000 - Freshwater Aquaculture Small Holder Farmers - \$675,000 in the original RIE. Can you clarify what is the difference in there because it is \$100,000 less each? Thank you.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, this is an ongoing project that we are carrying out with our partners. Basically, most of the work have been carried out. The work that is earmarked to be carried out, the reduced amount is basically to complete the work that is ongoing.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Mr. Chairman, on SEG 8 – Assistance to Commercial Brackishwater Shrimp Aquaculture Farmers (\$175,000), I just need clarification as to how many farmers are we targeting for this financial year?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- The number of farmers that we have depends on the number of applications that we receive but mostly, on average of about five to ten. These are existing farmers but we are trying to convert them from subsistence to commercial.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will move on. Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Head 31 agreed to.

Head 32 – Ministry of Forests

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The floor is now open for any comments. Programme 2-1, Honourable Qereqeretabua, you have the floor.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Mr. Chairman, I just want to ask the Honourable Minister two questions from SEG 7. The first is on REDD+ and, that is, the \$2 million allocated from the World Bank and this, I understand, was for the National Forest Inventory (NFI) which (I think) was launched on 20th January, 2021.

I just really want to ask about that because the last NFI was performed 16 years ago and this is essential for the collection of comprehensive information for developing and monitoring policies and guidance that support the sustainable management of Fiji's forest. However, it seems that the Ministry had leased some vehicles from a company in Nadi also in February, 40 or 50 selected villages from around Fiji had already been conducting the NFI but in early June, just last month, they were sent back to their villages and apparently there was no more funding. So, my question to the Honourable Minister is, will the Ministry resume the NFI?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Prime Minister, you have the floor on Programme 2-2.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- We are conducting NFI this year. Can you hear me?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I cannot hear you. Alright, Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Thank you. Mr. Chairman. I seek some clarification on Programme 2-2(8), Sir, on REDD+. I think the whole of last year and the year before when REDD+ was introduced, we were told in this august House that there was a foreign company that has been tasked to carry out the working out of a formula so that, at least, landowners would be able to know how much they are going to get out of this REDD+ by conserving, to forego the harvest of their trees or logs. Has that been finalised, Honourable Prime Minister – the formula on how things were going to eventuate or flow down to the landowners?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Sorry, what programme is that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 2-2(8) – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+).

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Mr. Chairman, we are still working with the World Bank to finalise this. Mr. Chairman, can you hear me?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, we can hear you now.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Mr. Chairman, in regards to my last question on the NFI, the Inventory, I did not understand the Honourable Prime Minister's answer to my question on whether the NFI would continue seeing that \$200 million that has been allocated to it and ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- \$2 million, not \$200 million.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- ... leased vehicles have been returned and the villagers involved have been told to go back home. So my question was, will this continue and when? Thank you.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- The NFI, next year, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Next year.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. We will move on. Honourable Qereqeretabua, you have the floor.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have another question also on SEG 7 and this is in regards to the GIS Data Processing and Display Software (ArcGIS Subscription) of \$40,000. If you go to the Ministry of Forestry website and you see the planting dashboard, it says that apparently, there has been 2,591 trees planted. However, we have been told many times in this House that around seven million trees have been planted. Now, we all know that not all seven million trees will live, so can we get some clarity on what the real figures are? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Prime Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Seriously, Mr. Chairman, I do not know what she is talking about.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- I think it is important that the question is answered because it does have everything to do with the Budget because if we are putting aside \$40,000 for a subscription that is obviously not working, then who is checking on the implementation of the use of the \$40,000? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- If I could assist, this is actually to purchase the software to process the GIS remote sensing data and display for effective senior management decision-making, it is part of that process. It has got nothing to do with your dashboard that you are referring to, Honourable Qereqeretabua. This is a new software that will actually assist in the monitoring of that and the remote sensing data that is required.

In respect of the reason of what you had suggested, the anomalies, that is not part of the supply, this is to do with supply. There can be a question later on about the numbers, but this \$40,000 is actually about the software to help us do better tracking.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Just to answer that, there are seven million trees planted. If she wants to go and plant another one, it will be seven million, plus one.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We move on.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- A supplementary question, Mr. Chairman, based on SEG 7 on GIS data processing as fully explained by the Honourable Attorney-General, the volume of GIS that is currently with the Lands Department and that of the iTLTB, given the size of the land area that we have in the small country of ours, would it not be advisable to test out the abilities of those two GIS systems that are already in place? It targets the same thing, Mr. Chairman, Native Land and State Land.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- If I could, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, there is the VanuaGIS which obviously is with the Ministry of Lands, and then we have this ArcGIS. Obviously, specifically for forestry, it is a specific allocation because there has to be a proper accountability in terms of the trees, and the focus is very different. Of course, we need to be able to look at the carbon-base, the carbon sink that is there is within those trees. They have got a specific target software application to this, whereas the VanuaGIS, et cetera, is a more general information system. Yes, it can perhaps, later on, there is an integration between the two, but the fact is that this needs to specifically focus on that.

