

TUESDAY, 5TH JULY, 2016

The Parliament resumed at 9.32 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport; and the Honourable Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 4th July, 2016, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Acknowledgement of Honourable Members and Visitors in the Gallery

I welcome all Honourable Members to another day of Budget debate today. I warmly welcome the teachers and students from Delainamasi Government School who are in the gallery this morning.

I also welcome those watching proceedings on television and the internet and listening to the radio. Thank you for taking interest in your Parliament.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE 2016-2017 APPROPRIATION BILL 2016

HON. SPEAKER.- We will continue from where we last left off from the batting list, and I will now call upon the Honourable. Salote Radrodro to take the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of Opposition, the Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members, I rise to take this opportunity to respond to the 2016-2017 Budget Address and I also take this opportunity to acknowledge and express a big *vinaka vakalevu* to all the hardworking civil servants for putting this Estimate together, and I would also like to acknowledge the children in the gallery, *ni sa yadra vinaka, ragone*.

(DELAINAMASI GOVT. SCHOOL.- Ni sa yadra saka.)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, my response will basically cover three areas: first a Budget overview, the Civil Service; and on Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation.

At the outset, Madam Speaker, and from a holistic perspective, let me say that this Budget drags Fiji further down the road of disaster and I do not support it.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, this Government, the most authoritarian, careless and inept government that Fiji has ever seen.

Madam Speaker, our people are screaming in pain over crime, poverty, high food prices, prices in the health and education sectors, problems with infrastructure, traffic congestion and the loss of business competitiveness. This Budget does nothing to directly ease the pain.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, this Government has become numb to the needs of the people of Fiji. They have become deaf to the cries of our people. They have become blind to the crisis facing our country. They have become mute to the abuse of the positions they hold in trust for the people. Therefore, Madam Speaker, the fact that the Honourable Minister has not presented any national development plan in this House speaks a thousand words, and indeed it is clear that this Government has lost its way.

Madam Speaker, from the outset, the Honourable Minister predicated his Budget on a false premise. He announced that this Budget will build on the foundations laid by his previous budgets but, Madam Speaker, may I refresh the Government on what they promised the people of Fiji in 2015.

The 2015 Budget theme was “Turning Promises into Deeds”. I have called it “Turning Promises into Debts” and may I ask, how many of these promises were actually achieved? For example, Madam Speaker, the Nairevurevu ni Cagi community, which is just there between Sakoca and Kalabu, still do not have access to electricity, and imagine when will the maritime and other isolated communities receive electricity. So what happened to the promise, “improved access to electricity and electricity subsidy”?

Madam Speaker, youth associated crime is so high and an effective alternative strategy to addressing these problems and also income-generating is sports. For example, the youths of Nawanawa are still asking, where is the *rara ni qito* or playground, as promised in the 2015 and 2016 Budgets? Where are the jobs? People are asking, where are the free medicine? For most time, patients are told they are out of stock and why are more women undergoing caesarean birth delivery? Why is there an increasingly high amputation with diabetic patients? Why are civil servants feeling insecure in their jobs, and asking why only doctors are getting a salary review in 2017? The poor and the marginalised are asking, why bring back the 9 per cent VAT in 2016 on basic food items and making lives more a struggle and miserable, especially after *TC Winston*? The school children, especially those in rural areas like those in Dakuilomaloma Village, who continue to walk six kilometres to school daily are asking, where is the free transport? Madam Speaker, these are some of the things that people care about but under the FijiFirst Government, this is not the case.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the 2016 Budget theme was, “The Future, a Strong Fiji, a Fair Fiji, a Healthy Fiji”, but the fact that the Honourable Minister repeated so many of the unfulfilled promises he made in the 2016 and 2015 Budgets tells us that there is, indeed, no foundation on which to build, and may I kindly remind him that the house built on sand will not stand ...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- ...and a clear indication on Government’s failed Budget is the unprecedented level of unemployment, crime and poverty that Fiji is faced with right now.

The Budget year has now changed to 1st August, 2016 to 31st July, 2017 but the justification for the change has failed to convince our people. For example, the fact that the 2016–2017 Budget does not have a theme, tells the people of Fiji that this Budget has no focus, no vision and no direction. Indeed, I must say that this Government has lost its way.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, the Budget Address amounted to nothing more than a waffling attempt at justifying ineptitude, plus warmed-over servings of the usual platter of promises, but as a framework for the way forward, it failed miserably to address any of the major issues facing Fiji today. Even when his Budget Address pretended to touch on critical issues, the Honourable Minister demonstrated a spectacular misunderstanding of the root causes of these matters, and consequently proposed a number of thoroughly inappropriate remedies.

Madam Speaker, five months after *TC Winston*, people are still living in tents and temporary shelters, children are still attending classes in tents and private homes like in Avea Villlage. The assistance given to these people who are mainly villagers and rural dwellers with no permanent source of income is just so small, that the process to rebuild their homes will be for the next five years or even more.

Madam Speaker, we know as women, mothers and grandmothers that our home is paramount and without proper houses and sanitation, these people will fall back into poverty. The Government’s limited action tells the story that they do not care about our people, they do not care whether these people will have a roof over their head or not.

Madam Speaker, what is more worrying is that, the Honourable Minister has decided to continue stubbornly along his misguided policy direction, based on a clear misunderstanding of macro and micro economic concepts and issues, convinces me that this Government is lost, blindly feeling its way along, oblivious at the nation’s problems but determined to do all in its power to convince itself and others that the nation is not in crisis. Madam Speaker, the Government has lost its way.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government have a passion for catchy sounding phrases which bear no resemblance to the policies programmed. Todate, they have not addressed our basic needs, empowered our people, ensured anyone’s survival except the Government Ministers, and it is obvious that we will not be moving onwards after this vacuous Budget.

Having already wasted over billions of dollars in the past years and failing to accomplish what they promised, the Honourable Minister now comes to Parliament with another smoke and mirrors trick, another

attempt to hoodwink the people of Fiji with an erratic quick-fix here, a plaster there and a ludicrous prognoses for relatively simple ailments, once again attending to the symptoms and not the root causes of the ailments or problems. For example, Madam Speaker, one of the nagging issue now is whether the promise by the Honourable Minister and I quote; “To help shift people quickly to recovery, to get people out of temporary shelters and back to their livelihoods”, would be achieved?

Madam Speaker, people are asking, can the Government afford to increase the housing assistance of \$7,000 for new homes and \$3,000 and \$1,000 for home repairs from this 2016–2017 Budget?

Madam Speaker, I would like to answer, ‘yes’. The Government can but the Government lacks the will to exercise prudent financial management through virements and transfers from budgeted allocations to boost “Help for Homes” Initiative. For example, Madam Speaker, Government can easily transfer \$60 million from Head 50 and let me give you some examples on which they could transfer:

- 1) SEG 10; Item 15 – Marketing Support for Fiji Airways - \$18 million;
- 2) SEG 6; Item 5 – Public Service Broadcast (Radio) - \$6.6 million; and
- 3) SEG 6; Item 6 – Public Service Broadcast (TV) - \$4.6 million.

Madam Speaker, these are commercial entities and they should be self-funding. Why is Government propping them up?

Madam Speaker, if I may continue:

- 4) SEG 8; Item 1 – Construction of Executive Residence - \$5 million; and
- 5) SEG 8; Item 2- Construction of PM’s Office Complex - \$5 million.

Madam Speaker, that is \$10 million. Why does the Honourable Prime Minister need a new office? Is this a priority?

Madam Speaker, if I may continue:

- 6) SEG 9; Item 3 – Vehicle Leasing Scheme - \$17 million; and
- 7) SEG 9; Item 10 – Fiji International Golf Tournament - \$9 million.

Madam Speaker, this type of budget reflects that this Government is anti-people and anti-poor.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Hear, hear!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- That is why an unprecedented number of people in Fiji are being left behind and forever trapped in poverty by this FijiFirst Government.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I must say that the people of Fiji today are much wiser than Government thinks.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Our people have seen the failures of this Government’s Budgets. They have suffered impoverishment and trauma at the hands of this Government.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- The people have noted that the critical issues facing them are not the same as the critical areas of concern of this Government.

Madam Speaker, on the Civil Service; in 2015, the Honourable Minister promised that the Civil Service Reform would be undertaken by the World Bank and with only \$500,000 to achieve the following:

- i) Upskilling and training;
- ii) improve systems and processes;
- iii) latest technology;
- iv) reward and incentive-based performance review system; and
- v) a Civil Service that is very competitive with the private sector by offering not only attractive jobs but also long term job security.

Madam Speaker, I am sure nothing much has been achieved

Madam Speaker, in 2016, the Honourable Minister again promised basically the same as those promised in 2015, but now with a \$1 million budget. A new promise was the recruitment of Permanent Secretaries and possibly from overseas, who are to be the senior non-political executives in Government. He also blamed the World Bank and the civil servants for the slow progress of the Civil Service Reform.

Madam Speaker, up until to date, I am still waiting to receive the Civil Service Reform Plan ...

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- ...as requested in my Budget response in 2015 and 2016. Madam Speaker, I had also followed this up in writing to the Honourable Minister for Economy. The Honourable Minister had admitted that there had been a slow progress in the Civil Service Reform, but this is not surprising because there is no plan and there is no money.

The Permanent Secretary overseas recruitment is an insult to our own local qualified people, which the previous and present Government had invested heavily in their education and training. It also undermines the Government's own "Buy Fiji and Use Fiji made" strategy. It is simply an expensive exercise and waste of taxpayers' hard earned money. Also the pay gap between Permanent Secretaries and the Deputy Secretaries and all those down the line is so huge that is it simply unfair and pay discrimination.

Madam Speaker, in the 2016-2017 Budget Address, the Civil Service Reform has almost disappeared, but the Budget Supplement included the following:

- i) Government's vision calls for a skilled, professional and accountable Civil Service;
- ii) modern high performing Civil Service that recruits, retains quality staff who provides quality service to the public;

- iii) the World Bank to provide models of best practice;
- iv) a comparative salary assessment survey between Civil Service and the private sector for a civil service review; and
- v) Also included a salary review for the doctors.

Madam Speaker, I only wish we could hear what the bulk of the civil servants mutter under their breath, because they operate in a culture of fear of victimisation. They are demoralised and frustrated because of nepotism, cronyism and unfair treatment. How on earth the Honourable Minister thinks that the civil servants will provide quality service when they are being mistreated?

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister can allocate all the money, get World Bank or IMF or whoever for best models and best practices and all the latest technology to the Civil Service, but if he does not treat the civil servants right with competitive salary, proper grievance procedure, the Government's vision of the Fiji Civil Service will always remain nothing but a dream. Right right now, Madam Speaker; bulk of the civil servants have been left behind.

However, Madam Speaker, to restore morale and justice in the Civil Service, this Government must consider the following:

- i) Remain local with the appointment of Permanent Secretaries;
- ii) there must be unprecedented clear separation of Powers;
- iii) there must be zero political interference;
- iv) restore pay and salary increments;
- v) conduct Job Evaluation Review;
- vi) restore general pay increases, taking into account the salaries paid to Ministers and Permanent Secretaries; and
- vii) implement the Recommendations of the 2003 Job Evaluation.

Otherwise, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister and the Government's vision for a skilled, professional and accountable Civil Service will always remain a dream.

Madam Speaker, moving on now to the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; the Honourable Minister had said, and I quote; "advancing the welfare of women and children is one of the Government's highest priorities." He further added that the Honourable Prime Minister had spoken out forcefully and repeatedly on the need to end violence against women and children.

The Minister for Women also has her own set of fancy words to describe the deafening silence from that quarter, by saying it remains "committed to the process" of developing consensus towards the establishment and implementation of a National Gender Policy.

Madam Speaker, let us briefly look at the budget provisions. The Ministry has a total budget of \$56 million, out of which only about 10 percent is for the Department of Women, 20 percent for

Children and 70 percent goes to the Social Welfare. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, only \$200,000 is being allocated to women NGOs for community-based programmes such as Elimination of Violence against Women and Children. This clearly demonstrates that this Government is just a talking government, making false promises by playing around with emotive words to appease the people of Fiji.

Madam Speaker, their words do not translate into action. For example, there is no additional provision for the implementation of the National Gender Policy and on Page 40 of the Budget Address Supplement, the same \$1 million that has always been allocated for Women's Plan of Action (WPA) is now saying that that is for the implementation of the National Gender Policy. This clearly demonstrates that the Honourable Prime Minister and his colleagues continue to discriminate against women and children in Fiji. There has been little process and no progress. Madam Speaker, this Government has never made any serious business about dealing with the issues of women, it is all talk and no action. If speeches, Madam Speaker, could implement the National Gender Policy or to Stop Violence against Women and Children, we would be the most empowered and the most safest in the world.

Therefore, I call on the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister for Economy to put their personal preferences aside and put the money where their mouth is, and allocate the needed resources to fast-track the introduction and implementation of the gender policy that would be in keeping with the wishes, aspirations and hopes of the women of Fiji.

Madam Speaker, the women of Fiji are tired of waiting. If this Government really cares about women and children, then transfer the \$10.6 million from the Fiji Roads allocation of \$510.6 million to the Department of Women.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Prime Minister for affirming that the roads to Vanua Balavu will be done.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, on the protection of children, this Budget like those before speaks volumes of this Government's lack of care and concern for our nation's children. Like in any other sector, they know what is required, they just lack the will.

Fiji has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and this means an acceptance of the responsibility to introduce relevant measures so as to ensure the general welfare and protection of our children.

Laws have been passed and these laws remain on the statute books but have not been effectively implemented, and our children continue to be raped, murdered, sexually and otherwise abused. This entire Government should hang its head in shame over the callous disregard for our nation's young.

Madam Speaker, let me move on to Poverty Alleviation. Two of the most concerning aspects of this Government are failed governance and a policy approach that is not people centred. The most painful manifestations of this Government's failure to provide for the basic human needs of our citizens is its record in regards to its social policy implementation and its treatment of the poor. Despite the numerous social programmes with fancy acronyms, the Social Policy Framework is characterized by

a network of unstructured, unco-ordinated and duplicative programmes, with associated waste, inefficiency, and mismanagement.

Madam Speaker, before I take my seat, I would like to respond to a question that was posed by the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs (even though he is not in the House this morning) yesterday in regards to the SODELPA Members of Parliament in regards to the Convention on the selection of party leadership.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- I would like to reiterate, Madam Speaker, what Honourable Bultavu had said yesterday on the invitation for public debate between the Honourable Prime Minister and the SODELPA Leader, Major-General Rabuka.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- I note, Madam Speaker, that Mr. Rabuka had appeared for an interview on *On the Record* programme at Fiji Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) with Edwin Nand.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, he had admitted all about the *coups* and had come clear on his responsibilities and the implications of the *coup* in 1987.

On the same line, Madam Speaker, may I request the Honourable Prime Minister, Sir, if you could also avail yourself for the same interview with Edwin Nand at the FBC TV, to be asked the same questions. On that note, Madam Speaker, may I reiterate my stand that I do not support the Budget.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts to take the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Members of Parliament; I rise to deliver my speech in support of the 2016-17 Budget, as tabled by our Minister for Economy.

Madam Speaker, the hallmark of our Government is to ensure that we are responsive to the needs of every citizen of this country. This was the basis of our Manifesto, and this has been the basis of subsequent budgets delivered in this very House.

Madam Speaker, no other national budget of this country has been subjected to the level of consultation that this Budget has been through. In a technical sense, this Budget is the people's budget because it reflects their wishes. Madam Speaker, the Bainimarama-led FijiFirst Government is the people's Government.

Madam Speaker, my brief today is to highlight how this Budget will contribute towards our Government's vision to building a smarter Fiji, a future Fiji, where knowledge is the foundation for discussion, discourse and resource allocation.

Madam Speaker, our country has suffered a lot since Independence when the select few, those in power or privileged positions, the elites and the oligarchs have used the vulnerable, the poor and the less educated for their personal gains to prolong exploitation or their stay in positions of power.

Madam Speaker, our country now, under our Honourable Prime Minister, is on a steady path to democratisation of every aspect of public sector governance. This path to democratisation is to ensure that everyone, in particular the ordinary Fijians, also participate in the growth and development process. Unless they participate, they will not be able to benefit in the growth and development process that takes place in the country.

Madam Speaker, I am tasked to ensure that everyone participates in the education process. Section 31 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji guarantees every Fijian the right to education, including access to proper school infrastructure and learning facilities necessary to foster quality education at all levels, and the 2016-2017 education sector budget facilitates this.

Madam Speaker, in our journey towards democratisation of education, to ensure everyone have access to education, we undertook numerous reforms in education. The Honourable Leader of NFP yesterday noted his reservation on the benefits from these reforms.

Madam Speaker, benefits from reforms to correct deep rooted problems, benefits of which cannot be delivered overnight. However, let me now bring to your attention and the attention of this august House some of the basic benefits of reforms that we have seen over a very short period of time.

Firstly, Madam Speaker, you will notice that everyone in the society have now accepted that education is important. Never before has this level of discourse took place on education in this country. There is a mass movement with regard to participation in education. This is an intermediate output of our reforms.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, you will notice a different level of enthusiasm amongst our children towards education. They are now asking questions, giving in their 100 percent and wants to edge out so that they can give a shot at the very best opportunities out there in the market.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, our reforms have created a new wave of parental engagement and acceptance of parental engagement in children's education and ownership.

Fourthly, Madam Speaker, the removal of scaling and return of exams have started to raise students' performance as evident from the pass rates and the mean marks in the key subjects in last year's exam.

Madam Speaker, let me just give you a brief snapshot of the Year 13 Results last year, compared to 2014 when we had the scaling, as follows:

Year	Mathematics	Biology	Chemistry	Physics
2014	15 percent	14 percent	10 percent	28 percent
2015	42 percent	40 percent	34 percent	57 percent

Madam Speaker, we are not satisfied with this. Our benchmark and target is 100 percent pass rate and we will get there over time.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government's stance and resilience amidst the massive disaster in the form of *Cyclone Winston* which devastated our beloved nation earlier this year, deserves special commendation. *Cyclone Winston* brought about great damage and chaos to all sectors of the economy and sadly, our Education Sector also felt the full brunt of its tenacity. This Budget, Madam Speaker, reflects our Government's commitment to rehabilitate our Education Sector and not only return the facilities and infrastructure to normalcy but also to attain higher benchmarks in terms of quality of service in all facets of education.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts is provided with a total direct allocation of \$448.5 million in the 2016-2017 Budget, which is an increase by 3 percent from the 2016 allocation. Of the total allocation, \$424.9 million is allocated for Operating Expenditure and \$20.1 million is for Capital Expenditure.

Madam Speaker, for far too long, people have undervalued our Government's actual investment in the education of our children. Let me today reveal how much our Government is investing in a child from Early Childhood Education (ECE) to Year 13 and never before was this data revealed. Madam Speaker, the statistics is as follows:

Madam Speaker, to educate an ECE child, last year Government invested \$541 for one child for one year. This year, our Government has raised the investment to \$890.

From Year 1 to Year 8, Madam Speaker, last year Government invested for one child in one year, \$14247 to educate in a primary school. This year, our Government is investing for one child for one year, \$2,447, relative to the \$1,757 last year. To educate a child in primary school, it cost the Government \$14,200 last year and \$18,156 this year. That is the total amount of money our Government is investing to educate a child in a primary school, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, to educate a child in the High School for five years, last year our Government invested \$15,000 and this year we are investing \$16,000 per child in the high school system.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the direct allocation of \$445.5 million, we also have separate allocations for Higher Education Institutions, TELS, Toppers and reconstruction of schools which takes the total allocation for Education to an amount of \$732.78 million. Yesterday, some Honourable Members on the other side had alluded to FRA or Infrastructure as having the largest budget. That is incorrect, unfortunately they are not able to read the Budget well. The total allocation for Education Sector is \$732.7 million. Madam Speaker, 20 percent of the overall budget is going to education which demonstrates this Government's commitment to education.

Madam Speaker, the extent of calamity and chaos of *Cyclone Winston* spread across educational institutions, the children and their families at large is truly saddening. Some schools have been completely wiped out, while many have suffered extensive damage to certain aspects of infrastructure, such as Labs, Workshops, Dormitory, Ablution Block, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, the Bainimarama-led Government's priority is to ensure the safety, wellbeing and the welfare of the child in all aspects of their lives.

Madam Speaker, this Government has allocated \$132 million to ensure that we are able to re-construct all the schools that have been damaged by *Cyclone Winston*. In addition, another \$10 million have been allocated to take up re-construction of schools which is summarised as follows:

- 1) 43 Primary schools boarding facilities;
- 2) 95 Early Childhood Education Centres;
- 3) 64 Non Government primary schools;
- 4) 7 boarding facilities in secondary and high schools; and
- 5) 9 Non-Government secondary schools.

This accounts for an additional \$10 million, Madam Speaker, to deal with schools and boarding facilities, as well as ECE Centres which suffered minor damages, in addition to the \$132 million allocated to deal with the schools which have suffered massive damages.

Madam Speaker, at this juncture, I want to clear the air on an incorrect information being circulated by Honourable Members of Opposition about the number of students studying in the tents.

Madam Speaker, you may recall that Honourable Salote Radrodro, during the last session, informed this House that more than 85,000 students are studying under tents, this is far from the truth, let alone 85,000. Not even 8,500 students are studying in tents, there are only 4,484 students studying in tents. Where did they get that 85,000 figure from? This is the kind of damage that the Honourable Members from the other side are doing in terms of circulating incorrect data. This is equivalent to 2.1 per cent of the total 211,385 students in our primary and high school system. It is 2.1 per cent, where did they get that 85,000 figure from? Only 4,484 students, Madam, Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

Calm down, calm down! More is coming.

(Chorus of interjections)

Let me now give you the breakdown, as follows:

District	Total No. of Students	No. of Students Studying in Tents
Cakaudrove	13,667	345
Nadroga - Navosa	13,584	12
Ra	7,779	1,108
Eastern	10,389	906
Ba-Tavua	15,708	1,192
Nausori	34,322	514
Macuata - Bua	21,418	72
Suva	55,263	0
Lautoka-Yasawa	39,255	335
TOTAL	211,385	4,484

The figure of 85,000 is not correct, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.-Madam Speaker, this is the level of inaccurate information that is churned out in Parliament and they want to run the Government.

Madam Speaker, this Budget allocates further \$1million for maintenance purposes of buildings and school quarters to schools outside the cyclone affected zones. This allocation will ensure that minor repair works in remote and maritime schools are carried out effectively without any hindrance to the norms of the daily school programme.

Madam Speaker, yesterday, Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo accused the Government and the Honourable Prime Minister for doing nothing for Kadavu. This is far from truth. Let me now give you the data.

Madam Speaker, from 2015 to 2016 until now, this is what we did to the schools in Kadavu, following the approval by the Honourable Prime Minister when he visited and participated in the Primary Schools Conference that was held in Kadavu. Madam Speaker, this is the truth, the reality. The data is as follows:

SCHOOL	PROJECT	AMOUNT PAID (\$)
Galoa Village School	Solar Panels (Energy)	10,000
Naceva District School	New Hostel and Dining Hall	70,000
Ravitaki District School	New Hostel Building	80,000
Tavuki District School	Boarding Facilities	45,000
Nakorosule District School	Upgrading of Kindergarten Facility	5,000
Natumua Kindergarten	ECE Block maintenance	5,000
Rt.Nacagilevu Memorial School	Kindergarten Classroom	5,000
Rt.Nacagilevu Memorial School	ECE Student Materials	1,000
Rt.Nacagilevu Memorial School	School Generator	18,500
Richmond Methodist High School	Construction of new Computer Lab	15,000
Richmond Methodist High School	75 Hp outboard engine	11,000
Tavuki District School	Construction of ECE Teachers Quarters	5,000
Tavuki District School	Repair and maintenance of classroom floor (which was rotting away)	29,000
Tavuki District School	Completion of Walkway	5,000
Nasegai District School	Library Construction	20,000
Nasegai District School	School Boat	5,000
Levuka Primary School	School Maintenance	40,000
Nabukelevu District School	Ablution Block Maintenance	10,000
Nabukelevu District School	Infrastructural Development	20,000
Nabukelevu I Ra District Sch	New Ablution block	25,000
Natumua Kindergarten	Teachers Quarters	20,000
Vunisea Secondary School	Improvement in the Library and Girls Dormitory	100,000
Kadavu Provincial School	School Maintenance & Ablution Block	15,000
	TOTAL	559,500

So, Madam Speaker, \$559,500 was given to Kadavu schools last year and at the beginning of this year.

The Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo says in this House that nothing was done by the Honourable Prime Minister and his Government. I will make one more round to Kadavu, and that will be over Madam Speaker.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, as I have alluded to earlier on, our Government has a firm grip on the Education Sector. Our Government understands that for our country to reach the epitome of success, we must focus all our energy and resources into education. The FijiFirst Government has made their intentions clear that equality to accessibility of education is paramount. It is for these children and their future, Madam Speaker.

Under the Free Education Scheme, Madam Speaker, we intend to see all Fijians benefitting, irrespective of their race, religion and geographical location. Yesterday, you would have noticed that in the contributions from the Honourable Members on other side, they were talking about the ethnicity. For us, variables of ethnicity, religion, class, are out of the window, Madam Speaker, with the 2013 Constitution.

The Honourable Niko Nawaikula was talking about constituency, and he gave a list of his own villages where we need to build roads, Madam Speaker. So, to this Government, Madam Speaker, the whole country is the Constitution.

(Laughter)

If you need a bridge, we will fix the bridge in the whole country. If we need to provide water, we will provide water to all the people in this country, not only to your constituency.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, I want to alert the Honourable Nawaikula that his children also needs assistance, Madam Speaker, just because they do not belong to your village.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, under this Budget, the Government has allocated \$200 million towards free tuition grant, so that these children and children like them throughout Fiji can go to ECE, primary school, high school and university, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, this year, we will ensure that in all the terms, children will get tuition free to ECE. An additional allocation of \$0.7 million have been allocated to ensure that in all the three terms, students do not have to pay tuition fee.

Madam Speaker, ECE education plays a pivotal role in preparing a child for primary and secondary education. ECE teachers' job is more than just teaching, it is also about parenting, mentoring, comforting and nursing, and we want our teachers to treat these children like their own and

being the first contact point for students as they step into the educational process, they will define their future.

In this regard, our Government has raised their salary grant to \$6.8 million and the breakdown per annum is as follows:

- ECE teachers with Degree will get \$6,987, an increase from \$2,700;
- ECE teachers with Diploma will get \$4,300 rather than \$1,800 that they used to get before; and
- ECE teachers with Basic Training will get \$3,225 rather than \$1,200 that they were getting before.

Madam Speaker, our Toppers Scheme is continuing. Our Government has allocated 30 more slots, so that we can pick up the additional demand from students who are doing well to get full scholarship. Our TELS Scheme has been extended to ensure that children are able to also get full funding for their studies in technical college campuses, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the transport assistance budget has been increased to ensure that children studying at technical colleges are also able to get busfare subsidy. Apart from busfare subsidy, we are also giving subsidies and vouchers to students who are travelling through RSL.

At the beginning of this year, we gave boats and engines to ensure that children are able to move from one island to the other or from one end of the island to the other, and 21 schools were able to get it. We have another \$285,000 allocated to cater for boat and engine for schools in the Eastern Division, Macuata and Bua, Madam Speaker; as follows:

- Uluibau Primary School;
- Susui Village School;
- Cakova Village School;
- Namuka-i-Lau District School; and
- Kocoma Village School

These are schools in the Eastern Division.

- Drekeniwai District School (Bua/Macuata);
- Druadrua Island School (Bua/Macuata);
- Bau District School;
- Sawau District School; and
- Navesi Primary School.

(Chorus of interjections)

Let me conclude, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Order! I am giving you another extra minute because of the time lost during the interjections.

(Chorus of interjections)

One minute only.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, they are taking my time.

Madam Speaker, I wish to end here by reading out the concluding remarks by the UN Special Rapporteur on Rights to Education in Fiji.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- We have heard that before.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Fiji is going through the historic period...

They are taking my time, Madam Speaker, so I will continue.

“Fiji is going through a historic period of transition in the education system. As a result of important reforms ushered in by the Government, along with a national initiative to overcome ‘ethnic divide’ and build a better Fiji for all, education system is undergoing transformation. Despite political instability, Fiji celebrated a democratic election in 2014 which seeks to develop a common national identity and promises to usher in an era of stability and progress.

The right to education is established by the new Constitution, adopted in September 2013 and important reforms have been ushered in by the Government. The Special Rapporteur is encouraged by the commitment the Government of Fiji has shown towards implementing the right to education. The unprecedented increase in financial resources devoted by the Government to education must be commended, as it demonstrates a deep commitment to the future of this country.”

(Hon. Member interjects)

That was it, Madam Speaker, and I thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I beg your indulgence. I am a bit concerned about the question of the statistics that have been presented in the House. We need to uphold the integrity of the House and be as factual as possible, particularly the statistics that have been presented, especially when there is stark differences between the reality and what is being presented. Listeners must be able to use statistics in whatever form they can.

I now call upon the Honourable Netani Rika to have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to support the National Budget of 2016-2017 and also make my contribution to the Budget debate that was delivered by the Honourable Minister for Economy on the eve of Wednesday 22nd June, 2016.

Madam Speaker, the Budget announcement for 2016-2017 has created history in the making. There were two rational changes made by the Government that made the difference from the past Budget announcements. First, is the shift of the old fiscal year from 1st January to 31st to December, to the new fiscal year from 1st August to 31st July for the following year; and second, it is the first time in the history of Parliament in the Republic of Fiji to have a budget announcement at night.

Madam Speaker, the rationale behind these changes is valid and well justified. There were comments made by various head of institutions, and let me highlight them to you.

The Acting CEO of Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority commented, and I quote; “With this new change the corporate taxes which is aligned to the sixth month and twelve months of the financial year, so with this the money coming into Government coffers is better aligned.”

The President of the Fiji Institute of Accountants commented, and I quote: “Normally, if a company or any other entity changes their financial year, usually it is always for positive economic reasons.”

The Senior Manager for Pricewaterhouse Coopers commented, and I quote; “The move to change the Government fiscal year is good and pragmatic. It takes the pressure off during traditional busy festive season.”

Madam Speaker, the change was not done in isolation. Discussions on this change started in December 2016 and also through the meeting held with the World Bank representatives and the Bill was tabled and voted for by this august House.

Madam Speaker, we understand the fact that new changes will always be hard to be accepted by some because they are so used to a routine that is well embedded in their system. Change is inevitable and we should view change as a positive thing that will always bring about new ideas in order to improve on the old ways of doing things, particularly to be in tune with the changing times.

Madam Speaker, I would like to share some of my experiences this morning. Whilst in Lebanon, I have learnt a common gesture from the locals when they want to communicate to people to say, “Take it easy, there is no need of overreacting, it is just a road hump where you slow down, drive over and continue on your way.” There is no big deal.” The gesture is this, they will collect their fingers together in this manner and they will say “*swai-swai*”.

(Laughter)

The Honourable Salote Radrodro, Ma’am, let me say to you, “take it easy, there is no need to overreact, it is only a road hump where you slow down, drive over and continue on your way.” There is no big deal. *Swai, swai* and be patient.

Madam Speaker, let me contribute to the Climate Change issue and what the Budget has to say about it. Over time, the Pacific Islands have been exposed to the change in *El Nino* weather patterns which have resulted in drought and a longer and more intense cyclone season. A classic example was when we experienced *Tropical Cyclone Winston* that passed over Fiji on the 20th and 21st February, 2016, it was a Category 5 Cyclone with wind bursts of up to 320 kilometres an hour. The severity of *Tropical Cyclone Winston* is a warning of what Pacific and, of course, Fiji can expect as a result of climate change. This is a clear indication that we, in the Pacific, should wake up to these realities.

Madam Speaker, as was highlighted by the Honourable Minister for Economy in his Budget Address that Fiji’s proposal has been accepted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) for Fiji to be the host country for this facility and in this respect, Government has allocated Small Island Development Funding of \$215,000 in the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The World Bank provides a grant of \$2.2 million for the Programme and the Government has contributed a sum of \$245,000.

Madam Speaker, I have to conclude my short contribution by taking this opportunity to acknowledge the commitment of the Honourable Minister for Economy and his team for a job well done. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural Maritime Development and National Disaster to take the floor.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Members of Parliament; I rise to add my contribution to those Honourable Members who have spoken before me, particularly on this side of the House, in commending the Honourable Minister for Economy and his team for a comprehensive and forward looking 2016-2017 National Budget.

Madam Speaker, I support the intentions of the Budget, both in its capacity to deal with current realities and its endeavour to improve Fiji's overall, social and economic landscape for higher growth. The Budget supports a broad-based growth that is conducive to the plight of the disadvantaged in our communities.

Madam Speaker, my Assistant Minister had spoken much on Rural Development but as the Minister responsible for Disaster Management, I wish to touch on the recovery and rehabilitation efforts after *Cyclone Winston*.

Madam Speaker, our rehabilitation efforts are geared towards the "Build Back Better" approach, one that is more proactive and reactive. I wish to comment on a few statements made in this honourable House, particularly on housing and those who are still living in tents. Madam Speaker, it is a fact that recovery takes time and it need resources. I have already answered questions in this honourable House and have also stated that recovery takes time and it will be available once we have the resources. Madam Speaker, to deviate from that, then we are deliberately lying to the people, so let us face facts. There is a recovery plan and people will be given assistance when funds are available.

Madam Speaker, I must also emphasise the fact that particularly with homes, we are all responsible for our homes but it is the Government that is providing some assistance. Whoever receives any assistance will appreciate the fact that Government is willing to assist. There is public infrastructure to deal with first and we have a huge list, so let us face facts. If we deviate from those, then we are intentionally lying to the people of Fiji. There is a recovery plan and we will assist when time comes and when the resources are available.

Madam Speaker, on the issues raised yesterday by the Honourable Nawaikula on Climate Change, the Karoko Seawall was constructed by an NGO and not Government.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- So?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, because the intention of the Honourable Member is to discredit Government for the quality of the work done...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- ... I must state before this honourable House that that project was undertaken by an NGO through USAid funding. However, I have asked my engineers to go and have a look and assist, if need be, subject to their visitation this morning.

For the Kanakana project, Madam Speaker, it is done in phases. The first phase was the river alignment because of flash floods that occur in the village. The second phase will be the walls, so that will again depend on the scoping and my team is working on that.

Madam Speaker, very briefly, the Ministry is genuinely thankful to its development partners, particularly the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, UNDP Australia, New Zealand and the European Union, for their dedication and support towards the Government's recovery plan for agriculture. In addition to this, the Ministry has made a submission to the European Union to fund rehabilitation works.

Madam Speaker, some comments have been raised in this honourable House about the allocation to agriculture, for an increase. Madam Speaker, you would note that in SEG 50 when we will come to the discussions, EDF 11 by the European Union is providing \$23 million for the agriculture sector. We have already been advised to make submissions and the Non-Sugar Agriculture has already applied for a \$15 million allocation, given the guidance we were given that we will probably get three quarters of the \$23 million. That is additional to the \$2.1 million that we have already expended on agriculture rehabilitation alone.

Madam Speaker, as you go around, people are now harvesting the vegetables, *kumala* and they are recovering their food security. You can see that it has also impacted on the pricing in the local markets for areas that have started harvesting so vegetable and rootcrop prices in some areas have come down and it is mostly likely that the other areas will follow as well. On the same note, Madam Speaker, the arrival of aid funds has given the Ministry some flexibility in the utilisation of its allocated budget in carrying out rehabilitation works for agriculture development.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry has contributed an estimated \$2.4 million in its recovery efforts so far which I had stated that includes the mobilisation of staff, distribution of planting materials, livestock, farm inputs and light machineries in order to facilitate the rebuilding and recovery process in the affected areas. This has translated in the restoration of food for our people as well as for organised markets of certain products that are now reflected in falling prices from the heights they reached immediately in early March. This has been possible from the Ministry's strategy to appropriate production from non-affected areas to substitute for losses anticipated from affected localities.

Madam Speaker, we are confident that with the allocation provided for different programmes, we will be able to pick up the pace and strengthen our recovery efforts.

The Crop Extension Division, Madam Speaker, has received a 41 percent increment in its capital programmes. I think this was raised by the Honourable Kiliraki yesterday about the allocation to the Extension Division. Of course, we value the work undertaken by the Extension Division and therefore, there has been a 41 percent increment in its capital programmes, as well as 37 percent increment for the Animal Health and Production Division, Madam Speaker. On aggregate, this amounts to \$4.5 million.

Other increases, Madam Speaker, are noted in the Ministry's Crop Research, Livestock Research, Land Drainage, Flood Protection and Land Resources Development.

Madam Speaker, please allow me to outline details of the individual programmes within the Ministry's budget and the relevant activities to be carried over the new financial year.