As highlighted by the Honourable Prime Minister, in the REDD+ that you asked the question, there are obviously various pilot projects to be run. The last one when we were doing that, was up in Namosi area, that we were looking at through the World Bank. This has got a specific target area in respect of the monitoring of the trees and the carbon sink that goes along with it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. We will move on to Programme 2-7. Honourable Rasova, you have the floor.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Mr. Chairman, it is all right, *vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Head 32 agreed to.

Head 33 - Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for any comments on Programme 3-5.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification on Programme 3-4(8) in terms of Development of State Land and Maintenance of Existing Subdivision, there is an increase of \$336,000 there. Can we just get a clarification from the Honourable Minister in terms of this involvement or this maintenance of existing subdivision? Can we get some clarification/ ideas on this issues and information on this State land development?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Programme 3-4(8), the Development of the State Land, is that the one?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Yes, and Maintenance of Existing Subdivision. There is an increase in allocation from \$600,000 to a close to \$1 million.

HON. J. USAMATE.- This money is for the development of unutilised State land. It includes the construction of infrastructure and the creation of subdivisions. So, in the next budget, that funds will complete Field 40, Vakamasisuasua in Labasa.

The Maintenance of Existing Subdivision is for the ones that we already have - improve the infrastructure, public utilities and also the amenities in the existing Subdivisions.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head No. 33 - Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources.

Question put.

Head 33 agreed to.

Head 34 – Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Head No. 34 is now open for comments. Programme 5-1, Honourable Gavoka, you have the floor.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes, Mr. Chairman. On SEG 6, can I ask the Honourable Minister to give an outline on this Grant to Tourism –of \$6.2 million, which I believe is Operational and in SEG 10 - Tourism Fiji Marketing Grant of \$20 million which is for marketing? Can he give us an outline on what is happening and what they are going to do with this kind of allocation? Tourism has been largely inactive for more than a year now. ?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I think he has heard me often enough right throughout the year but what is actually happening in tourism is actually not even a budget-related question. If he wants to increase it or decrease it, I would be happy to answer, Sir, but that is the provision made for tourism. Tourism allocation does not stop.

(Honourable Member interjects)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Gavoka, you have the floor.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- We need to know what is the staffing level, now that there is very little activities, have you reduced your staffing level? Where are you spending the marketing dollars? Is it just a figure that you will not utilise and take back into the central fund?

We see it here but you know that there is very little activity in tourism. What steps are you taking to conduct tourism marketing at a time like this? Are all your Offices overseas fully staffed, doing what? Did you have the full complement of staff in Fiji, and what are they doing? That is what we want an update on, Honourable Minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, again, this is not a budget-related question. Tourism Fiji has a response to that. They have got a budget, they will do what is necessary with the budget that has been given. The specific questions that Honourable Gavoka asked needs to be asked in the specific tone in a different forum, not this particular forum. Thank you, Sir.

(Honourable V.R. Gavoka interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Ask me if he wants to increase it or decrease it, Sir.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Is that a way of saying that I do not know, Mr. Chairman?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- No, it is absolutely not, Sir, it is a budget-related question. He needs to ask and be specific about what he is asking, at the end of the day, with respect to whether he wants to increase it or decrease it - a budget-related question. Questions about staffing levels, what we are going to do with the money, all of these things have a different forum, Sir. Thank you.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- It is not only a matter of increasing, decreasing or removing, it is also a matter of explanation. Explain what is this for? These are crisis time; what are doing, are you cutting back on the staffing level? Tell us! This is what we want to know. It should not be difficult, you should know about all these things, Honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I do know this is for Tourism Fiji's Operational Grant for this financial year. It is as simple as that. What part of that you do not understand, Honourable Gavoka, I do not know. But if you want to know how many staff we have in here, there and everywhere else, it is a different forum, it is not a budget question.

The provision is to cater for all the operational expenses for Tourism Fiji, including salaries and wages. Now, what else do you want know? It is as simple as that. That is local and international and yes, I do know, there is a forum for these things. Honourable Gavoka, stick to the budget.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- That is code for 'I do not know', Mr. Chairman, which is....

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- You cannot just put money in the Budget and not be able to explain what you are doing with the money. You just cannot come and do it here.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- If you ask ...

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Order!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Do not try and lecture to me, just tell me, I will provide you with the information later. If you do not know, just tell us.