Crop development, Madam Speaker, forms a major part of the Ministry's focus and for this, a total of \$15.4 million has been allocated under this Budget.

The Honourable Gavoka yesterday talked about improving the organised systems, definitely we are doing that, Madam Speaker. We were interrupted by *Cyclone Winston*, but we have started now with the private sector and of course, we have started in Navosa because of the cultivation of drugs in that area as well and with Michael Joe of Joes Farm and ADRA which is from the Seventh Day Adventist. So it is a partnership between Government, non-government organisations and of course, the private sector. They are in the process now of building nurseries, Madam Speaker, so that they can raise the seedlings and distribute to the farmers that are in the group and they will collect. The Ministry of Agriculture will provide the technical expertise and that has started last week, Madam Speaker, and we are going to organise the rest of Fiji geographically with farming clusters, market oriented and looking at the whole value chain.

I am talking value chain, Madam Speaker, where it starts from the farm level, then we look at the logistics in between, we look at storage sheds, we look at cold storages and the most important thing in this is the market itself because the theory about small holder farmers, Madam Speaker, for Fiji particularly (this is something that we have found lately from our statistics), when you look at the high end of the pyramid, only a few percentage of our farmers are commercial farmers, the rest are within the two next level of classifications. One, are farmers who are transitioning into market-oriented activities and then the majority of farmers in Fiji who are traditional subsistence farmers but they can be a vast army if organised well. That is the strength for us, it was seen as a weakness previously, but we are organising them into these groups with their markets and we are looking at the whole value chain, looking at all the levels of investment, whether it be the public sector, private sector or the 'on farm' level investment and hopefully, 2016-2017, Madam Speaker, we will start the revolution in agriculture for Fiji, particularly transitioning from traditional subsistence farmers into market-oriented and they can later on graduate into commercial farmers.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry has recently conducted consultations with the total agro processes to determine demand for locally produced raw materials that the Ministry will target in its 2016 Crop Development Programme. One example, Madam Speaker, AGRANA is in Sigatoka. AGRANA processes pineapples, bananas, quavas, passion fruits because the problem with farmers in Fiji, particularly rural farmers when they grew up in rural areas, they only know one market. For those in Serua and Namosi, they only know about Navua Market. For us in Tailevu, we only know about Korovou, Nausori and Suva Markets. They are not aware of the processors, that there are exporters, there is the hotel industry, the retailers, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, it is going to be exciting, the way we are looking at things, particularly working with the private sector. To that end, Madam Speaker, farmers are encouraged also to make use of the incentives provided by Government in the form of agro input subsidies, livestock feed subsidies, farm mechanisation and land preparation programmes.

Madam Speaker, I will not go into the details but the Honourable Tikoca raised this last year. We have again increased the allocation on land clearing from \$800,000 to \$2 million because small holder farmers have two problems. They use, it is not highly mechanised and it is not highly capitalised, Madam Speaker. So for us, to assist them, we need to absorb most of these costs and that is what Government is doing through the flat land drainage, flat land development, farm mechanisation allocation and through the land clearing allocation. That will bring a lot of relief to our farmers, Madam Speaker.

A total of \$6.9 million has been allocated for livestock programme with its focus on Brucellosis and Tuberculosis eradication. This is unfortunate, Madam Speaker, as much as we want to grow but we

are held back because of diseases. We are doing our best through the BTEC allocation to eradicate brucellosis and likewise, tuberculosis, and bring in efficiency, particularly to our dairy industry and of course, to the rest of the livestock sector. It is worthy to note, Madam Speaker, that the fight against brucellosis and tuberculosis will be an ongoing battle for the Ministry, given the nature of the transmission of the diseases.

Madam Speaker, for our support services, crop research has been allocated \$7.2 million during the new financial year with the main focus on development of seed and planting materials, construction of agronomy building, construction of the Tissue Culture Laboratory and Agriculture Research Services on root crops, tree crops and horticulture. This again was raised by the shadow minister, the Honourable Kiliraki yesterday, Madam Speaker, we are aggressive on research, Madam Speaker. Of course, we are mindful of climate change, we are mindful of diseases, and of course, the need for good, quality planting materials as well. That is one of the reasons why we have a special allocation for the tissue culture laboratory and particularly again for *yaqona*, it has a problem with dieback disease and we want to mass multiply *yaqona* planting material, likewise for *dalo* as well. That is why the need for the tissue culture laboratory.

Madam Speaker, I am also thankful that the private sector has also taken up this initiative and hopefully, before the end of the year, we will commission the first private tissue culture laboratory in Fiji that will be in Wainibuku area. For those who want to farm in Waibau, they can get their planting materials from that area, Madam Speaker.

The development of high quality seeds is also a focus, Madam Speaker, and planting material is crucial to the sector and given its guarantee for high productivity and yield and quality of final products for the domestic and exports. Of course, I have mentioned about the tissue culture laboratory for that purposes, Madam Speaker.

Land and Water Resource is a major component of our work, Madam Speaker, and \$13.6 million has been allocated. We do river dredging and drainage maintenance as well. Madam Speaker, that includes the design and construction of river bank boulders to prevent coastal erosion as well. One of the major projects for the new financial year that was raised by the Honourable Gavoka is the de-silting of the Sigatoka River and the tender has already got out and that will be funded. This is one of the major projects under this \$13.6 million allocation.

Madam Speaker, additional funding is to improve irrigation of rain fed areas in the Northern and Central Divisions. In the areas of watershed management, the objective is to optimize the use of surplus water for social and economic growth through increased agriculture production, provide water for domestic and irrigation purposes in drought prone regions during dry seasons and the increase water yield while maintaining water quality.

Madam Speaker, the 2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda talks about modernisation and industrialisation and part of this modernisation plan is drainage and irrigation. The Honourable Leader of the NFP would agree with me in the notable changes that have taken place in Muanidevo and the Dreketi area with the irrigation scheme and we will expect an increase in rice production from the area when drainage and irrigation issues have been sorted, Madam Speaker. This is critical for us, particularly during dry spells and we are going through a lot of these dry spells. There has been a consistency and reliability in supply. There have to be volumes and quality and this is why in the modernisation plan, we need technology, including irrigation, so that we can meet the expectations of the market.

Madam Speaker, making informed decisions on the types of agricultural developments in the different geographical regions of Fiji is impossible without available and appropriate statistics. Allow me to elaborate on activities carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture in continuously improving the quality and reliability of agricultural data on which sound decisions are made.

To date, the three provinces of Naitasiri, Serua and Namosi have had their Baseline Survey Review completed, that is the Review, Madam Speaker. We have taken the data of all the farming activities in Fiji and we are still encouraging farmers to go and register. I know that some farmers have just registered lately, Madam Speaker, because for us, if we need to have effective plans, then we must know our numbers, we must know the facts, Madam Speaker. This is an area that we struggled with in the last few years. There was no reliable data.

Madam Speaker, we are working with FAO and, of course, SPC and the National Bureau of Statistics. Madam Speaker, I have presented the first report, the In-Depth Country Report to the Commission in Bangkok during the 72nd Commission Meeting last month, and hopefully at the end of the exercise, agriculture statistics becomes official. This means, Madam Speaker, that as of today, all statistics will be released by National Bureau of Statistics. However, if we complete this exercise, universities and whoever needs data released from the Ministry of Agriculture will become official, and I think this is a major achievement for us.

Also on that, Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure of opening the National Stakeholders meeting on developing Fiji's first e-agriculture strategy. We are amongst a few countries in the world that have gone now into e-agriculture strategy. Weather information will be given to the farmers, whether through mobile or through internet, even moisture levels, marketing information. Madam Speaker, we live in a globalised world. Technology is a driver for change and we want our farmers to be included in this because it is consistent with Government's plans, not to leave anyone behind, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture, as you are well-aware, has embarked on the road to modernise and industrialise the agriculture sector as outlined in the Fiji 2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda. This has been the move to more mechanised crop planting, harvesting methods and increased efforts in the Ministry, working closely with the private sector. This should lead to more technological innovation in agro-processing and the whole value chain.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude by congratulating the Honourable Minister for Economy and his team for a well-thought-out and forward looking Budget, which in my view, augurs well for our future economic development.

Madam Speaker, I join the other Honourable Members of the House who have commended the 2016-2017 Appropriation Bill 2017 which was presented by the Minister for Economy by offering my own commendations.

HON. B. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of Opposition, Honourable Ministers and fellow Members of Parliament, fellow Fijians, *ni bula vinaka*.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government believes in its 2016-2017 Budget and to achieve its Budget objective, the Government will implement robust regulatory frameworks that foster social inclusion and sustainable economic growth. The process of improving the lives of the vulnerable and

marginalised groups is the strategic priority of the FijiFirst Government. It fosters inclusiveness, having a development focus and strengthening the social economic sectors.

Madam Speaker, Government is committed to deliver the expected outcome by embracing a wide range of socio-economic policy reforms. The pinnacle of service delivery to all Fijians remains a cornerstone of what the Government intends to do. In this regards, Government has focussed programmes to advance entrepreneurship amongst youth, women and challenged individuals to effectively contribute to job-creation and economic growth. Envisaged support measures are also ushered through these budget initiatives.

Madam Speaker, the Fijian people have notably expressed their appreciation on a fair and inclusive Budget. Therefore, I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for Economy and his team for their hard work in producing this Budget. It is an inclusive Budget indeed, and reflects the Government's commitment and service to all Fijians.

Before I continue to deliberate further on my contribution towards the Budget debate, I would like to quote from Willie Nelson, I quote, "once you replace negative thoughts with positive ones, you'll start having positive results."

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. B. SINGH.- Therefore, the Bainimarama-led Government believes in socio-economic progression through sound and fair public policy.

Madam Speaker, like my colleagues on this side and part of the other side of this House, I rise to support the 2016-2017 Budget before this Parliament.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government is gearing towards sustainable economic development which was well-alluded by the Honourable Minister for Economy in his budget speech. In this regard, Government has allocated \$7.9 million in the 2016-2017 Budget for micro and small business grants and the Northern Development Programme. This is an increase of \$5.3 million.

Madam Speaker, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the engine of growth for any developing economy and ours is no exception. Therefore, the FijiFirst Government is providing a level playing field with prudent fiscal and economic policies which will stimulate growth. Our Government has faith in the Fijian people to produce, deliver, innovate and strike a balance to improve the situation.

Madam Speaker, the fact articulates that grassroot entrepreneurship drives economic growth, poverty reduction and employment all over the world. Thus, our Government will continue to do all it can to foster the development of MSMEs.

Madam Speaker, the Government's socio economic reform incentives would strengthen the support for MSMEs by taking a robust, comprehensive and strategic approach to developing the sector. This will be driven from the highest level by the National MSME Council chaired by the Hon. Prime Minister, and through the establishment of a central co-ordinating agency to ensure effective implementation of MSME programmes across all sectors.

Madam Speaker, while Government makes policies in trade and investment areas, it is entrepreneurs who trade and invest. Therefore, the FijiFirst Government has embarked on formulating strategies to eliminate supply-side bottlenecks in Fiji's current trade and investment regime.

Madam Speaker, MSMEs play a key role in transition and development. These firms typically account for more than 90 per cent of all firms outside the agricultural sector, constitute a major source of employment and generate significant government export earnings. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the increase in capital gains, harnessing of native raw materials, branding Fijian-made, curtailing rural-urban migration and efficient utilisation of natural resources, are the priorities for FijiFirst Government.

Madam Speaker, allow me to conclude with a quote by Henry Ford, "Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, and working together is success."

With those words, Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to endorse the Budget.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Prem Singh to take the floor.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, I join you, in acknowledging the presence of students in the gallery and some of them may be in the future, will be sitting in this House after paying off their TELS loans

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, let me congratulate my Nadi soccer team for winning the Fiji FACT Tournament.

(Acclamation)

Madam Speaker, on 24th September last year in my response to His Excellency the President's Address which was basically a blueprint for Government programmes for the ensuing year, what I said then is pertinent to what we are debating in Parliament, and I quote, Madam Speaker:

"True nationhood, common and equal citizenry can only be achieved if we collectively start doing some of the following:

"Economic growth to generate employment; meritocracy in the civil service and appointments being made at least in proportionate to the population of our ethnic groups; as a start having a quota for recruitment of personnel from other ethnic groups in the military, again on meritocracy to give it a semblance of multi-racialism; having bipartisan committees to collectively look at serious challenges facing sectors like the sugar industry, health and medical services."

My point here is that, it is all very well to finger-wag on what should be acceptable parliamentary conduct and what is not, but reciprocity, humanity and national interest should be our guiding values if we are to succeed at bipartisanship, and not arrogance and condescension. We, on this side of Parliament, continue to offer our hands for bipartisanship. It is not up to the other side to reciprocate sincerity and respect in national interest.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the 2016-2017 Budget falls far short of the above principles and values. This Budget is like a smokescreen, trying to camouflage the reality. The reality is that there was no need whatsoever for a new budget. Budgetary provisions for *Tropical Cyclone Winston* rehabilitation could have been made without this process.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that even without around \$208 million allocation for *TC Winston* recovery, our true financial position is not what is being portrayed in this Budget. The revenue estimates and actual revenue illustrate this point and Madam Speaker, I look to the fact that you said that we have to quote proper statistics. The statistics that I am quoting is from the Budget provided by the Government.

In 2014, revenue estimates was \$2.7 billion, but the actual revenue was \$2.37 billion, a shortfall of more than \$350 million. The 2015 Budget had estimated revenue at \$3.122 billion. The actual revenue was \$2.552 billion, a shortfall of \$570 million. For 2016-2017 revenue which is estimated to be \$3.175 billion as per the Estimates, but the Supplementary documents forecast this to be \$2.868 billion; two different forecasts, so which one is right?

This is why we are saying this Budget is full of smokescreens with the reality being our debt level will increase to 50.4 percent of our nominal GDP or close to \$5 billion. The Honourable Prime Minister said yesterday that his Government was not going to burden the people of Fiji with more taxes to pay for *TC Winston* rehabilitation. However, are we not bequeathing our people and future generation with rising debts? Why could not the Government be more prudent with the Budget process and diverted funds from allocations that do nothing towards nation building or contribute to our social and economic advancement?

A lot of examples of wastage have been given during this debate. However, I am particularly interested in the budgetary allocation towards the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) because FRA's importance was dramatised in Parliament yesterday by the Honourable Minister for Works and Infrastructure.

From the 2013 Budget to this Budget, a total of \$2.726 billion has been allocated to FRA. In 2013 the FRA was allocated \$422 million. In 2014, the FRA budget was revised upwards to \$489 million. In 2015, \$653 million was allocated. In 2016, \$635 million was given to FRA and now almost \$528 million has been allocated to FRA. What is the productivity or output? I expected the Honourable Minister to inform Parliament how much of \$2.726 billion had been used for capital construction, that is, roads, bridges and jetties, and of course how much of it has been used for management and technical expertise with consultancy works.

Because \$2.726 billion over a period of four years is a lot of money and despite this massive funding, the Government has failed to construct two bridges in Suva that have been closed for the last four years, and despite the colossal funding, FRA failed to regularly check the state of the Tamavua-i-wai Bridge in the last four years. A bridge that is the only link to out Viti Levu from the Capital via Queen's Road. The FRA admitted that the bridge was last inspected four years ago. This is the height of irresponsibility. In comparison to this fiasco, it took an average of four years each to build the Ba and Sigatoka bridges after they were destroyed during *Cyclone Kina* in 1993 and the new Rewa Bridge 10 years ago and they are major bridges, not slides and swings.

Where is the justification for allocating the largest chunk of our budget towards FRA? What is the return on such massive injection of capital? Has it attracted investment and created more jobs?

Has it resulted in a productive agricultural sector and increased our exports? While Government keeps giving the largest chunk of our budget to FRA, debt continues to rise.

This budget has allocated \$448 million to service our debt, of this, the interest payment alone is almost a massive \$285 million; \$52.5 million for overseas loans and almost \$232.5 million for domestic loans. Essentially, a sum of \$448 million for debt servicing is \$240 million more than funds allocated to *TC Winston* rehabilitation. If this is the FijiFirst Government's version of prudent financial management, then God help Fiji. And speaking of prudent financial management, Madam Speaker, when people are reeling from the aftermath of *Cyclone Winston*, Government saw it fit to change just after 18 months two new Prados, Kias and other vehicles. So, where is the priority?

Madam Speaker, despite what the Government says, the budget of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces continues to generate controversy and rightly so. The total RFMF budget is \$178 million, including peacekeeping. Again, this is only \$30 million less than the allocation of \$208 million for *TC Winston* rehabilitation.

A cyclone caused devastation that has caused \$1.42 billion of damages and losses. We are allocating money to help them make a transition and understand civilian control as stated by the Honourable Minister for Defence on 3rd September, 2015 during an interview with the *Fiji Times*.

Madam Speaker, unlike other civil servants and even members of the Fiji Police Force, whose individual salaries are documented by the Public Service Commission, the salaries of our military personnel are not made public, so where is the transparency which is a prerequisite in a civilian society?

Talking of salaries, we need a well-paid and well-resourced Public Service. The average salary of our nurses is around \$18,000 and this does not take into account their work experience. I am told senior nurses earn the same as nurses entering the profession. Similarly, our teacher's starting salary is around \$12,500. Teachers who have spent more than 25 years in the profession earn less than \$25,000.

In the last 10 years, the salaries of our civil servants have not been fairly adjusted. In comparison, Madam Speaker, the Prime Ministerial base salary in 2006 was \$106,000. Since October 2014, it was \$328,750. The base salary has increased by a massive 210 percent through a Decree promulgated a few days before the start of parliamentary democracy in October 2014.

Surely, Madam Speaker, our teachers, nurses and ordinary civil servants do not want such a massive rate of salary increase but something commensurate with their experience and cost of living accrued in the last 10 years.

As a cane grower, the sugar industry is very close to my heart. For more than 100 years, the sugar industry has been the backbone of our economy. For more than 100 years, including the indentured period, the sugar industry has weathered many storms and defined the national landscape. It has survived cyclones, floods, droughts, two World Wars, industrial and political strikes and political upheavals. But, finally an industry which has directly or indirectly supported a quarter of Fiji's population across the races throughout history is now bleeding to death.

Madam Speaker, industry stakeholders have ran out of answers on how to revive it. The industry's best hope of recovery 10 years ago was derailed by the events of 2006. The Military Government deliberately sacrificed the injection of a \$350 million grant to the industry by the European Union. Had this materialized, Madam Speaker, Fiji from 2011 onwards would have been

producing a minimum of 4 million tonnes of cane and 400,000 tonnes of sugar, using more efficient methods than we are using now.

Madam Speaker, sugar is a “lifeblood” industry. It is far too important to be allowed to die. However, this Government, both as a military regime and now as the FijiFirst administration, instead of providing theoretical and practical solutions, it has been adopting a fire-fighting approach, which in reality is just like most fires witnessed in the country in the last two years, has destroyed the properties it was supposed to protect.

In 2006, when the industry structure was intact and we had input of politicians in the industry, there were 18,636 active growers who produced 3.226 million tonnes of cane. The four mills produced a total of 310,140 tonnes of sugar at a TCTS of 10.4.

In 2015, the FijiFirst Government has been in charge of the industry for nine years, the number of active growers has fallen to 12,872. They produced 1.84 million tonnes of cane. The four mills produced 221,934 tonnes of sugar at TCTS ratio of 8.3.

So, it is clear where the fault lies, Madam Speaker, not with the politicians, but squarely with this Government which has politicised the industry like never before. People who cannot tell the root of a cane plant from its top are tasked with making decisions to the detriment of the growers, Madam Speaker, and the industry as a whole.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P. SINGH.- Much has been made of the \$11 million Cane Development Programme and the fertilizer subsidy of \$9.7 million, which was a loan in the previous two budgets and there is nothing in this Budget to say it is a grant, Madam Speaker, although it is said it is a subsidy in the Estimates.

Madam Speaker, that \$11 million that this Budget provides for farm assistance and cane development, this is in respect of uncultivated land which means the new farmers will be assisted. I question the motive of whoever whose policy is this. This is a long and short fallow question. The long fallow land will not be productive even if you inject so much money into them for nearly three years. The best way out would be the short fallow, where you replant the ratoons. These are people who have the know-how, the infrastructure and the capital to do it. Just an injection of \$2,000 hectare will have made it happen. I think they must revisit this and this will be discussed in detail in the Committee of Supply, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the closure of the Penang Mill will cause untold misery to the *vanua* and the people of Ra. The Government has allocated \$2.5 million to cart cane from Penang to Rarawai Mill.

Madam Speaker, the cost of repairing the mill will be around \$3 million and the time it will take is about 16 weeks. This was relayed to me by former engineers of the FSC. One must recall that following the devastation caused by *Cyclone Ami* and flooding in January 2003, the Labasa Mill was repaired in time for the start of the crushing in that season.

The growers are in limbo because there is no clear indication from the Government on whether the mill will be repaired at all. There is confusion following the Honourable Prime Minister’s statement to ISO in Turkey that the co-generation and syrup mill projects have been put on hold. This statement came soon after the FSC Executive Chairman was repeatedly telling growers that a new mill will be ready for operations next year.

Madam Speaker, in the meantime FSC continues to cannibalize the Penang Mill by stripping it off its parts as if the Mill is derelict and will be closed forever.

Madam Speaker, we need clear direction, the people out there need clear directions of the intention of the Government, whether the Penang Mill will be repaired or closed down forever.

Madam Speaker, you do not make progress by cannibalising the Mills.

Madam Speaker, the massive crop rehabilitation programme, following the prolonged drought of 1998 has been conveniently forgotten by many, including the Government. The then SVT Government, following negotiations with the Opposition's National Federation Party, granted almost \$43 million in rehabilitation package that increased the cane crop to 4 million tonnes in 1999. That was real, genuine and direct assistance. But the FijiFirst Government has other ideas.

Madam Speaker, it is clear that Government thinks the Reform of the Sugar Industry Bill and the Sugar Cane Growers Fund (Amended) Bill will rescue the industry. This is also stated in the Budget, which under-pins the long-term viability of the industry on these Bills. However, this is hallucination on the part of the Government, forget about sugar industry if the cane growers are subjugated.

Madam Speaker, these two Bills are before the Standing Committee on Economics Affairs and the reports would reflect the views of the people, the lorry operators, cane cutters, mill workers and of course the general members of the public.

Madam Speaker, on the Master Award, all I have to say is that the Master Award is a judicial document. It is an Award. It is a total injustice that a politician can revoke the Master Award. This is unlawful.

Madam Speaker, the rent subsidies of our agriculture leases of 4 percent by CBUL must continue to benefit the landowners for further stability and equity amongst the industry and the agricultural sector.

Madam Speaker, on 'Help for Home' initiative, recently on tour of the Western Division, we were informed that whilst there is law to punish people who make false declarations, there is nothing to address the suppliers of hardware materials. The 10 hardware companies that have been selected to provide the service, and in some instances, the whole initiative by the Honourable Prime Minister was for the people to access the cheapest goods around to build their homes. What they do is they grab a person, swipe his card, if he has been allocated \$7,000 and they have no materials to supply, what they do is, they keep it on hold. Right to Ba, Tavua, Rakiraki,, there are numerous complaints and I urge the Honourable Prime Minister to look into this through his District Officers and Commissioners.

HON. MEMBER.- Already been dealt with.

HON. P .SINGH.- They are still doing it.

(Chorus of interjection)

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, it is four weeks now and the people have not been supplied with goods. Their cards have been swiped and they are waiting in vain. So, this is one thing that we must take seriously, it is the taxpayers' money that we are assisting the home owners with and we must

be accountable and the people who are taking advantage must be brought to justice. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Members we will now suspend the sitting for morning tea and we will resume at 11.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.07 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.35 a.m.

(MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will continue from where we left off this morning, so I now call upon the Honourable Ashneel Sudhakar.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, *Tropical Cyclone Winston* hit Fiji on 20th February, 2016. As I travelled around the disaster struck areas, what I saw there was absolute devastation and destruction. There were many houses with no roofs, there were houses with only walls standing, and then there were houses that were blown off from their very foundations. There was no food, there were no clothes, there were no homes and there was no hope. All there was, was tears in the eyes of our people. These people needed help there and then.

We, Fijians are fortunate that we have the FijiFirst Government...

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- ...which did not drag its feet but sprung into action straightaway.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- No Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is legally obliged to build individual homes.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Yes, yes!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- In America, when there are tornadoes and homes are destroyed, people rebuild them themselves.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- In Australia, when there are forest fires and homes are destroyed, people rebuild their homes themselves.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.-However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our FijiFirst Government is a Government of compassion, it is a Government of love and hope.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- It is not all about dollars and cents for the FijiFirst Government, it is about humanity, the people and the Fijians and to demonstrate that, the FijiFirst Government forked out some \$83 million to help the Fijians, whose homes were destroyed, through the 'Help for Homes'

Initiative. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 24,000 people were assisted through this scheme. Affected Fijians received between \$1,500 to \$7,000 to help them restart and rebuild their homes.

In the 2016-2017 Budget, the FijiFirst Government has allocated a further \$20 million for the continuation of the Programme which includes funding for over 450 applications for refunds received in this financial year. About 4,000 more Fijians will be assisted through this Programme.

This is not a handout, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is a handout!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- But as the Honourable Attorney-General says, it is a leg up for our people. The Opposition might call it a political gimmick but ask the people who now have a roof above their heads and are safe from the rain and sun, they will call this the 'human touch.'

While the Opposition talks about giving 10 percent of their salaries, our Honourable Prime Minister demonstrated that human touch by being on foot in the disaster struck areas and wiped the tears of our people.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- On the 'Help for Homes' Initiative alone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 2016-2017 Budget deserves support and praise.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- *Vinaka.*

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- My vote will be in favour of the Budget on this fact alone, and I encourage all Honourable Members of this House, including those in the Opposition, to vote 'yes' for this inclusive Budget for this is not just about dollars and cents, this is about our people, this is about humanity and this is about the Fijians.

People who have the houses now and people who never had an opportunity to start off, had been helped by this Government. The FijiFirst Government holds the hands of its people and helps them through difficult times. I request you to be with us and see the plight of our fellow Fijians. I will say this again, it is not about dollars and cents only, the Budget Estimates talks about dollars and cents, but it is about being a good human being. It is about caring for your fellow Fijians.

With those words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I pledge my support for this Budget and I encourage Honourable Opposition Members to please support the Budget as well.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I proceed, one thing that is quite clear, that they held the hands of these people and are taking them down to the deep lake.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Without any reservations whatsoever, this Budget is an empty one.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the 2016-2017 Budget Address and in doing so, I want to assure the people of Fiji that we, on this side, will continue to drive and promote truth, reconciliation, accountability and transparency.

Fiji has recently adopted the title, 'Minister of Economy'. That is an appointment used in Arabic countries, including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and the Islamic State of Afghanistan. In the Fiji context, anything that is economy in Government, public and private enterprises come under the Minister of Economy. This is unprecedented for Fiji and this self-proclaimed appointment will make the Minister of Economy the most powerful man in Fiji.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- He totally disregarded the democratic concerns of the people of Fiji and, of course, this side of the House. A promotion of no separation of powers under the false pretence of the Democratic Fiji, and this was clearly demonstrated in the removal of the two Opposition Members of Parliament through the total disregard of their own Constitution and the Standing Orders of Parliament. The Honourable Prime Minister must understand that such actions promote ill-will or hostility between communities in Fiji.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, I wish to highlight that the current Budget does not address the repayment mode of UN outstanding loans to the taxpayers of Fiji.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to raise my concern that the substantial amount of the Defence budget is allocated for peacekeeping industries abroad. The logic is simple, we invest our resources where we get returns. For every peacekeeper that Fiji deploys overseas, United Nations is supposed to pay the Fiji Government, but this is not the case. The Fiji taxpayers are paying for these missions. The United Nations debt to Fiji continues to increase.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we, the SODELPA, believes that it is about time now that the United Nations headquarters increase their civilian employment from Fiji as recognition of the immense participation of our country in the peacekeeping Missions since 1978. This will allow reduction of military strengths, create technical education and real career employment as UN Field Service Staff to those demobilised servicemen, substantially improve remittances to multi-millions of dollars and contribute to quality of life.

I seek the concurrence of the Government through the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs who is missing, to start this process now whilst we hold the top position of the President of the United Nations General Assembly. The Philippines did this, hence earning trillions of US dollars per year of remittances.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the recent fast-track Bill under Standing Order 51 in regards to Government of Fiji issuing two sets of passports to servicemen in the Middle East, one for Arab countries and one for Israel, is a serious breach of UN Peacekeeping Protocol. We must seek UN advice on how best they can facilitate movement of our troops, both in Arab and Islam and Israeli States.

A cancellation of Fiji's contribution to the United Nations will create havoc in the security of our country. The dictatorial imposition to such organisation may negate our long standing reputation which will threat many other openings that may be offered to us.

On sugar, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bill together with its precursor, the Sugar Industry (Amendment) Act passed by Parliament in August 2015, completes the isolation process of the growers from the mainstream of the industry. The voice of the grower has been stifled. The institution which carried this voice has been hijacked by the State and its nominee, the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC).

The process began in 2009 with the unlawful dissolution of industry institution created under the Sugar Industry Act 1984, to promote co-operation and understanding amongst its stakeholders. The tragedy is that, the powers that be have learnt no lessons from this turbulent history. Not only are they meddling with the livelihood of some 13,000 growers and another 200,000 people directly and indirectly dependant on the sugar industry for their wellbeing, they are jeopardising the national economy.

The Bills propose to place the industry firmly in the hands of those who have led it since 2009 have failed. Indeed, they are the very ones who have caused its present calamity. How can they salvage the situation? How can they be expected to make it more effective and efficient as is stated in the Explanatory Notes of the Bill? So therein lies the answer to this dilemma. It certainly is not maintaining the status quo but in reversing the whole process which started in 2009.

It is in cleaning up the FSC and the Sugar Ministry. The hangers-on in the decision making process must be replaced by people with expertise and full commitment to the industry and not to their own agendas. Yes, the industry can be returned to its former glory but to do so will need a sizeable investment by the State in a well-formulated crop rehabilitation programme, and in the harvesting and transportation infrastructure.

Our sugar industry will be entering a new era come September 2017 when the EU support arrangement expires. We will then be subject to the vagaries of the international marketplace where the going is not easy.

We will need to bring down costs through improved efficiency and a substantial increase in production at the farm and factory levels, to give a good return to the growers to keep them on their farms. However, success can only be guaranteed, provided the cane growers are once again empowered, and I say again, "empowered" and recognised as equal partners.

Government and its Contributions: All throughout the Budget, we hear that the FijiFirst Government aims at the implementation of Financial Management Reform initiatives, which is critical to strengthening accountability and transparency, as well as to ensure prudent management of public resources in the Civil Service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government continues to contradict itself on the content of its Budget where it is bailing Fiji Sports Commission of its obligation on making principal repayments of its debts totalling \$4.3 million, and \$11.3 million to FBC. These organisations have been privatised for the very purpose of self-sustainability. Government support of this kind proves that they lack vision and the strategy to stand on their own feet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, can the Government also clarify for the sake of the bus operators the extent to which the Service Turnover Tax (STT) and Environmental Levy (EL) are applicable? Is it only applicable for the tourist bus operators, or any bus operator that carries a tourist?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of Government's expenditure policy is to promote self-help initiatives, MSME development and financial inclusion initiatives. Government again fails to demonstrate this in disqualifying homestay providers who accommodate international guests. The levying of the STT and EL on these low income earners for promoting the Fijian culture and providing a home for the international students is again a contradiction to Government policy. How about aligning these income earners to the income tax?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I call on the Government to stay true to its vision in encouraging and driving small and micro enterprises. Tax compliance awareness, grace period and training first needs to be rolled out before penalising the small and medium enterprises with penalties and tax compliance which continues to be the Government's main strategy in collecting additional revenue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to always strike a balance in our policies and understand that the customers and businesses are inter-dependent on each other. Why not regulate the mark-up of car dealers rather than publishing their mark-up? I call on the Government not to be insensitive and throw its weight around and targeting specific groups and not looking at the economic players completely.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government claims to triumph transparency over other governments. Can the Government explain why it has not allocated the stipulated budget funds to the various ministries in charge, instead allocated these funds to the Ministry of Economy to control?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Fiji has added "security" to the five basic essentials of life. Security is being prominent in Fiji's case as it will threaten financial and economic stabilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Economy has direct oversight over the strategic sectors:

1. The Sugar Industry under the Management of Mr. Abdul Khan.
2. The Fiji Hardwood and Fiji Pine under the management of Mr. Faiyaz Khan.
3. Fisheries - PAFCO under the Chairmanship of Mr. Iqbal Janiff, who is also the Vice Chancellor of FNU.
4. Tourism - I refer to Airports Fiji Limited with Mr. Faiyaz Khan as Board Chairman and CEO and Air Terminal Services chaired by Mr. Riyaz Sayed-Khaiyum;
5. Border Security managed by Mr. Xavier Khan.
6. State Broadcasting managed by Mr. Riyaz Sayed-Khaiyum which has been allocated \$6.7 million for Public Service Broadcast (Radio) and Public Service Broadcast (TV) \$4.6 million.
7. Ministry of Commerce managed by Mr. Shaheen Ali.
8. Commerce Commission has a Board Member, Mr. Firoz Ahmed Ghazali who is of Pakistan descent.

9. The Central Bank is co-managed by Mr. Arif Ali.
10. The Finance Intelligence Unit managed by Mr. Razim Buksh.
11. The Elections Office managed by Mr. Mohammed Saneem.
12. Government ITC – management headed by Mr. Nisar Ali. They are also digitalizing the *Vola ni Kawa Bula* in iTLTB.
13. Our Geneva Mission where World Trade Organisation is based is managed by Mrs. Nazhat Shameem Khan.
14. Hamid Ali founder of the road contractor NAIM from Malaysia, close friend of some people on that side.
15. Recently FICAC laws were amended and now given the same powers as Police. So, now Fiji has two Police Force; one Controlled by Commissioner of Police and another is controlled by the AG himself.

The recent bickering in Parliament has drawn concern of the Fijians and negative feeling against certain elite groups in Fiji being the minority group, however, assuming critical chairmanship and CEO leadership positions in Fiji.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Talk about the Budget.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- That is the Budget.

(Chorus of interjections)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there appears to be rampant cronyism of the economy. Fiji faces the biggest threats since Independence, we have never faced such threat before in our history. Our civilization, lifestyle and culture is under threat. The nation is under threat. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the sunset clause is fully operational now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am concerned about this important issue. It is not a laughing matter. Government needs to address this immediately as Fijians are disgusted about this. The concentration of economic power seems to be with a few elite. There is animosity growing within our various Fijian groups questioning why this elite group is being advanced over others. The fury with the stigma of “one man” leading the nation with his kind. The people of Fiji have started to build misconceptions about others within his group but have failed to identify that it is only one man that we need to isolate as the real dictator.

Mr. Deputy Speaker as I conclude my contribution to the Budget, I want to reassure the people of Fiji...

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 62(4) says that there cannot be any imputation that raises animosity between different ethnic or religious groups. The Honourable Deputy Whip had just

mentioned; “He continues to rule with his kind”. What is he trying to imply? What he is trying to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is against Standing Order 62(4) (a) to (d).

I request that the Honourable Opposition Whip withdraw’s that statement where he said that one person continues to rule “with his kind”. Rule with his kind is wrong. May I have a ruling on that Mr. Deputy Speaker?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is not listening to what I said. The Ministry of Economy has direct oversight over the strategic sectors, so the strategic sectors has a CEO and I am merely mentioning that. That is it!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- You said, “with his kind”.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- That is it!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- The words that were used were; “with his kind.”

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- But what are you afraid of?

What is quite clear is that we are witnessing a *coup* within a *coup*. You do not understand that.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- I rise on a Point of Order.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- May I continue?

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- No, no!

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- You are not the Honourable Speaker, you listen there!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Who are you?

(Chorus of interjections)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, let us confine the debate to the Budget and not make implications against any other Member of Parliament. So, the Honourable Member may continue, bearing this in mind...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- ...that if you continue again, I will stop you from that, Honourable Member. Thank you.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Very well, thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I must say again, as I conclude my contribution to the Budget, I want to reassure the people there in Fiji that we will continue to fight and stand up against these unfair schemes, corrupt malpractice and fake democracy. I do not support this empty Budget.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. I will now call upon the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, fellow Ministers, Honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen; I rise to add my voice in support of the Bill before the House and I thank the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister of Economy for a comprehensive and pragmatic Budget.

The Budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, clearly outlines how much this Government values young people and recognises the important contribution that sports make to the people of Fiji, not just through increased fitness and health but by promoting social cohesion and helping young people apply values that will make them successful in life like teamwork, perseverance and self-discipline.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am excited that the 2016-2017 Budget provides a range of initiatives to guarantee that Government provides young Fijians the support that they need to stand on their own two feet and absorb the skills they will need for employment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this respect, my Ministry continues to broaden its cooperation with other Ministries across Government to strengthen and co-ordinate services that are offered to young people. This is to ensure that Government resources are effectively utilised and that all Fijians, even in the remotest communities and villages, have the opportunity to develop income earning opportunities that are viable, sustainable and satisfying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are several allocations to promote the youths in the budgets of different Ministries, so it is incumbent on us to co-ordinate precisely to reach those parts of Fiji which traditionally have benefitted less fully from Government's support. I have been on outreach visits and I have been told in many places that in living memory, to be the first Minister to have visited the youths. I am determined, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to do follow-up visits to these villages and *tikinas*, with services provided by my Ministry at the forefront of this effort.

I welcome the allocation of \$629,000 to expand the infrastructure of five youth training centres at Nasau in Sigatoka, Naleba in Macuata, Naqere in Savusavu, Yavitu in Kadavu and Valelevu in Nasinu, which also looks after the province of Naitasiri.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, skills training are offered through these training centres in close co-operation with other Ministries, such as Agriculture, *iTaukei* Affairs and Fisheries and Forests. This is being extended to include financial literacy; to save for a rainy day, on how to manage money wisely, how to invest, how to use the bank and how to make their saving grow. This co-operation will increase the capacity of our training centres to cater for young Fijians, who need a second chance to re-enter mainstream vocational training or boost their livelihood through microenterprise projects. I will give an example, a girl I met in early 2014 as a youth club member in Draiba in the interior of Navosa, re-entered mainstream vocational training which allowed her to conduct bridging courses and she is now a student at Alafua Campus in Samoa. I met there when I attended the Sports Minister's Meeting in Apia, Samoa late in 2015.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are some classic examples. We are giving chances to those who have dropped out from formal education to be trained in our training centres.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to further strengthen the training programmes offered at these training centres, the Ministry is taking concrete steps to accredit all courses offered throughout our centres and the Ministry, to ensure that trainings subscribe to standards of competence, to comply with Fiji's National Qualification Framework. Between 2013 and 2015, 541 graduates completed training through the five training centres. About 20 percent of these graduates established successful small businesses in their communities, while another 40 percent have found employment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these success stories were just a part of the 9,770 young people who were trained and assisted through all our programmes in the same period. However, proud as we are, we know that much remains to be done. Many young disadvantaged Fijians are unable to gain entry to the training centres, so we are allocating \$1 million in this new financial year to take training to them. We will send out mobile teams to offer multi-skills, empowerment and Seeds of Success training.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that mobile community-based training works but we also know that it is the only way that some young people can get the skills training they need. Between 2013 to 2015, a total of 2,886 young Fijians have benefitted from the mobile training and for this number, approximately 60 percent have established successfully income-earning opportunities or are using knowledge acquired during this mobile training to contribute to their communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, building the resilience of young Fijians is at the core of this effort. It is top of mind, and every effort will continue through the Seed of Success motivational and value-based Programme to strengthen the resolve and character of young Fijians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to complement this effort, 15 Youth Administrators have been deployed into the provincial deployment machinery. This is an unprecedented effort to mainstream the youth voice into our development programmes. This has already further strengthened the co-ordination of service, particularly to rural youth and it ensures that their voices are not only heard but also that we begin to truly hear and act upon their aspirations, and eventually help them realise them. This has also ensured an increase of activity in our training programmes and will continue into the new financial year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the Government service to young Fijians has been strengthened in the 2016-2017 Budget, youth organisations are also being recognised for their ability to partner with development agencies to deliver training and enterprise programmes. This will be supported by a youth grant provision of \$200,000 in the 2016-2017 Budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this delivery mechanism encourages youth organisations to build their ability and strengthen their capacity to operate youth programmes to serve the larger community within the parameters of the National Youth Policy. Ultimately, we want young Fijians to be able to contribute to the economy, and we need to continue with the effort to build up their skills and confidence to do so, and the 2016-2017 Budget clearly supports this approach.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the same note and in keeping with Government's efforts to support and act on the voices of young Fijians, the provision for National Youth Day has been increased to \$100,000. This encourages young people to contribute to youth policy and programme formulation. International conventions require that young people, not only become policy recipients, but also contribute to finding the solutions that eventually benefit their well-being.

A further \$100,000 is provided for international youth exchange, which will further bilateral co-operation with countries where Fiji has established memoranda of understanding in the area of youth development. Mr. Deputy Speaker, through these arrangements, young Fijians are able to gain exposure to different experiences and return with new knowledge and best practices in youth development. Co-operation agreements are in place with India and Indonesia and with advanced consultations underway with China and Korea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Fijian youth will also benefit from exchanges with 242 youth delegates from 11 countries when the Ship for World Youth berths at Suva's King's Wharf in February 2017. The 2016-2017 Budget provides for the hosting of this multi-national delegation over three days of village and institutional visits, cultural exchanges and courtesy calls.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a 12-member youth delegation from Fiji will be part of this Japanese Government-funded programmes over three months. This has enormous benefits for young Fijians, and on behalf of the Fijian Government, I express our gratitude for the invitation extended by the Government of Japan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my other equally important portfolio is sports. I am grateful to my colleague, the Honourable Minister for Economy, for the provision provided in the 2016-2017 Budget to spearhead our efforts in sports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are on course to create history at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. The people of Fiji are showing their support to Team Fiji and the efforts of the Fiji 7s Team. This is the subject of conversation in almost every household in Fiji - from the housing estate of Raiwaqa to the sand and sunshine of the Yasawas, from the cane fields in Seaqaqa to the hills of Naitasiri, from my own cyclone-ravaged island in Koro, to the far reaches of the Natewa Bay. These are stories that are shared around the bowl of *yaqona*.

The prospects of a medal, hopefully gold, in Rio, Mr. Deputy Speaker, dare I say is great. In anticipation of this real possibility of history being created, \$500,000 has been set aside to reward up to \$30,000 to any athlete who wins a gold medal at the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, history was also created when the first Super 15 match between the Crusaders and the Chiefs was hosted in Fiji a few days ago. I thank the Chiefs for making this their home game. Apart from the teams, charters full of supporters also graced our shores. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is sports tourism in action, and this is being harnessed to bring maximum returns to Fiji's economy. A sports tourism policy to ensure that Fiji continues to attract international competition will be pursued in the new financial year in close co-operation with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

In support of this effort, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am delighted that just over \$4 million is provided to maintain and construct sporting facilities that meet international standards. It is a simple fact of life that we cannot host international events without international facilities. I am delighted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this Budget will also include new community complexes ongoing now in Kadavu, Gau and Vunidawa and the maintenance of the existing Fiji Sports Council facility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, together with the necessary sporting facilities, Fiji needs to continue supporting our people who are working and researching in sports science and sports medicine. This is an essential complement to our existing efforts at professionalising sports as an industry. We must be able to help our athletes achieve peak performance and avoid injuries. We must be able to help them

recover from the injuries that inevitably occur, and manage the strain that constant physical effort at the highest level can put on the human body. This will also be reflected and will be pursued within the framework of our bilateral sports co-operation agreement and with the Ministry of Education in terms of training local talents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government, through my Ministry and its statutory arms - the Fiji National Sports Commission and the Fiji Sports Council, have reformed our approach to sports development, to ensure that our sports men and women fully benefit from the opportunities provided.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a major reform initiative, established the Fiji National Sports Commission to align and guide the delivery of sports programmes in Fiji through a co-ordinated and partnership approach at all levels of participation, and I am proud to say that it is beginning to bear fruit.

On the level of sports development, a budget of \$600,000 in the 2016-2017 Budget will provide:

- Overseas specialists to run training clinics in Fiji for athletes, referees and technical officials - \$200,000;
- Overseas sports scholarships for talented athletes - \$200,000; and
- Rural sports development programmes and sports outreach - \$200 000.

On the elite end of the spectrum, the Budget supports our activities internationally as follows:

- Overseas tours with a grant of \$2 million; and
- Hosting international tournaments which have far-reaching benefits for the local economy and development of our athletes while providing a competitive stage here at home with \$1.9 million,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, by encouraging sports in Fiji to access international coaches through our international coaches' initiative, we have achieved the following:

- Qualifying in football for the Under 20 FIFA World Cup and for the Rio Olympic Games;
- Qualifying in cricket for the U19 World Cup in 2016;
- In Table Tennis, we now rank number two after Australia in Oceania and have our first qualifiers for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games; and
- Also our champion qualifying for the 2016 Rio Olympic Games in Rugby 7s, both for women and men.

This is the benefit that we reap from paying overseas coaches to come and do the understudy of a local coach. A further \$1.5 million is allocated in the 2016-2017 Budget for international coaches to develop our capacity further.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to ensure that all Fijians enjoy the benefits of sports apart from those enjoyed by our elite athletes, sports development programmes must be accessible to all. Programmes introduced through the Fiji National Sports Commission continue to be well received.

In 2016, despite the cyclone affecting rural outreach programmes, we were able to conduct these programmes in Bua and Macuata, and in July 2016, these will also run in Labasa, Lautoka and Sigatoka. These programmes feature a train-the-trainers course which is run in a village for two weeks to introduce the variety of sports practiced in Fiji and train coaches, referees and administrators. In the new financial year, this will continue in Lau, Rotuma, Koro, Ra, Rabi and Tailevu.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these programmes are inclusive. They are designed to welcome persons with disabilities and women as equal participants, and focus on the wellness and development of the whole community through physical activity, including Zumba and aerobics. With the co-operation of the Ministry of Health, all participants are screened.

The legacy left is the “fitness leaders”, who are identified and trained in villages to organise daily and weekly activities. This gives real meaning to the fight against NCDs, and we are working with the Ministry of Education on training physical education teachers and implementing a comprehensive physical education programme in the schools over the full academic year. Implanting life-long learning and physical literacy will be another vital tool in this fight.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Fiji’s future in sports is promising. This is ensured by the reforms and initiatives in place, by the review of the national sports policy to be undertaken in the new financial year and by the provision of the 2016-2017 Budget. This, continues to support Fiji as we climb up the international rankings, and it continues to support the health of all the people of Fiji.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support wholeheartedly the 2016-2017 Appropriation Bill, 2016 before the House and thank the Honourable Members for your attention.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- I will now call upon the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament; I rise today to speak in support and to endorse the Budget that has been presented in Parliament, but at the outset, I would like to initially address some of the comments that have been made during the course of this debate. One of the comments that has often been made from Honourable Members of the other parties is that, the Government on this side lacks vision, that perhaps the Budget does not have a theme, but I would like to say that that is a false understanding of what governance is all about.

Our vision on this side of the House is very clear and what we have just heard from the Honourable Ratu Tikoca is an exposition of exactly what we are against. We believe we have a vision, that we have a strong united country where everyone in this country is regarded as one. When we are able to do that, we will have a strong country. We have heard today some of the most despicable filth that has ever come into this House. How can we have that in the most august House? The only thing that I am glad about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the children who were sitting here are no longer here to hear those kinds of sentiments. The strengths of this country depends on all of us being able to work together to see ourselves as one country. When we start trying to find conspiracies under every sheet of paper, under every mat that you have, you interpret things that will lead to the destruction of this country.

This is what the FijiFirst Government stand here for, a united Fiji that builds a strong country, a Fiji that does not demarcate people according to what their hair looks like, or whether they have their hair or do not have their hair, what their religion is, what they speak or what they eat; we treat everyone equally. When we are looking at our country and when we are trying to tell ourselves; “What should we do in this country?” we do not look at the ethnicity or religion of a person. We choose the best possible person for every occupation because it is all based on merit because if we are able to do that, they can do the kinds of things in those organisations to develop and deliver value for our people. When we talk about one of these organisations – ATS, FBC or Fiji Pine, when these companies develop a lot of profits, then we are able then to provide services to all of them. So, I think we should all learn, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to look at everyone equally in this country. This is the same sort of rhetoric that took this country to the ravine that they are on.

This is the same sort of rhetoric and this is something that we must put a stop to in this country and it behoves all of us in this House, every single Member of Parliament to make sure that these kinds of sentiments are not expressed in this House, especially when the people love this country. That is the vision of this side of the House. The vision of this side of the House is for the benefit of everyone in this country. This divide and rule tactics of saying; “We should do these things for these group of people and something else for those others”, that is out-of-date, that was 20 and 30 years ago. That was what led to the decline in this country. That is why we needed a new revolution under the Bainimarama-led Government and the FijiFirst Government to come up with its Constitution and put things right for the benefit of everyone in this country.

The other reason I am supporting this Budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is because, if you want to build a country, you need to generate economic growth. If you look at the history that we have had in this country, this year (2016) will be the seventh year that we have had consecutive growth. Sometimes, Honourable Members of the Opposition do not realise how great that is. That is a fantastic thing, seven years of consecutive growth and it is building on all the things that we have done in the past. It started from the things that were done by the Bainimarama-led Government, now in the FijiFirst Government, and we are still moving. We are developing growth, more jobs are coming through, even in spite of the fact that we have had *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, did you not hear the statistics that were given by the Minister for Employment? In spite of all that, things continue to grow.

A few days ago, the Honourable Minister for Trade announced that a lot of the investments that are taking place in Fiji are coming from the private sector.

(Inaudible interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- Calm down, calm down! Take it easy. The truth hurts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the truth hurts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few days ago, the Honourable Minister for Trade announced that most of the investments in this country are coming from the private sector. What does that mean? The private sector does not invest willy-nilly.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- Listen, listen!

The private sector does not invest willy-nilly. They look very carefully. When they have confidence, then they invest. That is the other reason why I support this.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- I will get there, hold on.

The third reason why I support this Budget is because it has been consistent. Consistent in what terms? Consistent in its focus on all the people of this country, consistent in its effort on the least marginalised, that is why we have allocation for free education, free busfare and free medicine. We are always concentrating on those right at the very bottom of our society. There has always been consistency in those areas.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- I am coming there! I am coming there!

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- It is not fair, there are no jobs, university students are unemployed.

HON. J. USAMATE.- And now I am there.

There have been some false information. We have been sitting here and we have been inundated with these false figures and false statistics.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- *Vinaka*.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I do not know whether it is intentional or whether you are being intentionally blind or intentionally deaf, some of the things that have been coming to us from the other side.

This Government pays a lot of attention to health and we regard the health of all of our people as one of our most important and sacred responsibilities. Some speeches that have been made that the Health budget has gone down. The Health budget has not gone down. Within the Budget for this year, we now have \$244 million for the Ministry of Health but in addition to that, we have another \$41 million just for the doctors which will be governed by the Ministry of Civil Service. If you add those figures up together, it adds to more than \$285 million. You add the amount that is added for the training of doctors which is \$1.16 million and another \$2 million which is in the rural development for the development of facilities and quarters, it comes to more than \$280 million. That is a true reflection of the importance that this side of the House attaches to Health.

The other thing that this Budget has shown, which is for me as the Minister for Health, is something I really appreciate is its emphasis on human resources. This year, there will be a focus on our doctors. This year, we will be looking at, at least, increasing their salaries by between 56 to 81 percent because they are a very important component. We have always had a problem in the past in being able to develop and retain our doctors and with this as part of the reform within the Civil Service, within Government, we will be able to develop them. We will be able to retain them and we will be able to develop a cohort that will allow us to address the kind of things that we need in this country. This is part of the overall reform that we have for the Civil Service. We need to have the right fit of people, the right shape and the structure so that we can begin to give out the services that we have.

In addition, there is money being set aside for the training of doctors of \$1.16 million; another \$0.5 million for the training of other cadre and another \$180,000 specifically for the nurses in the Fiji College of Nursing.

The Honourable Dr. Biman Prasad had talked about specialist positions, yes, specialist doctors are very important. Over the past few years, the Ministry has realised this and working together with the FNU, we have been able to put together a programme to develop specialists. We now have around 63 doctors undergoing their training programme to become specialists, 11 have already graduated with their Masters programme and another 11 have undertaken their postgraduate attachment after they have completed their Masters training programme.

So, there is a pipeline, we still have deficiencies in terms of the numbers that we have, but through this pipeline and also through the kind of activities that we get through the Skilled Professional Act, we are also beginning to see skilled professional workers enter into the private part of the Health Sector. So, there are developments in terms of making sure that we have the right kind of people in place to deliver services to our people.

There has also been talk about the 'Free Medicine' Initiative. Yes, I agree that there have been some hiccups along the way, but we are getting there. This year, in another two months' time we will have the full complement of all the 142 medicines that will be part of this 'Free Medicine Scheme' and the processes that need to get everyone on board to be registered are being fine-tuned, so that by the end of this year, we hope to see the Free Medicine Scheme working for everyone, but still if people walk into a health centre or a hospital, they get free medicine anyway, but this is just for those who do not come to a public facility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been a lot of investment in this budget for which I am grateful for a lot of capital projects. With health, you require good people, you require medicine, you require equipment and you require places for them to work, good buildings. This year, we will see the completion of the new Ba Hospital where \$13.35 million has been set aside. That Hospital is an example of a partnership between Government and the private sector and it is going to be a model that we can use in other areas.

There will be the upgrading of the Keiyasi from the Health Centre it is in now to a Subdivisional Hospital of around \$6.3 million, the upgrading and extension of the Rotuma Hospital for \$2 million; the completion of the new Naulu Health Centre which I am glad to report that the civil works has just been completed and the construction is about to commence now and hopefully by the end of the year we should have this health centre online to relieve the pressure on Nausori, Valelevu and also Suva.

One of the most important things that we have is to make sure that our Health Centres, such as the one in Galoa and the nursing stations in all of those areas, as well as Korovisilou, that they are well maintained and Government has set aside \$2 million to make sure that these facilities are up to speed and they can continue to provide services.

There has been some questions asked in the House about the extension of the CWM Maternity Unit and I can inform the House that this project is continuing. It is not an easy project to do, because where the extension takes place, there is a huge ravine. If you go to the CWM Hospital, you will see the huge ravine, the huge gully. So, there needs to be a lot of expertise hired to make sure that they can undertake the geotechnical work that needs to be undertaken. There is payment of consultancies and over the concept design and the Project Manager has been put in place. This will be ongoing, we do not expect construction to take place right away, but it should take place beyond 2017.

There has also been some questions in the House raised about the Makoi Birthing Unit. I am glad to say that despite the fact that we had multiple landslides that led to the delay in this project where we had to build a retaining wall at the back of the Unit, that project is expected to be completed by the end of the year. When it is completed, we hope that it can relieve some of the pressure on Nausori, Suva as well as Rewa in terms of our pregnant mothers.