(Honourable Members interject)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on. Programme 6-1. Honourable Tabuya?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Programme 6-1(10) on the Young Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) Programme, there has been a reduction, Honourable Minister, by \$20,000 in this allocation. As you know, this Programme has been touted a lot and needs to be available for our young entrepreneurs, especially at this time when they are pursuing entrepreneurial activities especially during this time of COVID, you see a lot of online businesses as well as delivery businesses from young people. Why has there been a reduction of this amount from your Scheme? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- One second, Mr. Chairman. Sorry, I apologise. What was the question?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- The Young Entrepreneurship Scheme in SEG 10 has been reduced by \$20,000 for this year. Can you explain whythat is?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- This has been an ongoing programme that we have actually had and along with this, there are other programmes that we have in place. It has been reduced because we had this ongoing for a while. There is a slight reduction purely because of the current climate that we are actually in.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, if I could also add that the Honourable Member should remember as announced in the Budget, there is a \$200 million facility now available interest free for two years for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) entrepreneurs, so they can access those funds through that too.

The YES is about innovative new businesses. It is not about, for example, as you are talking about food delivery which is not innovative since a lot of people are doing that. If there are people in that type of business, they can actually get a loan from the \$200 million facility at less than 3.99 percent interest rate.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on. Programme 8-1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 8-1(8) – Re-design and Construction of Retaining Wall at Government Wharf-Phase 1, can we be given an indication on which Government Wharf does this involve? It is a reduction in the allocation, Sir.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Sir. I think that is Walu Bay - the construction of a retaining wall at the Government Wharf, Sir. Basically, this fund is to cater for the construction of the retaining wall at GSS. There is a bit of work there that still needs to be done at it and it is located at Walu Bay.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. We will move on. Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 34.

Question put.

Head 34 agreed to.

Head 35 - Ministry of Sugar Industry

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The floor is now open for any comments. Head 35-1-1. Honourable Professor Prasad, you have the floor.

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a question to the Honourable Prime Minister in relation to Programme 1-1(10) - Sugar Stabilisation Fund of \$46.9 million, which includes the guaranteed minimum price of \$85 per tonne, which the Government had guaranteed before, and I am happy that, that is being continued.

The Honourable Prime Minister knows that the farmers have actually sent him a petition with respect to the delivery payment of \$32.61 which was announced, considered to be very low because the farmers on average cost of \$45 to \$47, would have to fork out between \$14 to \$16 to cover the cost. So, will the Honourable Prime Minister ensure that out of that \$46.9 million, 60 percent of that guaranteed \$85 price will be paid in delivery payment for this harvesting season to ensure that farmers are not out of pocket, which is what they have been asking in the petition to the Honourable Prime Minister for? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I cannot figure out his question. Does he want the stabilisation fund increased, does he want it decreased? What does he want?

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- No, it is not a question of increase or decrease, Honourable Prime Minister. The question is whether the delivery payment is going to be increased from \$32 to \$51, which will amount to 60 percent of the guaranteed minimum price of \$85, because the forecast price was also very low? That is what the farmers had written to you, Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- For your information, Honourable Professor Prasad, we will pay whatever is promised in the Budget. Thank you.

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- Honourable Prime Minister, the Budget promises \$85 minimum guaranteed price. I am talking about the delivery payment, which the farmers wrote to you about.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I have not received anything. We have promised \$85 in the Budget and that is what we will pay them.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- You wrote the letter on their behalf!

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- The delivery payment is \$13, Prime Minister, and the farmers Sir, 60 percent of the guaranteed price, which is the total price that your Government has guaranteed which farmers are happy about. But they are asking you to increase the delivery payment out of that \$85 to 60 percent.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- I think we need to understand that it is an operational issue, Honourable Professor Prasad, for FSC to consider, it is not Government. I think you should be in a better position to understand that.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- This is not forestry.

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- You do not know what you are talking about, Honourable Naiqamu.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Order!

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- You do not know, you do not plant any cane. I am a farmer, I know.

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, I would probably let the Honourable Attorney-General answer that, instead of the former Minister for Forests.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Professor Prasad, please, let us move away from the sarcasm. I am just adding to what the Honourable Prime Minister has said. He has answered the question but if you read the Budget Supplement, paragraph 1.76 quite clearly states how the money will be spent. And on top of that as you know, the delivery payment has actually been increased by FSC and it has already been done. You should know that. The farmers have stopped giving you information because they are quite happy with what was announced. Read paragraph 1.76 because it sets out how the money will be disbursed.

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- The increase in delivery payment has not been announced by FSC.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The delivery payment has already been announced by FSC, Honourable Professor Prasad. Please, check with them.

HON. P.K. BALA.- He knows very well.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- No, he does not.

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- I do not need your advice, Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations.

HON. P.K. BALA.- I am not saying that I am just giving you advice, I am saying that the Tribunal has already announced and the farmers are happy with the 2020 delivery payment.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Keep to sports.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Please, Honourable Rasova, you do not know what we are talking about and you do not know how to plant even cane, please.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Honourable Professor Prasad, do not play politics, please.

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- But you are the last guy to talk about this.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 35.

Question put.

Head 35 agreed to.