In addition to all of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is going to be an investment also in the ICT infrastructure and network. One of the most important things that we need to do is to manage data and convert data into information so we can make use of it. There will be an investment of around \$350,000 on this, and also during the course of *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, about 25 percent of all of our facilities underwent some damages and some are completely destroyed. Government has set aside \$3.656 million to be able to deal with these facilities all across Fiji - all the 200 plus facilities.

There have been some questions raised in the House about Nausori and the Nasinu area. The Nausori plan is being reviewed at the moment. For the Nasinu area, we already have Valelevu in place. Over the next two years we hope to be able to acquire land to make Valelevu bigger so that it can deal with the population that it has in that particular area and also relieve some of the pressure that CWM currently faces.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Health there are different services provided; Curative Services, for curing people who are already sick; Rehabilitative, for rehabilitating people; and also Preventative, to try and prevent people from becoming sick in the first place. Strategically, in the Ministry over the next few years, we will begin to pour a lot more attention on this preventative focus, the focus on public health, on keeping those who are well, well and trying to reduce people becoming sick in the first place.

Public Health saves money, it improves our quality of life, helps our children thrive and reduces human suffering. This has been reflected in the Strategic Plan of the Ministry in which we intend to provide more resources over the next few years towards prevention activities, especially those in the different settings. In this year's Budget there is a sum of \$6 million which has been set aside for public health which is managed from within the Headquarters, and that is going to move us towards this direction of prevention activities.

In addition to the money that is being set aside for public health, there is also sums of money that has been allocated to our Divisions. We have four Divisions in the Ministry of Health - North, South, Central and Eastern. In each of this Division they do a lot of work in terms of meeting people out in the Divisions and for the divisional level, there is a combined budget of more than \$44 million, a significant portion of which will be used for public health.

In the Ministry of Health, we have welcomed the increases in the price for cigarettes, alcohol and sugar-sweetened beverages. We all know that the biggest killer in our country is NCDs (Non-Communicable Disease) and wrong food, wrong smoking and also wrong drinks are some of the biggest risk factors that we have. The cost of people eating the wrong food, smoking and indulging in too much alcohol is felt in our hospitals, and that is where the costs come. So, through this way, we hope that we will be able to encourage people to indulge less in these risk factors and also help pay for the cost of running the hospital services.

Immunisation is also a major strategy for preventative health and that is also being funded. The major outcomes that we will be introducing this year and that we need to go stronger in is a more

multi-sectoral approach to NCDs because it is not something that can be addressed by Health alone. This will require co-operation with other areas like trade, agriculture, employment, local government, housing and a national NCD multi-sectoral committee to be put in place following this Budget.

Most of the budget in this current Budget and in the past Budgets that we have had, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have been used for the Curative Services for our Ministry, in other words for dealing with those who are already sick. Our combined budget for our specialist hospitals in this period from 2016 to 2017 is \$69.9 million. A significant portion of the budget for the four Divisions will also be used in the Sub-Divisional Hospitals that will help our Curative Services.

In addition to this, we have \$37.7 million that is being allocated for the procurement of major consumables such as drugs, extra materials, dental prosthetics, dressings, beddings and linen, family planning supplies, staff clothing laboratories, et cetera.

For overseas visiting medical teams, we have \$0.5 million to help them come and provide their services in Fiji. \$1.3 million is provided for expenses of overseas and medical consultations to cater for the increasing number of patients requiring overseas referral for special treatment that is not available in Fiji, such as cancer and cardiac referrals.

We often have cases, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of people needing to be brought to Suva or to Lautoka or to Labasa from outlying areas and \$2.2 million is provided for the charter of aircrafts to meet the high demands for medical evacuation of high risk patients from the locations mainly in the rural and maritime areas.

Biomedical equipment for hospitals, health centres and nursing stations of \$5 million has been set aside for that.

Dental equipment for urban hospitals, sub-divisional hospitals is \$0.5 million.

The upgrading and maintenance of urban hospitals, institutional quarters is \$2.5 million and the purchase of equipment for urban hospitals, health centres and nursing stations is \$1.8 million.

These are some of the major expenses that we have and we are very grateful to get this budget. Every ministry will always want as much resources as possible, but we believe in the Ministry of Health that the resources that have given to us will be there, and that will allow us to move our services towards the vision that we have which is to develop a healthy a population as possible.

One of the important developments that we have also heard from the Honourable Minister for Economy is his announcement that there will be a hotline established, so that people who have issues with health services can ring in and make their complaints known. This is something that we welcome because we believe that complaints are always gifts for us. Complaints help us to understand some things that are not going on as well as they should, and they will complement the assistance that we already have within the Ministry of Health using our Risk Managers and our clinical service networks to keep improving the services that we have.

One of the statements that has been made in this august House over the past few days has been that health in general, has been declining. When these statements are made, they are not quoting any sorts of data, so I think this is one of the important things to do. As leaders in this House, if you are going to make a statement about anything, if you say most people are dying or anything like that, you

need to substantiate it with data. We cannot just stand up and make statements like that. They need to be substantiated with data.

I had a look at the information that we have in terms of Under 5 Mortality and there has been a lot of concern in this area. I have looked at the data and it is shown Under 5 Mortality has been reduced from 21.8 percent in the year 2000 to 17.5 percent in 2013, and it still continues to decline. So, there has been a gradual decline.

What I am trying to say is, in some areas in some aspects of health, there can be anomalies every now and then but generally, there has been a decline in the mortalities. It does not mean that we are perfect, no, it does not mean that we are actually perfect. It means that there is always constant room for improvement, and that is what the Ministry is focussing on.

At the moment, we realise that one of the problems that we have in the Ministry is that, staff need to communicate better with the people that they serve. There is a project that is going on at the moment in the Ministry right now, to improve communication, the cleanliness of our facilities and to reduce the waiting times that people have within the hospitals and in our facilities.

The other important thing that we are doing to try to make sure that our response is much better to our customers is to bring the values of the Ministry to be part of our Performance Management System (PMS), so that people are actually measured against the values that we have within the Ministry.

The last thing that I would like to mention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that, one of the things we believe that is being mentioned right across the Ministry is the need to strengthen leadership and management right across all of our facilities.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I strongly support this Budget because it is according to the vision of what is best for the people of this country. *Vinaka Vakalevu.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister for Health. I will now call upon the Honourable Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Members of Parliament; I rise to respond to the 2016-2107 Budget Address as presented in this august House on 22nd June, 2016 by the Honourable Minister for Economy. This 2016-2017 Appropriation Bill 2016 has been presented without clear policy directives and lack of important information, as had been practiced in the past on the Budget Estimates and Supplements.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Shadow Minister for Health, I will focus on the Ministry of Health, touch on some issues on education, development in the Lomaiviti Group and some recommendations that I will present in my presentation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is also noted that the Honourable Minister for Economy controls more than 50 percent of the National Budget.

(Chorus of interjections)

If my calculation serves me correctly, it can be rightly said that he is a control freak or a superman.

(Hon. Member interjects)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the continuous neglect and mismanagement of the FijiFirst Government as it has governed our nation for the last nine to ten years, has led to a frightening deterioration of the state of our health services and infrastructure. This is further exacerbated by the Honourable Minister for Economy's recent Budget address denoting that the component of the doctor's salary will be administered by the Ministry for Civil Service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a sensitive issue and is bound to create a sense of divided allegiance among the doctors between the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services and the Honourable Minister for Civil Service. This can also be seen as undermining the capability and authority of the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services...

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Awh!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.T. VADEI.- ...and may be interpreted as FijiFirst Party's clear indication of low confidence in him as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Minister for Economy's reasoning for shifting the component of the doctors' salary and its administration does not hold water as the past administration of the same by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services has stood the test of time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support the pay increase for doctors but I note that there was no job evaluation undertaken to determine these pay increases that range from 56 percent to 81 percent as announced by the Honourable Minister for Economy in his Budget address. How these increases came about, is anyone's guess.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the low morale of 3,236 of all health care workers in terms of the nature of work undertaken, the long working hours with inadequate remuneration had greatly contributed to the dismal health care services that we are currently witnessing daily.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Hear, hear!

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, the increase in salaries have to be inclusive of all health care workers where a job evaluation exercise is to be undertaken to determine the percentage increase in salaries and wages. As announced by the Honourable Minister for Economy, only one specific cadre of health care professionals is going to be paid a salary increase, lest we forget that all cadre of health care professionals work in unison towards the welfare of any one person, as you are all aware of. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is equally important that each cadre is to be looked at on its own merit and be remunerated appropriately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had enough of the divide and rule tactics, and health care workers whether they be doctors, nurses, dentists, physiotherapists, pharmacists or any other should be remunerated appropriately. Therefore, I propose that a job evaluation exercise be undertaken at the earliest to address the inequalities, and an increase in the Health budget allocation be effected to cater for the proposed increase in salaries and wages across the board on health care workers. In addition

to the Honourable Minister for Economy's Budget address, he again highlighted the need for general practitioners and private doctors to be engaged in public hospitals during peak hours. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Minister should be reminded that this is not a new initiative, as general practitioners used to provide locum services in the past in public hospitals' Outpatients Departments during peak hours or on relieving assignments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I noted that another \$250,000 of our meagre resources have been set aside to set up (in the Ministers own words) an open transparent complaints system. I say that this is a waste of time and resources. There is already in existence a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the same, so why reinvent the wheel? The Ministry of Health and Medical Services thus need to review the existing SOP to be more inclusive to new challenges and effect changes accordingly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the allocation of \$250,000 can be better utilised in other important areas of the health services, for examples, in the advocacy of Non-Communicable Diseases or given as an added grant to the Kidney Foundation from \$300,000 to \$550,000. This is to reduce the cost of service delivery to dialysis patients who are also taxpayers and continue to contribute to the buoyancy of our economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Section 38(1) of the 2013 Constitution - Right to health, states; and I quote:

“The State must take reasonable measures within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of the right of every person to health, and to the conditions and facilities necessary to good health, and to health care services ...”

Section 38(3) states, and I quote:

“...if the State claims that it does not have the resources to implement the right, it is the responsibility of the State to show that the resources are not available.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will now focus on health care service delivery and first and foremost, is the Primary Health Care Services. You will agree that prevention is better than cure, therefore, more emphasis should be centred around Primary Health Care Services as it does not consume much of the health resources.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the wake of *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, Primary Health Services should put more emphasis in improving villages and settlements' water supply and sanitation to minimise the risk of typhoid and other contagious communicable diseases. If not managed properly at the primary level, this may lead to hospitalisation, thus an added burden to an already burdened health care system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, during my visit around the country visiting numerous health facilities including hospitals, health centres and nursing stations, I noted that patients, including women and children waited for more than five hours to see a doctor. Some unfortunate ones were not able to receive the services of a doctor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, recently in May this year, an asthma patient was presented at the Raiwaqa Health Centre at 7.30 a.m. with difficulties in breathing. The patient died at 8.45 a.m. without receiving any medical attention.

The dilapidated condition of health infrastructures speaks volume of the degree of negligence on the part of Government to provide adequate funding to ensure that they are regularly maintained. This has now further exacerbated by the colossal damage caused by *TC Winston*. Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I propose that the budgetary allocation for the maintenance of sub-divisional hospitals, health centres, nursing stations and staff quarters be increased by \$500,000 so that all repairs and maintenance works are carried out in a timely manner, and the community is not further inconvenienced when accessing the nearest health facilities closest to them.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, more resources should also be allocated to the upgrade and maintenance of Divisional and Specialised Hospitals, to ensure that they are kept clean and are in hygienic conditions always, as this will lead to decrease in incidences of cross infections.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the inability of the Ministry to always ensure that common drugs, consumables, vaccines, dressings and basic medical equipment are generally made available in all facilities is deplorable. This happened in CWM Hospital last week. The Honourable Prime Minister should be encouraged to visit these health facilities without notice to see for himself their conditions, and he should be requested to start his tour in his own backyard, the CWM Hospital.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I suggest that a bipartisan approach for an inquiry into all aspects of health care services is to be undertaken, to gauge the weaknesses in the system and that they are addressed accordingly, and it is hoped to pave the way for improving the delivery of health care services to all, including the decrease in waiting time at hospitals and health centres.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I concur with my colleague, the Honourable Gavoka, that there is an urgent need for the construction of a new hospital along the Suva/Nausori corridor to cater for the continuous increase in population, especially women and children. This will also decrease the current burden of health care services at the CWM Hospital.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this juncture, I wish to highlight a shameful and insensitive comment echoed by Honourable Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services which appeared on the front page of the *Fiji Times* on 24th July, 2015, and I quote:

“The high demand for basic medicine is because of people’s ignorance to look after their health and this has contributed to the shortage.”

This was unwarranted as her comment added salt to the injury of people, who were denied basic medication because of the failure of the system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Auditor-General’s Report in the last eight years on health services revealed that large stocks of expired medicines and vaccines which had to be destroyed. This is gross negligence on those responsible and they should be taken to task as this represents taxpayers’ funds not properly utilised.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to comment on the \$10 million appropriation for the Free Medicine Programme from the 142 essential drug list of the Ministry of Health. This is news to us as we all know that all medicine supplied from any public health facility are supplied free of charge since the mid-1980s.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it will be interesting to know how this allocation was spent in the last fiscal year, given the fact that medicine are always supplied free from any public health facility. I propose that this appropriation of \$10 million be set aside to cover a job evaluation exercise mentioned above for the rest of the health care professionals and are remunerated accordingly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health is a fundamental right. Investing in health is investing in our future. The continuous high cost of providing secondary and tertiary health care services in hospitals, together with the high cost of medical equipment, medicine, consumables and diagnosing tools, it is about time that the Ministry look at other funding options to fund the ever escalating cost of delivering health care services to all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, social health insurance is one of the main options that can be taken up as some studies and reports have been compiled in the past. This will be adequate to form the basis for future studies. As I mentioned earlier, health is a fundamental human right, therefore, it is the obligation of any Government to embrace that human right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this point, I wish to dwell on the total cost of free tuition at universities and technical colleges for everyone which is estimated at \$110 million. This is possible through better realignment of priorities in the budget of \$3.5 billion.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you look at the proposed budget, it shows \$42.5 million for TELS, \$10.6 million for Toppers and \$4.3 million for other scholarships which comes to a total of \$57.4 million. These are all part of the Budget for 2016, why not add another \$53 million and provide free tuition for all? Mr. Deputy Speaker, the future of our nation hangs on our youth and we must prepare them by providing the highest form of education possible for them.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, TELS or the student loan scheme is a recipe for disaster as our youth will buckle under the debt burden they have to carry. It is happening in America where students' loans have exceeded over \$1 trillion and has become a hot issue heading to the US Presidential Elections in November. Government has been going around telling high school students that free tuition at the university cannot be done, but we say; "Yes, we can do it."

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes, we can! Yes, we can!

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to highlight that over-emphasis on the Budget appropriation of the disabled people of our nation, but I have not heard anyone as yet to talk about tangible ways and means that the proposed Budget will directly affect the daily lives of the disabled of our society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I propose that buses and taxi operators are encouraged to import buses and taxis that are user-friendly, in terms of allowances for wheelchair users, thus increasing their mobility. These operators are to be exempted from any import and excise duties.

In addition, I propose that the Budget be present in Braille instead of a Sign Language Interpreter, and if possible to *Hindi* and *iTaukei* vernacular for better understanding by the resource owners and public at large.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this juncture, I will briefly focus on my constituency. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for the successful completion of the jetty and the ice-plant on Gau Island. However, the people of Nairai are still waiting for the completion of their jetty that was promised by the FijiFirst Government in 2013. As you always want to portray yourself as a caring government and you also mentioned that no Fijian will be left behind in all you do, I am rest assured that the Nairai Jetty Project will be factored in the 2017/2018 Budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to reiterate the notion that a heavy population is a productive one that places a minimal or no burden at all on the health care system and one of the many drivers of increased economic activities. We should be reminded again that health is a basic human right, and therefore, it should be readily accessible by all.

In response to the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports, when you are saying that Government will attend to other needs when they have the resources, I only want to ask; if the Government had strongly prioritised and allocated \$2.3 million last week for the Super Rugby Game and is also allocating \$9 million for the golf tournament, is that a sign that they are not for the poor? I also want to respond and ask the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports; has there been an allocation for the weightlifters in Levuka, who had won medals in the SPG Games here in May, 2016? However, to my dismay, there is nothing provided by this Government.

In conclusion Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not support the Budget.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. I now call upon the Honourable Samuela Vunivalu.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members; I rise to support the 2016-2017 Budget and I acknowledge and thank the Minister for Economy for presenting in this august House a Budget to rebuild and take Fiji forward.

May I quote from the *Bible*, from the book of John 15:7, I quote: "If you abide in me and my words abides in you, you shall ask what will and it shall be done unto you."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, what I have noted is that all Honourable Members of the Opposition are not supporting the Budget and yet, they are still demanding and asking the Government to do this and that.

(Laughter)

How can the Government of the day entertain one group that does not support the Budget? I hope they will support the 2018/2019 Budget and onwards.

Secondly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I congratulate the Nadi Soccer Team for winning the Fiji Fact Tournament, so keep supporting your party and the Budget and you will win all tournaments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, protecting the nation is the primary responsibility of the two Discipline Forces which come under the jurisdiction of the Honourable Minister for Defence. They provide national security for the country and its borders. Countries around the region are facing new challenges that need a new way of thinking to solve the ever-growing effects of globalised society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this country's Forces are here to provide border security, combat potential terror attacks, both within and from external forces, and provide humanitarian assistance in major natural disasters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Minister for Economy in the allocation given to the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces and the Fiji Police Force. The 2017 Budget provides \$96.4 million for the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) and \$131.7 million for the Fiji Police Force (FPF) respectively.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Fiji is just recuperating from the *Tropical Cyclone Winston* that crossed island nation a few months back. Rebuilding of lives and livelihood is a process that will take time due to challenges. The RFMF personnel were deployed to various places affected by the disaster to help and assist the nation in rebuilding this country from the ground and for this, we are grateful.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, although Fiji is a very small country, it makes a significant contribution to the United Nations in peacekeeping missions and multinational force and observers where the Fiji Infantry Battalions serve in Sinai, Iraq, the Golan Heights and South Lebanon. As we are all aware, one of the primary responsibilities of the RFMF is to ensure peace and security within the country for the benefit and security of all Fijians. I must commend the Commander of the RFMF, Rear Admiral Mr. Viliame Naupoto, for ensuring the security, defence and wellbeing of Fijians and Fiji.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak on the FPF. They are an integral part of our communities and their work is based in the local communities that they serve. The role of the Police is to maintain law and order, protect members of the public and their property and prevent and investigate crimes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the FPF has been engaged in solving crimes around the country; from cultivating commercial marijuana farms to rape (minors and elderly), assault, murder, et cetera. With the Budget allocation for the Police, they can manage to rebuild and enhance their technical assistance and their Force which the civil society can trust, and solve matters of national importance before it ruins our youth, our communities and our families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure everyone here in this august House has heard about the *Operation Cavoura*, spearheaded by the Commissioner of Police, Brigadier General Sitiveni Qiliho, where 3,000 plants of cannabis were uprooted from the Navosa highlands and another 4,000 were uprooted recently. Imagine what would have happened if these plants were not found and ended up on our streets! What could be the ripple effect on our children and communities?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been a rise in reports of rape cases in the country. This is because victims of such acts are now bold and confident that the law will assist and protect them. The awareness programmes and community outreach has greatly assisted people to be more proactive and confident in reporting the matter to the Police. I state again that the Police is here to assist and protect victims, and direct the culprits to the right disciplinary process. The law and its processes have given the victims confidence to speak out and report to the Police.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, the Budget allocation for the Police will also enable them to get training from international organisations, as we all know that we live in a globalised society with all sorts of international challenges and criminal activities, from drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering....