Head 37 – Ministry of Local Government

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the floor is open for Head 37-1-2. Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a question under SEG 10 for clarification. We have the provision of preparatory works for the Municipal Markets in Savusavu, Levuka, Dreketi, Nakasi and Lami. Can the Honourable Minister, please, inform the House when these construction works will begin, noting the urgent need of this service for the population residing around the areas from Lami to Nakasi?

Also under SEG-10 is the new Rakiraki Bus Station, again, when will this commence for the people of Ra, noting that this development is long overdue?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will answer the Rakiraki Bus Station question first. Yes, this was announced earlier in the 2019-2020 Budget but as you know what happened in 2019, the situation really changed with COVID-19. In some capital work projects, it requires a lot of preparation and preparation here involves things like Traffic Impact Assessment needs to be done, EIA needs to be done and the documentation and design. So, the preparatory work still continues and that is why that particular SEG, if you look at it, it is called preparatory work. So, we are not talking about construction at this stage, it is just preparing the project so that we reach the construction stage and then we will call for a tender and the project can happen on the ground.

And for all those four markets mentioned, again, these projects are on the preparatory stages, like it requires, as I have said earlier on, you need to do EIA, you need to do topographical survey, Scheme Plans and you need to do the whole host of work. So, design and documentation will continue and when we are ready with that. then we will start with the construction work.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Honourable Minister, is there a timeframe?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- At this stage, we cannot give you a timeframe, simply because you know what is happening in the country. People cannot move around freely. We cannot go on the ground and do all these works, so we cannot give you a timeframe. As the situation unfolds, then we can have a conversation but for now, we do not know for how long COVID-19 is going to go on and with all these restrictions, I cannot promise you a time, but paperwork is going on.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, we will move on.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-2(6), I seek some clarification from the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing and Community Development, especially with this Rural Local Authorities allocation of \$300,000 that is here, together with Waste Collection Subsidy - Municipal Councils of about \$3.7 million.

Sir, the point that I seek clarification on is out in Somosomo, Taveuni, we had an MOU with the Local Authority but now since they have reformed the Local Government and it has moved to Savusavu, there has been constant delays in the dumping of rubbish in Somosomo through that MOU. Will that be taken care of by that Rural Local Authorities - \$300,000 or this Waste Collection Subsidy - Municipal Councils? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, there are two different programmes. The first one is the Rural Local Authorities, which is purely town planning works. For example, when the applications are received, then the officers need to go but as you know from 2018 Rural Local Authorities were disbanded and all these programmes came under the Ministry of Local Government, particularly with municipalities. So, what they are involved in is going to the sites, if there is any development application they look at that. They also look after all the markets - that comes under Rural Local Authority.

Waste subsidy is the other set of funds given to the Municipal Councils to look after the extended boundaries. So, this is where Savusavu Town Council is responsible for Taveuni and they are responsible for the collection of the garbage. But, again, as you know and as you can see, the amount of money is very small when it comes to giving it out to the management of garbage in Taveuni. So, the services are worked out based on the funding but if you want more depth in that then, I can respond to it through a question.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Vosanibola, you have the floor.

HON. P.W. VOSANIBOLA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I think my concern has been asked by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Madam Minister, for the explanation. I just need a clarification on Lautoka Swimming Pool. I cannot find it in your programme. I just need an update on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For Lautoka Swimming Pool, the matter is before the court and until the matter is sorted out, we are not going to proceed as such.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. We will move on to Programme 2-1. Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, just a query on SEG 7 - Digitalisation E-Service Platform Project. This is the second year it has been allocated. Can the Honourable Minister update us on what is this being spent on and what is the progress of this project? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The digitisation programme is the e-service platform that we would like to create for Town and Country Planning. At the moment, what we see is that, most development proposals or projects that come to Town and Country Planning is all filed in a paper format, so it needs to be digitised so that we can free up the space. In fact, if you go to Town and Country Planning, you will see a room that is full of paper, so this particular funding is towards that. Also, to assist in the ease of doing business, that is where people can submit their application through e-format or you can call it through e-services platform.

Along with that, the idea is also to link up the Municipal Councils. As I have mentioned earlier on, that we would like to see that Municipal Councils also offer e-services and they would like to keep a record of every ratepayer's information. You as a ratepayer, once you get your number or say, a pin number or whatever, then you can go into that site and your documentations will be there and you can communicate with the municipal council. I know you have gone through the Budget and the amount that is given, it is not just like one time project, it is spread over several years. Thank you.

HON. T. WAQANIKA.- Mr. Chairman, SEG 10 - New Town Development (\$1,400,000), can the Honourable Minister, please, elaborate which new town development is this?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- SEG 10.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, the work is related to Korovou, Nabouwalu and Keiyasi. For Korovou, the money will be used, again, for EIA and detail design.

In this year's Budget, we had a public consultation. We have completed the topography survey, we had a workshop with the people of Korovou, we wanted to understand what they needed in their town, so that exercise is complete and the preparatory work will continue in Korovou.

With Nabouwalu, again, there are funds given to proceed with the Nabouwalu foreshore development and market development area, along with the preliminary works that started in Nabouwalu, and the same goes for Keiyasi town development, Mr. Chairman.

HON. T. WAQANIKA.- Mr. Chairman, just another question on the same SEG - Municipalities Master Plan, the amount allocated, if the Honourable Minister could clarify whether that is only for the Suva Municipality or which municipality is this, or is it just a master plan?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, as the name suggests, it is a new town development in these three areas - Nabouwalu, Korovou and Keiyasi. HON. T. WAQANIKA.- No, no. Mr. Chairman, just a clarification, Honourable Minister, I apologise. It is the same SEG - Municipalities Master Plan. I am now onto my second issue on the same SEG. I hope that was clear, Honourable Minister, I apologise if it was not earlier. I just need to know what is the Master Plan allocation and which municipality are we looking at because I understand there is a Town Planning Scheme.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, my short answer would be that it has to do with the greater Suva area, so all municipalities within the greater Suva area, Lautoka and Nadi. Those are the municipalities involved in this Master Plan.

03:34:17

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. T. WAQANIKA.- What is the timeframe?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Kepa, you have the floor.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Minister has answered the question that I want to ask. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Rasova, you have the floor.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Yes, through you, Mr. Chairman, I think the Honourable Minister has answered my question. But then, given that Vunisea is under the new Town Planning, when will it come to fruition?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, it is not a question of where you come from, therefore, we are going to look after that area. It is based on what we can do and we look after the whole of Fiji, not because you are from Kadavu, therefore, you are going to ask question related to your locality. We can only do so much and I have already listed the areas where we are going to work. But that does not mean that we will not look at Vunisea. As time will come, we will progress with that.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Mr. Chairman, before you go onto the next Head, can I just thank the Honourable Minister for her responses.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I have not finished with this Programme yet, because we have a motion to be moved for Head 37 to be increased by \$300,000 in Programme 2-1(10) with respect to New Town Development, and I give the floor to the Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, I move the motion:

To increase the allocation for Programme 2-1(10) - New Town Development by \$300,000.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- I beg to second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Aseri Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- I think the gist of the motion is for the Government to consider setting up a new town centre around the Vunidawa area or the Sawani area, since currently they are on lockdown and there is a need for Government to consider providing the necessary market logistical arrangements and market facilities. As we know, the people of Naitasiri supply the Suva market with all the vegetables and rootcrops, especially on weekends. They come down on Thursdays, Fridays and on Saturdays, so the need for the increase is to ask the Government to consider providing the necessary facilities to cater for those vendors who come down from the village. At least, provide toilet facilities, bathing facilities and places for them to come and rest when they come to sell at the Sawani border. They are currently facing difficulties.

I think the media have also highlighted that they are coming down everyday, so it forces them to reduce and sell their products at the very least that they can sell their products to. They bring a bundle of *dalo* to the Suva market and estimated price is \$25. But at the Sawani border, because of the absence of proper market facilities and this is something like on a daily basis when they come down and go back, they cannot take their unsold products back to the village. They have to dispose it and sell it at a cheap price, or they will just have to dispose it at provided localities.

I am also raising this motion to question and bring in the idea regarding the Agriculture Marketing Authority. Their continuous absence from the site is also raising a lot of questions, especially to the farmers. When they go up to address the farmers in the Naitasiri Province, they seem to be dictating the price, Mr. Chairman, which is very, very low price and this is very sad, considering the market price in the town centres and city centres. So, that is the gist of the motion, for a \$300,000 increase. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, the floor is open. Anyone else wishing to comment on this motion? Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Honourable Member went around the bush but I think his main interest was Sawani and not really Vunidawa. The issues he raised was for Sawani. It is a temporary measure and I am sure the vendors from Vunidawa would like to sell at Nausori when the borders open, but that does not mean that we are not going to look after Vunidawa. There is an Urban Policy Action Plan developed with the help of ADB, and if you look at the UPAP document, it talks about new growth areas. Mentioned are these new areas: Vunidawa, Nadarivatu and Wainikoro.

Now, to work and to decide exactly where we are going to have a new town centre, there is a lot of planning work involved and consultation is involved. So, this year, we intend to use \$5,000 just for the public consultation work in Vunidawa to really do the assessment to understand if we are going to put up a big market, a small market or whatever size, whether it will be utilised or not. So, we need to understand the special planning of that area, as well as the views of the people living in Vunidawa.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Honourable Minister for the confirmation of the work being done but, at least, consider establishing road stalls. You have to consider the plight of the vendors who usually come down on a daily basis to the Sawani border.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You still wish your motion to go through?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Yes, that is my right of reply, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will now vote on Head 37 to be increased by \$300,000 in Programme 2-1(10) with respect to New Town Development.

Question put.

Motion defeated.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 37 - Ministry of Local Government.

Question put.

Head 37 agreed to.