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Vunivalu.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament; I rise to present my contribution in support of the Appropriation Bill before the House.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Honourable Minister for Economy and his team for presenting a well-balanced and an inclusive Budget; a budget which addresses critical aspects of a vibrant and growing economy; a budget which addresses the critical pathway to recovery from the most devastating natural disaster to ever hit Fiji; and a budget which continues to bolster one of Government's key roles of taking care of the vulnerable and marginalise in society.

My Ministry welcomes the initiative by the Honourable Minister for Economy, to introduce a new Budget year. The financial year ending 31st December, has always posed a lot of challenges for us from an implementation perspective, that is, implementation of our capital projects, if the machinery of Government slows down towards the end of the year due to the onslaught of the festive season. I say this with utmost sincerity and honesty as I have been a civil servant myself, implementing expected outcomes for Government.

With the new Budget year, Ministries will now get a new injection of funds to continue with the delivery of Government services while performance is still at its peak. This new Budget year, coupled with a longer term for planning purposes will only serve to boost efficiencies within Government in relation to the fulfilment of Government outcomes.

The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources has been allocated an approximate sum of \$31 million to carry out its core functions in the new financial year. Whilst the total budget remains the same, there are increases within the budget in priority areas, such as in the areas of development of informal settlements for housing, groundwater resource development for clean and safe water, earthquake and tsunami detection, and monitoring in the field of surveying and geospatial development and management.

Some of the key features of my Ministry's budget are as follows:

Land management: a modern and updated geodetic system is crucial for proper land development. To this end, there is an increase in the budget allocation for the National Geodetic Upgrade for which \$1.18 million is provided. This is to upgrade from the old world geodetic system of 1972 to a new system. This will provide for more accuracy in geospatial locations, and also compatible with modern equipment and navigational systems. To this end, preliminary meetings with relevant experts have taken place with the view to advertise for a Project Manager this month.

The Ministry is also happy with the new allocation of \$260,000 for the acquisition of an unmanned aerial vehicle. This will allow for aerial survey, providing real time and instant information with a shorter turnaround time. This has important implications for urgently required aerial surveys, such as those required in some simple land dealing consent applications, and also for assessments of

natural disasters, such as *Tropical Cyclone Winston*. It will also come in handy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for law enforcement purposes like the identification of marijuana farms.

The funding of these initiatives show Government's commitment to continually support the core function of my Ministry in State Land Management and the role this plays in the life of our economy. To that end, as of last year, the Ministry has started issuing 99-year agricultural leases in accordance with the FijiFirst's promise to the Fijian people. This shows Government's support for Fijians in the agricultural sector, and recognises their need for longer security of tenure to incentivise investment on their farms.

Since 2011, Government has been providing a budget to the Ministry for the consolidation of an electronic National Land Register. This is the identification of land tenure for every parcel of land in Fiji, and require the combined efforts and co-operation of stakeholders, like the *iTaukei* Land Trust Board (iTLTB) and the Registrar of Titles. In the upcoming Budget, this item is now part of the operation allocation.

The Ministry has also embarked on the Land Use Master Plan to attribute usage, climate, soil type, contour and other geospatial components to land parcels in Fiji, to enhance this electronic tool for land management and strategic planning, not only for the Ministry but other ministries as well. A budget of \$240,000 has been allocated for this project in the next financial year.

Development of State Land: One of the key roles of the Ministry is the development of unutilised State land to productive use. To this effect, an allocation of \$2.7 million has been granted to cater for the continued development and put into productive use of vacant State land. This involves the creation of infrastructure and the development of subdivisions for industrial and commercial purposes, targetted at generating and increasing economic activity.

For the new financial year, our priority is in the development of an industrial subdivision at Vakamasisuasua in Labasa. This will help alleviate the increasing demand for industrial land in Labasa, and is in line with Government efforts to encourage investment in the Northern Division.

The Constitution pledges the right of every person to accessible and adequate housing. The Ministry has been allocated the sum of \$300,000. The provision is to cater for the regularisation of informal settlements of State land, providing Fijians residing in these settlement security in land tenure and dignity. This will cater for both squatters residing on vacant State land, and those on illegal subdivisions of State land.

A total of 72 approval notices for lease have been issued in the Western Division, and a total of 77 approval notices have been issued in the Northern Division todate. That translates to 149 families, who are given security of tenure and a real opportunity to better their livelihoods.

Mineral Sector: Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$200,000 has been allocated to the Mineral Investigation Project with the view of improving and increasing mineral exploration and development. This contributes to increasing investment in the Mineral Sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$250,000 has been allocated for the upgrade of the geochemical lab, to allow for the chemical analysis of rock samples locally. For the 2015 financial year, the Ministry was allocated \$290,000 for the same purpose. With that sum, the Department was able to begin the renovations of the laboratory to an OHS compliant laboratory. With its budget for the first half of this year, the Department was able to facilitate the safe disposal of hazardous chemicals professionally.

With this new allocation of \$250,000, we will be able to continue with the purchasing of laboratory equipment to enable us as a country, to analyse locally what would normally be sent overseas for analysis. So, in yesterday's contributions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when heard from the Honourable Dulakiverata that the allocation for that particular purpose was not enough, I would like to assure him and the House that it is enough for our purposes for the year.

The Environment Unit of the Department of Mineral Resources has been upgraded to a division, to manage environmental issues from the mining sector and also on State land development. An increase in allocation for this particular division is also thankful.

Groundwater Resources and Development: Mr. Deputy Speaker, access to clean water remains one of Government's key priorities. To help in realising Government's goal for accessible clean and safe water as promised in the Constitution, we have been allocated a sum of \$1.23 million for groundwater assessment and development. This is to alleviate water supply problems in rural areas with little to no access to proper water supply. A total of 20 boreholes were drilled in 2015, a total of seven boreholes had been drilled so far in 2016, and one reticulated at Navutu Settlement in Nadroga.

A new initiative of the Ministry is the reticulation of productive boreholes to provide clean and safe water from the ground to the people. Currently, reticulation work is being conducted at five locations - Navakawau Village in Taveuni, Kiobo Village, Kubulau District School, Namalata Village and Raviravi Village in the District of Kubulau in Bua. The increased budget for this activity enables us to also consider the facilitation of the reticulation of water to communities, apart from the drilling process. Reticulation thus far has been funded by beneficiary communities themselves or by other donors and stakeholders, both within Government and outside of it.

There has been an increasing activity of earthquakes and tsunamis around the world, and there is a need for Fiji to increase its monitoring and preparation for such potentially catastrophic events, to ensure the reduction of the threat to the livelihood of all Fijians.

In this Budget the Seismology Unit of the Mineral Resources Department has received an allocation of \$293,000, which is an increase of \$186,000. This is to cater for the 24/7 operation of the Earthquake and Tsunami Monitoring Unit of the Ministry. The strengthening of this Unit means a boost for natural disaster preparedness for our country. Because of this role, the Unit works very closely with the National Disaster Management Office in mapping responses to windows of opportunity created by the threat of natural disasters.

As part of the Ministry's contribution towards rebuilding and restoration post-*Cyclone Winston*, part of the Department of Mineral Resources' budget for the current financial year was diverted to geotech surveys for the identification and assessment of new village sites.

The Land Use Division: Since its inception, a total area of approximately 2,500 hectares of *iTaukei* land has been leased. With the total number of 37 leases managed by the Division to date, a total revenue of around \$6 million has been generated by these leases, directly benefiting the landowning units financially. This, in turn, stimulates economic growth. The target for the next financial year for the budget we have been given for this year, is to complete the development of two subdivisions in the Western Division.

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a work programme for the next financial year as recognised in the Budget, brings forth the need to work in collaboration with other Ministries and stakeholders, whose roles are closely aligned to our core functions to contribute to the improvement of livelihoods.

We will, therefore, continue to establish various inter-agency forums, to ensure that there is co-ordination in the implementation of our capital projects and programmes in the next financial year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy with what the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources has been allocated with for the 2016-2017 financial year, and I am certain that with the concerted effort from the team within the Ministry and the budget we have been allocated, the Ministry will be able to realise its aim in attaining best results in its core functions.

I fully support the Appropriation Bill and I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker and Honourable Members, for your attention.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you.

I will call upon the Honourable Minister for Economy to deliver his right of reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would now like to provide my response. Normally, in providing a response is providing clarification on many of the issues that have been raised, but in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know where to start from, given the pathetic level of performance from the other side of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was listening to the proceedings when I was not here because I was upstairs, and again, as I have said in this House before, I was reminded of the Marist Brothers who taught me. One particular Brother, Brother Eugene Flaherty, who actually took me for oratory contest competitions that I went to, always told me that when having a debate and people attack you personally, when they personalise matters - when they talked about your hair, your looks, your religion, where you come from, and they do not stay on the topic, you know that they have already lost the argument. He said, "You must always be there for in a much superior position when they do that."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is precisely what has happened. They have to come to this debate and have personally attacked me. They have obfuscated figures, they have made a big shenanigan about economy. They have personalised matters. Honourable Tikoca who is not here read out the names of selective people because they are of the Muslim faith. He forgot to mention the names of other people, of other faiths, of other ethnicities, he selectively did that. Why? I will tell you why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because he reared his 1987 head again, led by the leader of their party who sits outside this Parliament.

Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, who is inside this Parliament also joined the fray by personalising matters, saying that I control the Judiciary and the DPP's Office. The DPP issued a Press Statement, there is absolutely no control on those independent offices. They have re-used RIEs to say that I control that. RIE has been a feature of the budgetary system in Fiji since Independence, yet they have chosen to do that. It is a pathetic display of the level of debate and the intellect that have been shown and I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Fiji are sick and tired of this. They are sick and tired of the Opposition constantly rolling into this fray of ethnicity, as the Honourable Usamate had pointed out, rather than focussing on the issues. And I can also tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what they are really sick and tired of; they are sick and tired of people like the NFP leader, who sits there in silence, listening to the veiled bigotry that is taking place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to read out a poem from Martin Niemoller, who talked about the Nazi Germans. He said; "First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Communists and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for me,

and there was no one left to speak out for me.” Honourable Professor Prasad, remember that, the kind of bigotry that is taking place behind your back, can come one day and bite you.

(Laughter)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- A Point of Order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I find it actually quite glaring that the....

HON. J. USAMATE.- What is your Point of Order?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The Point of Order is this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Honourable Attorney-General and his Prime Minister as well, on a number of occasions have lumped NFP with issues that....

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- What is the Point of Order?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The Point of Order is this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Honourable Minister must stick to the Budget. He is casting aspersions. The reason why he is saying that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because he wants to....

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member, we have your point. The floor is yours, Honourable Minister.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Point of Order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have not finished.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- He told you to sit down!

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- We have got your point, Honourable Member.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Attorney-General is trying to create ill will...

(Laughter)

... by saying that I am keeping quiet.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, you are!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, I made the response. There are Members of Parliament on this side, they have the right to raise issues and the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy has the right to reply to that. Why is he dragging me there? Because he knows, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in the next Elections, we will deal with them.

(Laughter)

People are going to support the National Federation Party, they are fed up with you people. That is why you want to lump me with everyone else.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member, we have your point.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What a pathetic Point of Order! What are a pathetic performance by the spokesperson for the Opposition on the economy! What a pathetic performance and they have the audacity to tell us to stick to the Budget when three quarters of all their submissions were on non-budget issues. It was on misrepresentation, that is what happened.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is playing the race card because it is very convenient for them to keep saying; “oh, these people are concentrating on this. Biman Prasad is not saying this.” Very, very convenient to tell the people that they should not support NFP.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Whip had asked a ruling on Standing Order 62(4). You had said for them to continue. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the right to also respond to that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is this, their debate entirely crumbles into personalisation of matters. The entire response crumbles into them having their small little constituencies when the entire electoral system of the Fijian elections system as set out in the Constitution is about all of us being concerned about every single Fijian, irrespective of where they live.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again I say this point, they chose to read out the names of selected group of people, yet did not read other names of other people in boards in the Civil Service, as head of security agencies. It is pathetic! They want to run a modern nation state, yet at a drop of a hat, they would start dividing us and the audacity of the Honourable Leader of the NFP to say that we are playing the race card. How can that be, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, this shows the logic or lack of that, that exists on the other side of the House. They read out selected countries of economy. Let me read out where selected countries also had Ministry of Economy - Slovenia, Israel, Lithuania Spain, Mauritius (they usually love to quote), Hungary, Cook Islands, Japan, Ukraine, Netherlands, Georgia, the State of Ontario, Latvia and Slovak Republic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition who has left, did not read out these names. The Honourable Whip of the Opposition did not read out these names. I am raising these issues to demonstrate the obfuscation that is taking place. The selective use of information to steer the debate in a very skewed manner and so the people of Fiji must know what they are doing, how they are obfuscating. Let me also point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the kind of inconsistencies that came out from the other side.

Honourable Nawaikula said that when he met a group of people in Vanua Levu, they said that Government said that it will carry out development, the FijiFirst Government carry out development and he said, he told them; “no”. He said; “it is the responsibility of all governments. It is not a big deal. We are only doing what we are supposed to be doing”. Absolutely right! We are only doing what we are supposed to be doing. Unfortunately, none of the other governments did it. That is why we are lumped with this huge level of development that we have to carry out. The reality is, none of the other governments cared. Today, this Government is going into areas the Honourable Minister for Education read out, how we are going to Kadavu, how we are going to other parts of Fiji, interior of Naitasiri and various other places. People in Naitasiri who used to see the electrical lines over their villages did not get electricity, today they have electricity.

There are many other groups of people who today have the services that they did not have. None of the other governments did anything about it. That is a pathetic performance. The Honourable Kiliraki talks about the Constitution being shoved down his throat, on the other hand, the Honourable Bilitavu and the Honourable Nawaikula used the Constitution and said; "We must give our rights under the Constitution." Which one is it? You want it or you do not want it?

The Honourable Aseri Radrodro, whom we have a lot of respect for, says that there should have been an exemption on corporate taxes because of *Tropical Cyclone Winston*. Honourable Gavoka said that tax rates are too low, which one is it? Which one is it? What do they want? You want tax rates high, you want tax rates low, you want tax exemption or you do not want tax exemptions. They say that they are for all Fijians, at least, that is the spin that is now being put on by the leader who is not in Parliament, he is saying he is for all Fijians. They also sometimes say that as well, yet they automatically boiled down the assessment into ethnicity.

Honourable Gavoka talked about how we must have the *qoliqoli* tax, service tax, et cetera. Has he discussed and thought about; "What about the other parts of Fiji where there is lack of tourism, the interior of Naitasiri where there is not a single hotel, where they have very little *qoliqoli* apart from rivers?" There are many other parts where *iTaukei* people live where there are no hotels. How will we benefit them? How will that Service Turnover Tax (STT) or *qoliqoli* tax benefit them?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it goes to show the lack of thinking and the lack of economic understanding of how taxes work. When taxes are collected, Mr. Deputy Speaker, taxes are used to redistribute services and wealth. If we use the same logic, that means all the businesses that pay taxes in Fiji, we should be have a special road for them. We should have special street lighting for them because they are the ones paying VAT.

No! Taxes are used to provide services to every citizen, so when we collect STT or VAT, we use that money to provide services to all Fijians, whether they have less *qoliqoli*, no *qoliqoli*, whether there is a hotel, or no hotel, and whether they live in maritime areas or rural areas, that is what we do with taxes, so that you provide services. So, today we have unprecedented levels of service and assistance to those people at the bottom end of the socio-economic scale in Fiji, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is how we do that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, inherent in that philosophy, there is also an assumption that there are homogenised groups. There is no homogenised groups, even within Indo-Fijians, Chinese, *iTaukei*, whoever else you want to think about; there are rich and there are poor, they are connected and not connected people, there are people who have access to land and people who do not have access to land, so this homogenised views of our society or our economy, will actually be a disaster if that side ever sit on this side.

We have Honourable Radrodro again talking about FRA and WAF, being private entities, they are not private entities. He worked for Fiji Sports Council. He knows about financial dealings with Fiji Sports Council. He knows how it was dealt with. They received Government grants. They are not a private entity. How can you have a spokesperson not knowing the distinction between a private entity, a corporate entity and a statutory entity?

They say that Civil Service is undermined by using a letter from a civil servant who himself is discredited, for him to be monitored for his attendance at work, and they hold it up with such pride. This is the level of credibility that they are bringing into this House.

Honourable Salote Radrodro, we have issued out two ministerial statements in this House talking about the Civil Service Reform, you were probably not listening then. We talked about the roll out of the merit based appointment system. The funding has come from the Australians. When you go to their cocktails, ask them that. When you go to an invitation, ask them that. They gave over \$3 million, that is how they are being funded. The open merit recruitment and selection guideline has already been rolled out, 623 civil servants have also been trained in that area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need civil servants who are not absent from work. We need civil servants who just because they are directors of a particular department, do not take all overseas trips, Honourable Vadei, knows very well about that.