Head 40 – Ministry of Infrastructure and Meteorological Services

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, the floor is open for comments on Head 40-1-1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification on SEG 1, reduction in terms of the salary of established staff and the unestablished staff, given the importance of this Ministry. Can we get an indication from the Honourable Minister regarding the decrease, whether this will also mean the reduction of staff eventually throughout the year?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, the money that is budgeted is sufficient to accommodate all serving staff.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 2-2, Honourable Aseri Radrodoro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, on SEG 8 - Completion of Upgrade of Viwa Island Station, the allocation has been reduced to \$50,000. Can we get an indication from the Honourable Minister about the status of the upgrade of the Viwa Island Station?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, this is the money that Meteorological Services has looked at on what is needed to be done for that particular station. We know that it is quite far out from Viti Levu and to also look after the equipment that is there to keep them in the condition that they need to be maintained. *Vinaka*.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- I cannot hear that properly, Mr. Chairman, has the progress work been done?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Programme 3-1(8) – Maintenance, Upgrade and Refurbishment of Public Structures and Water & Sewer Lines (\$1,000,000). There is an increase of \$400,000, does this mean that the work was not carried out last year and the allocation is now being carried forward this year?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- No, Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is based on what Government hopes to do in the new financial year.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- It is not clear what he is explaining.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, this \$1 million that is allocated for this financial year is adequate to cater for what is planned for this year. What was given for the last financial year has been used for the activities of the current financial year.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We move on. Programme 3-1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification from the Honourable Minister; Programme 4-1(10) – House Wiring for Grid Extension Projects of \$4.3 million.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Which Programme are we talking about, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 4-1(10).

HON. J. USAMATE.- Is this for house wiring?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Yes.

HON. J. USAMATE.- House wiring is for projects that are happening right now that need to be continued. There is also money set aside for house wiring that will be handled by EFL. You will find that in Head 50 for additional projects that they will be doing, some of the house wiring are for ongoing projects and will be managed by the Department of Energy and other new ones will be handled by EFL under Head 50.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The other one - Completion of Rehabilitation of Diesel Schemes for the Relocated Communities and Reconstructed Homes - TC Winston of about \$1.1 million, can we get an update on this allocation, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Yes, for all the diesel generators, money has been set aside to make sure that we make the necessary repairs for those generators that still exist in some of our communities.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on. Parliament will now vote on Head 40 - Ministry of Infrastructure and Meteorological Services.

Question put.

Head 40 agreed to.

Head 41 - Water Authority of Fiji (WAF)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The floor is open for Head No. 41. Programme 1-1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to get some clarification from the Honourable Minister regarding this grant that is being given to Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) on Programme 1-1(6), and perhaps, also relating to SEG 10.

In terms of the allocation that has been given, I think we can all agree that the continuous disruptions in water supply that is happening all around Suva-Nausori and also in the Western Division, I just wanted to get a confirmation and clarification from the Honourable Minister regarding the reduction in the grant that is being given and the services that will be provided to ensure that everyone who has piped water reticulation connection will continue to have piped water supply, rather than the current experience of water shortages and water breakdowns, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, like all other agencies, they always want more money that is needed to be balanced. The current situation that we are in, WAF is aware of this and they have come up with their own policies, revised their systems and processes, structure culture and some of the other things that are being put in place in this Budget. We will try to address some of the reasons that led to those things that we had in the past. Sir, WAF is committed to making sure that it tries its best to provide water to all communities to the best of its ability. *Vinaka Vakalevu*, Mr. Chairman.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just another question to the Honourable Minister regarding the Department of Sewerage on issues surrounding workers. I think they carry out a very important role in terms of the work that they do and they have also been requesting PPE equipment and the way they carry out their duties. I just hope that the reduction, Mr. Chairman, will not deprive them from having safety clothes upon carrying out their activities at the Department of Sewerage facilities.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- That was not a question, it was a statement. Mr. Chairman, WAF regards its employees as its most important asset and it provides PPEs to make sure they do their work safely.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, we will move on.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just another one on Capital Grant, can we get a confirmation from the Honourable Minister regarding the finalisation of the repair works at the Na i Kava Sewerage Pipes, are we in the final stage or will that be part of the process of finalising the positioning of proper sewerage pipes?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, for that specific question, I do not have the reply. I will just ask the Honourable Member to raise the question at a future sitting of Parliament so I can get the reply to him.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Sir, given its huge increase in terms of capital grant of about \$17.6 million, we just wanted to see whether that is part of its plan, or just give us an indication,. then we can ask the question when we have a turn to ask questions.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, wastewater and the handling of sanitation is a key component of what WAF does and there is quite a lot of investment into that, especially for the treatment plant in Kinoya and the movement of waste across to Kinoya. So, I can confirm that, that is something very important to WAF.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 41.

Question put.

Head 41 agreed to.

Head 42- Ministry of Waterways and Environment

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for any comments on Head 42.

Since there is none, Parliament will now vote on Head 42.

Question put.

Head 42 agreed to.

Head 43 - Fiji Roads Authority

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for any comments on Head 43.

Since there are no comments, Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 43.

Question put.

Head 43 agreed to.

Head 49 - Peacekeeping Missions

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for any comments.

Since there are no comments, Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 49.

Question put.

Head 49 agreed to.

Head 50 - Miscellaneous Services

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for any comments on Head 50.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- SEG 10 - TELS Programme, Mr. Chairman. There is an allocation there of \$67.68 million for tuition and \$46 million for accommodation. Just a clarification from the Honourable Minister, with this allocation and after students complete one programme and there being no jobs right now for them to be able to apply for, how can they be considered for the next programme, such as diploma and degree, will that give them better job opportunities? Can the Honourable Minister clarify that allocation?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, could the Honourable Member give more clarification, I do not understand her question.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- The question, Mr. Chairman, is on the first allocation which is on tuition and because there are no job opportunities right now for students, how can they be considered for the next programme, say from Diploma to Degree, which will then give them better chances for jobs when it comes up next? How can they be considered under this allocation?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- At this point in time, the allocation is for someone to get into the TELS Programme and with the stated pre-requisite marks. This funding, of course, caters for those who are already in the existing TELS Programme, so that is what this is for.

You will see below that you have the National Toppers so that caters for new and also the existing ones. It caters for new ones in the sense that those who will qualify next year will, of course, come under the scheme, as per the requirements that will be rolled out through the Tertiary Services Loans Board (TSLB).

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Mr. Chairman, can I ask the next question which is on SEG 10 - 33 - Data Bundle for Year 13 and Fiji University Students. Can the Honourable Minister clarify that data bundle and which Fiji University students does this cater for? Is it for the three universities or which universities are that for? Can you just clarify that allocation?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In fact, I just wanted to point out that it is actually a typographical error and should read, 'Fijian University Students' and not 'Fiji University Students'. It does cater for all the three Universities. It should read as 'Fijian' because it is only for Fijians students and not foreign students studying at FNU, USP or maybe some at University of Fiji, I am not sure, but it is all for Fijians students.

Now, Mr. Chairman, if I could also take this opportunity to point out another typographical error and my apologies for that. This is on SEG 7 - 20, where it says, "Study on Medicinal and Industrial Hemp".

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Honourable Minister, on SEG 7, since we are going back there, there is...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, no, I just wanted to correct a typographical error.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- You are taking us back there, SEG 7 - 16 - Rehabilitation of QVS Phase II (Indonesia), how many phases are there? There is also SEG 10 - 10 - Ongoing Rehabilitation and Construction of Schools...

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No, Honourable Member, it was purely a correction, so we are not going back there. It is just to correct the mistake that was done.

Honourable Qereqeretabua, Honourable Radrodro was in the way, but you have the floor.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, on SEG 10 - 27 - Fiji Recovery Rebate Package - Fiji Airways (\$40 million). I am just wondering if Fiji Airways has any shame left with this allocation of \$40 million for a Fiji Recovery Rebate Package and further \$7.6 million in Item 28 for the purchase of shares related to Fiji Airways.

The Budget Supplement details the following, and I quote:

“(a) ...“Parliamentary approval dated 25th May, 2021 for the FJ\$455 million Government Guarantee to Fiji Airways was also amended to read as follows:

“Parliament approves that the Government of the Republic of Fiji guarantee Fiji Airways borrowings consisting of a mix of domestic borrowings up to FJ\$191.1 million and offshore borrowings up to US\$117.1 million with a total limit of;

- (b) approximately FJ\$455 million valid until the guaranteed facilities are discharged by the lender or fully settled”;
- (c) that Fiji Airways pay a one off fee of 15 percent on the FJ\$455 million Government Guarantee.”

Can the Honourable Minister, please, clarify all of these because it looks very tempting right now to table a motion to reduce this allocation? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Sir, if the Honourable Member just bothered to ask instead of jumping to conclusions, we had a similar Fiji Recovery Rebate Package in the last Budget but we did not have Fiji Airways next to it. The reason why Fiji Airways is next to it is because the rebate package will be actually channelled through the Fiji Airways Scheme, and I will tell you why.

This is essentially to help our hotel operators and Fiji Airways to make tourism a lot more attractive. As we have said time and time again, we will be competing with the rest of the world, countries like Thailand, for example. Phuket have already offered and they are saying that anyone vaccinated can go to Phuket. We understand Penang in Malaysia is also saying their entire island is currently vaccinated so they are accepting all fully vaccinated tourists. Now, they have reduced their prices significantly and if Bali gets on track again, that is another round of competition for us too. In order to be able to make our packages a lot more attractive, we have said that we will give a rebate package which will mean that we will essentially assist hotel operators and Fiji Airways, to have competitive pricing, so they need to be part of the Scheme with Fiji Airways.

We obviously do not want these hotels to do a package with Air New Zealand or some other airline because we want the Fijian company to start employing more flight attendants, so the package has to go through Fiji Airways. We have worked that out and as we have highlighted, the lump sum will be about \$400 per person, so that \$400 will be shared between Fiji Airways and the various

hotels who will be part of that package. Honourable Qereqeretabua, if you divide \$40,000,000 by \$400, you get 100,000. In other words 100,000 tourists can be assisted by this.

The last time, we had allocated \$60 million but obviously, it was not used for that particular purpose because of the fact that we had the second wave and, of course, the travel bubble, et cetera, did not eventuate so with the vaccination now, we are hoping that it will eventuate now and we hope, we understand it would, if we get 80 percent by October. We have a couple of months then to negotiate on a bilateral basis with Australia, New Zealand or any other country, and then we can offer these packages to tourists who would not only be very health conscious but also very price sensitive.

In respect of the guarantee, I cannot for the life of me understand why you are linking the guarantee to this particular amount, nor do I understand why you are linking that to the issue of new capital by Fiji Airways because they have offered that to all the shareholders. We obviously want to maintain our position as a 51 percent stakeholder, so that is why we are buying these shares. It has nothing to do with those two incidents that you did highlight.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you. I wish to thank the Honourable Minister for the full explanation on that item number 27. I just wish to add something to it. Yes, he has discussed about the need to make tourism more attractive and that Fiji Airways is now included in that this year under that rebate package.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, it was also last year too.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you for clarifying that, Honourable Minister. You know that the largest and best global marketing effort right now, even though tourism is down, this is to be done in terms of promoting Fijian sports tourism and trade branding has been done by our Fiji Sevens Team with the Tokyo Olympic Gold.

Now, imagine the global reach and viewership that the boys generated from winning that Olympic gold. I would suggest Honourable Minister and the Honourable Members of this House that from this allocation of \$40 million, that we allocate \$30,000 per player and team members to celebrate their gold from winning in Tokyo; that we look at this because it has been a tourism effort; they should be rewarded accordingly and it is already allocated here in SEG 10; and that this should be allocated to our boys to celebrate their win in Tokyo. I will suggest that to the Honourable Minister and to the Government to consider that, to celebrate our boys and their win. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will move on. Parliament will now vote on Head 50.

Question put.

Head 50 agreed to.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Heads 51 and 52 are standing appropriations, sometimes called 'below the line appropriations', not the Savusavu variety.

Head 51 lists all the pensions that are payable. These are a charge on the government finances. Head 52 are the charges on account of public debt. These numerous pages list all the information on

interest and loans by the State. Neither Head is voted upon because they must be paid and are, therefore, already catered for.

Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of the Estimates. We shall now move to consider the Schedules and Clauses of the 2021-2022 Appropriation Bill 2021, Bill No. 7 of 2021, as required under Standing Order 101. I advise Honourable Members that as we have not amended the Estimates, Standing Order 101 prevents any amendments being moved at this stage. Standing Order 101(3) also prevents any debate on these questions. We move on.

Schedule 1

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Schedule 1 agreed to.

Schedule 1 stands as part of the Bill.

Schedule 2

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Schedule 2 stands as part of the Bill.

Clause 1

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 1 stands as part of the Bill.

Clause 2

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 2 stands as part of the Bill.

Clause 3

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 3 stands as part of the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of the Committee of Supply. We have now concluded voting on Heads 1 to 50, as well as the Schedules and Clauses of the 2021-2022 Appropriation Bill 2021, Bill No. 7 of 2021. Therefore, I will now resume the Speaker's Chair.

The House resumed:

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the Committee of Supply has agreed to the 2021-2022 Appropriation Bill 2021 without amendment.

On that note, I now call upon the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to move the third reading of the Appropriation Bill. You have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That the 2021-2022 Appropriation Bill 2021 (Bill No. 7 of 2021), be read a third time and be passed.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

[A Bill for an Act to appropriate the sum of Three Billion, Two hundred and Sixty Six Million Six Hundred and Ninety-Nine Thousand Seven Hundred and Twenty Seven Dollars for the ordinary services of Government for the year ending 31st July, 2022, (Bill No.7 of 2021), enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. (Act No. of 2021)]

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament has now passed the 2021-2022 National Budget. As I have alluded to earlier, the weeklong budget process is essential and a vital part for Parliament to fulfil its Constitutional obligation.

On that note, I take this opportunity to thank all Honourable Members for your contributions during this integral process. I also congratulate the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications on the successful passing of the 2021-2022 National Budget. I thank all Honourable Members for your hard work and cooperation during this process.

Honourable Members, thank you for your contribution today and that brings us to the end of the sitting for today. Enjoy your evening and the games that are coming up and we wish the Team well. We adjourn until tomorrow morning at 9.30.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.24 p.m.