(Laughter)

We need civil servants, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who are high performers, who are service-orientated, and Honourable Salote Radrodro knows about that because she was a former Director. We need civil servants whose family members do not personally receive Government grants such as eco-tourism, and Honourable Tikoca would know about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we have done in the Civil Service reform is that, we have carried out the roll out and it will be done in the next few months on job evaluation, discipline guideline, performance guidelines, training and staff development, nurses and teachers specifically.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many civil servants who are high performers at the moment. There are many civil servants who are also not high performers at the moment. We need a Civil Service that is service orientated, that people are appointed on merit, that promotions are on merit. What is wrong with that? We need to discuss issues with people who know what they are talking about, have the ability to understand the issues, are able to understand when you roll out ministerial statements, if they were so concerned, they could have had discussions with us after we rolled out the ministerial statements. There have been ministerial statements.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is this, salaries in the Civil Service are being renewed and the reality is also this, we have also set job evaluation exercises for 132 positions which have been carried out and they will also be rolled out very soon. It is a pattern that we are seeing being developed and the House will be informed about it in due course when the time is right and perhaps, when the Opposition has the appetite to understand such matters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me get on to some facts and figures. The spokesperson for the Opposition himself is contradicted by saying that there is a list of common features in the past budgets for the FijiFirst Government when really that points out to a level of consistency that is unprecedented. The level of consistency, the philosophical basis behind that has been extremely consistent. This is why the Honourable Netani Rika read out the feedback that we have received from the private sector which has been extremely consistent. Contrary to claims, economic growth has been consistent and sustainable.

The Fijian economy grew by 5.3 percent in 2014 and further expanded by 4.2 percent in 2015. For the 2016 calendar year, the economy is expected to grow by 2.4 percent. The impact of the 2016-2017 Budget is expected to further raise this growth. That projected 2.4 per cent growth is a remarkable achievement in itself, given the devastating effects of *TC Winston*. Out of the 21 economic sectors, 16 are expected to grow. The only sectors that are expected to contract include agriculture, sugar (manufacturing of sugar which has an impact on the manufacturing sector), forestry and water obviously for various specific reasons because of *TC Winston*.

The fact is the Fijian economy is poised to grow for seven consecutive years, seen only once in Fiji's post-independence history and from 2013 to 2015, the economy grew by 4.4 percent for three consecutive years. The assertion that debt level has increased by 40 percent from 2006 to 2014 is an incomplete assessment of the state of government's overall finances.

What the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad failed to highlight that over the same period, Government revenue excluding asset sale increased from \$1.4 billion to \$2.3 billion, an increase of 64.3 percent. In addition, Fiji's GDP which, in simple terms, is the value of all goods and services produced in the economy almost doubled from \$5.3 billion in 2006 to below just \$10 billion in 2016. These are facts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Honourable Professor Prasad also failed to look at solvency and liquidity indicators to assess the Government's debt position. In fact, these debt matrices explicitly highlight Government's sound and sustainable fiscal position. Debt as a proportion of GDP has been declining. It was hovering around 53 percent in 2006 and gradually declined to 46.3 percent by 2015. The debt to GDP ratio for 2016-2017 is projected to be 50.4 per cent. This figure includes the 4.7 per cent net fiscal deficit, resulting from the additional expenditure of \$207.9 million specifically for *TC Winston Rehabilitation*. If this important one-off expenditure is excluded, the projected deficit for 2016-2017 would be 2.6 per cent and the corresponding debt ratio would have been 47.8 per cent of GDP.

The 'B'+ rating for long-term foreign and local currency sovereign rating released by Standard & Poor's, an international credit rating agency yesterday, further demonstrated Government's prudent and robust economic management. The Moody's Rating Agency also earlier upgraded Fiji's credit rating from negative to stable. These ratings further demonstrate that Government is well-positioned to absorb any unexpected shocks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me further elucidate on the debt because they have talked a lot about the debt and I do not think they understand about it, they simply look at figures and say; "Oh, this is debt."

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Please, listen! You've lost your credibility.

Let me provide a synopsis of the Government's debt and capital expenditure.

In the 10 years from 1997 to 2006, debt stock increased by \$1.3 billion while capital expenditure amounted to \$2 billion. In the following decade - 2007 to 2016, Fiji's debt stock is projected to increase by \$1.7 billion, 0.4 percent billion higher than the previous period. The capital expenditure, however, in this period was \$6.5 billion, more than threefold compared to the previous period. The two critical points to be noted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that in the previous period - 1997 to 2006, for every capital investment of \$1.53, a dollar was borrowed by the governments prior to 2006. In comparison, the Bainimarama Government and now the FijiFirst Government borrowed a dollar for every \$3.82 invested in capital. This reflects, both the quality of government expenditure and prudent management of our fiscal affairs contrary to Honourable Prasad's views.

At the end of 2006, \$2.86 billion was inherited by the Bainimarama Government as debt stock from the previous government which we are still paying off. So, they need to understand when they talk about debt, it was not just accumulated by this Government, it was also accumulated by the previous Government. Honourable Prasad needs to tell them that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the FijiFirst Government is very strategic, cost and risk conscious when it comes to borrowing. We aggressively pursue blended financing. The approval of US\$31 million or \$64.6 million grant for the urban water supply and waste water management project by Green Climate Fund in late 2015 is evident of Government's pursuit for cheaper funds or free funds, but it also is an indication of how the other agencies view us as prudent financial managers.

The fact that the Honourable Minister for Agriculture highlighted about the fact in Head 50, we have the EU giving us direct budgetary support to provide assistance to the agriculture sector in access of \$20 million, that in itself is an indication. Generally, when you have funding such as that, they tie it in to themselves, they will disburse the funds but they have actually put the funds directly into our own bank account.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they talked about contingent liabilities, this also must be cleared. Contingent liabilities is not a new thing, this has been done since the Alliance days, the NFP, the FLP Coalition, the SVT, the FLP and the SDL days. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Prasad speaks about high debt to GDP ratio by including the contingent liabilities.

The reality is that, in the past 10 years, there has been no call on the guarantees. Honourable Prasad likes to make mountains out of molehills, of course. The Government's debt composition guideline which has been developed in consultation with the World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat (they love the Commonwealth) is sound and well thought-out. Our focus is not primarily on the level of debt but also on the composition to safeguard against any downside risks. We continue to follow debt strategy of maintaining domestic to external debt mix with the range of 70:30, plus or minus 5 percent of total debt.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government's operating revenue collections are more than sufficient to meet its operating expenditures. Let me explain this very simply to the other side of the House.

What we gained as revenue is enough to pay for what we need to run Government on a day to day basis - paying for your salaries, paying for Parliament, paying for the running of vehicles, photocopying, salaries of civil servants, et cetera, it is enough to pay for that. We only borrow when we want to build, and that Mr. Deputy Speaker, is something that we need to do.

Sale of Assets is not a new thing, but of course, they talked about how we did not sell in 2014/2015, because we are not selling for the sake of it. We are not selling our assets simply to fund our budget. We are selling it from a strategic perspective, where we get the right partners. You have seen the change in the ports where we have divested, not all our shares but some of our shares; we have seen the turnaround time improved by 33 percent of the ships. They no longer impose a levy on the containers that used to come to Fiji before where they used to impose a levy because it was inefficient. So, we are looking at strategic partners and we will find the strategic partners, and we have some very, very good partners at the moment on foot.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is this, I can go on about the facts and figures, but I am sure that we will debate the various Heads.

The fact is, this Budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has spun them out of control. They do not know how to react to it, they really do not know how to react to it.

(Chorus of interjections)

Here we have a budget that is taking care of the rebuild, here is a budget that maintains increased financial prudence, here is a budget that also addresses the employment issues pertaining to our youth, graduates, and also the disabled people in our country. No other government has done such an extensive assessment and assistance to this group of people. So, the reality is, we know they said they will go down to the people. We also go, there is a lot more of us on this side so obviously, we can cover bigger ground, there is a lot more of us and we get the feedback. The feedback is extremely positive, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

With those few words, I recommend that this Budget be positively approved and that we can then go into the Committee of Supply.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you. I thank the Honourable Minister for Economy for his right of reply.

I wish to welcome the students of Assemblies of God Primary School to Parliament, I hope that you will learn something new from your visit to Parliament today.

Honourable Members, pursuant to Standing Order 99(3), the 2016-2017 Appropriation Bill 2016, Bill No. 35/2016, has now been read for the second time and without any questions being put, the Bill and the Estimates now stand referred to the Committee of Supply.

We will now adjourn for lunch and we will resume at 2.42 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 1.42 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.50 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.— Thank you, I have been informed that Item 5 on today's Order Paper has been deferred until tomorrow and will be dealt with before we resume the Committee of Supply. We will now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

Now, the Parliament will form the Committee of Supply to consider each Head in our Budget Estimates. This process is envisaged to be completed on Thursday and then the Committee of Supply will vote on the schedules and Clauses of the 2016-2017 Appropriation Bill 2016.

Pursuant to the agreement reached between the Whips we will attempt to complete debate on votes on Heads 1 to 20 before today's adjournment. For the Committee stage, I will sit at the table with the Secretary-General and Members should refer to me as Madam Chair. The mace will also be placed in a bracket under the table. The Secretary-General will announce each Head separately. Members may then stand to speak on that Head, you may speak more than once on each Head. You may also move amendments to the estimates in that Head.

If a Member does not move an amendment, debate will then be on the Head and the amendment. At the end of the debate the amendment or amendments will be voted on first and then followed by vote on the Head.

Please be reminded that amendments in Committee of Supply are limited to those permitted in Standing Order 100(2). This is either an increase, decrease or removal of the item or sub head from the Head being debated.

Finally the debate, if any, should be confined to the Head, sub head or item referred to. Any debate must be relevant, concise and not repetitious. Having said that because the Estimates run the full breadth of Government's expenditure and revenue, the debate will be far reaching but must be relatable to the Head being debated. There are Heads 1 through 50 which we need to get through and therefore I will be vigilant in order Members to cease speaking if I feel the rule of the Committee process is being breached.

Honourable Members, I ask for your co-operation.

In Committee:

Head No. 1 – Office of the President

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Chair, for the Office of the President Head No.1, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 1 on the Established Staff. How many established staff are being budgeted for here, Madam Chair because I see there is a reduction in the amount from the actual in 2014 to 2015, 2015 to 2016 and now 2016 to 2017? Can be an explanation for that, Madam Chair?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments? It is now on debate and Members may speak more than once of up to 20 minutes. The fact that the Budget has been reduced as has been mentioned really reflects the needs of the President's Office right now. It seems that the reduction will cater for the establishment they have at the moment.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- So, there is a reduction in staff, Madam Chair?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- It looks like it, but we are debating on the Budget as has been presented by the President's Office. Any clarification?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Chair. The Honourable Leader of Opposition raised a pertinent point. If you look at the comparison, if you look at the revised Estimate and you have the Estimate itself because we are changing the financial year, what we have done with 2015-2016, as you know prior to this, we had the calendar year. So, you will find as we go along some of the areas that may show reduction, some they may show decrease because you are borrowing some from the previous year (Hon. Prof. Prasad will know this) and some from the other year. So, there may be a slight variation. The true reflection of the variation will get once we do the following year, the 2017-2018 variation.

But to answer your question, Honourable Leader of the Opposition through you Madam Chair, is that what we should be concerned about is more the amount of money that has been allocated to the actual SEG in the respective Activity or the Programme.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- So, Madam Chair, in view of that, for next year looking at the trend, that means there will be a further reduction because that is what happened over the three years.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you have clarification, Honourable Attorney-General?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Not necessarily.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Further to that question by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I think we need the number that has been allocated to SEG 1 and 2 before we can move a motion whether we need to increase or decrease the allocation that has been provided there. Is there any number that is attached to this allocation in SEG 1 and SEG 2 in terms of staffing.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I think it is again ...as I tried to highlight earlier on is that you get some slight variation because you are not actually comparing in the previous years when you had straight out calendar years, you will be able to compare, for example 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. Now, in order for us to be able to give you a point or reference because the financial year will now begin from August to July of next year, what we had to do in order to give you the 2015-2016 comparison, we had to borrow some from this year and some from last year. So, that is how we came up with that. So, if you look at the difference

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- We are after the numbers.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- If you look at the difference, it is a question of \$4,000, it is not a break-in at the bank. It is a question of \$4,000. Now, again as we have highlighted the general philosophy behind it, as the other Honourable Ministers would also tell you, as you will find in the others, as you will recall from last year's budget when we had the calendar here, we stopped giving the number of established figures because it depends on the needs of the respective ministries. Again some of the ministries have already started, for example, with the restructuring that they have been doing, in some instances, they are now paying higher salaries but not necessarily with the increase in the numbers.

So, this is how it works. What we are concerned about is the actual budget pocket sum and the Permanent Secretaries and the Ministers cannot break that. So, the point is that in here you have \$4,000 and then with the wage earners you have a difference of a little over \$40,000.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, just a clarification from the Minister that might be useful. We have the actual for 2014 and 2015 and then you have the revised estimate for 2015 and -2016 and then of course an estimate for 2016 and -2017. I am assuming that the consolidation is exactly from the month of 1st August right up to 31st July for those years (2014 and 2015) and then it has been forwarded through.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, Sir, I did not get you.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I was just saying that you have actual for 2014 and 2015 so what I understand you would have done was to look at the actual from 1st August to 31st July, 2015 and then from 1st August, 2015.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is precisely what we have done.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Okay.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- In terms of the actual numbers to go back to the Leader of the Opposition, there is no decrease *per se* of the staffing numbers. In the same way, for example, with some of the other ministries, their Ministers would also tell you, for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He may find in the old structures that we have with the reforms that is going on, they may have been for example five Senior Administrative Officers. He may decide and with the reform that is going on, that whilst he has given the same amount of money, he may not necessarily need five Senior Administrative Officers. He could actually have three but pay them a higher salary, get better quality people. So that is how it works.

This is the kind of attitude that has been given. So, what we are saying, you need to be concerned about the actual figures themselves. So the actuals, you are right, what we have done is the actual spent in half of 2014, half of 2015, the reason why we have revised for 2015/2016 is because the books for 2016 is not closed yet. So that is what I am saying, it is a revised estimate.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- When you actually do the estimate for 2016/2017, I suppose the expenditure for the first six months because the budget started in January, probably would be less than what happens beyond June, July or August. So I am hoping that the estimate that you have for 2016/2017 actually reflects that variance that you usually see in the normal expenditure pattern.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, I think it is given. The fact is that you do have a variance, with the books do not close, obviously and this is with the President's office at the moment. One of the things that we are obviously trying to also do which has been bit of a problem for many decades in Fiji, particularly with FMIS, is actually closing the books.

In some countries the book actually closes three days after or in Singapore they actually close the book on the day the book is supposed to be closed. In Fiji, we have seen a trend where because of the FMI System the book tends to close a lot later.

I think it maybe a pertinent point also, Madam Chair, to raise and this is one of the issues that we talk about accountability and one of the reasons we have talked about. We have seen in some

Ministries, we have seen in one particular instance where they send in the 'R' for a particular capital construction, when the money was disbursed, the officials in that Ministry used that money to pay for something else.

So this is why we are trying to tighten it to ensure that when there is a 'R', if you say for example 'R' to build school Acts and they make this submission, it comes to the Ministry of Finance official, the desk officer looks at all the contractual documents and they say yes we need to pay \$2 million now.

When the money is released to FMIS, we found that they actually used that \$2 million to pay for other things. So this is the reason why we are tightening things up in that respect, so as far as our jobs is concerned in this committee of supply is to ensure that the actual funds that have been allocated it does not get busted. But internal wise, it may not get busted, we need to ensure that the allocation is actually specifically for that. So these are some of the issues that we have raised and as we have said in the Budget Speech about Internal Audit processes will need to be improved.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you Madam Chair, going back to the original question I think probably we would have already said that needs that arise in that particular office, the Office of the President and the clarification that has been given by the Honourable Minister of Economy. Well the original question is if you could give the amount of established staff.

I think last year, we were also given the same question where he had revealed that there are 22 positions at the Office of the President and there are about 15 unestablished staff but given the figure that is given now, one of his answers last year, they normally are given an envelope and they will decide on how many staff they would like to recruit but given that idea now that a particular Ministry might be able to stand fully whether this particular figure that is in the estimate and whether it will also consider the new needs of the office or there will be new people coming in or there is an established 24 position like he said last year Just for clarification..

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, when we have budget consultations, all the different Ministers come together with their Permanent Secretaries. Obviously in the case of His Excellency, the President, he does not come but the official Secretary of his office comes and they make submissions and these figures are arrived at in consultation and agreement with the respective Ministries. So it is there to cater for their need as required.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I do not know but I feel that this issue, is an issue to be discussed prior to coming to Parliament before this amount was confirmed, isn't it? On how many staff and all these details should have been made during the phase before the Parliament phase. We are now into the Parliament phase and if there is an astronomical amount, then you should be concerned.

I think we had mentioned that we will have to try and be succinct on this one and if you really need to know the numbers, it is a reduction and not an increase. So if it was an astronomical increase, then we should be worried but it is a reduction which means they may have tightened up. Like I said this discussions should have been made before this Parliament phase.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, just to show that no one misquotes you, the variation that is there, I mean the comparison, like I said does not necessarily mean that there is a reduction per say because of the fact that we are starting a fresh and a new financial year, so the comparison to the previous year is done with the financial year that was not done from August to July.

As I said that as we continuously go throughout, you will find that there are some variations but they are not necessarily capturing the true variation per say.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- It is just that the question was on the reduction and that is why they wanted the numbers.
Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Madam Chair, on SEG 3, for travel. You have travel there and we also have overseas travel on that same SEG. This is for His Excellency, the President and his wife, what about the security detail? Is there anyone else included in this allocation for domestic travel?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, you will see in other travels too, for example in the Honourable Prime Ministers one, you will see that we have segregated the travel for overseas travel and of course the local travel and that is how the break down is. So one is domestic and one is overseas.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- I now that Minister for Economy but does that include his security detail also in this?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, absolutely.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- As I have mentioned the debate is really on the increase or decrease. If you want to increase, decrease or if you want to remove, that is the debate. So what is it that you want? You want an increase or decrease?

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- It just seems to me, Madam Chair, for that \$77,000, since he needs to travel around a lot, I am just wondering whether that is adequate for his needs because that also includes his security detail?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Like I said, Madam Chair, all of this is done in consultation with the Excellency Office and this is obviously adequate and we have complied with that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. It is open for debate.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- SEG 4, Madam Chair, on spare parts and maintenance. We are really concerned about what happens to the First Lady, His Excellency's wife who had that accident. She was in the Government vehicle when that accident happened and that is why we are concerned about the quality of staff, meaning what type of drivers do they have there, are they safe? Because she had that accident which could have been worse.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I think that is not an issue of the budget.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- So in terms of spare parts and maintenance, the motion here is to increase that amount, Madam Chair, to be increased by \$45,800 in respect of spare parts and maintenance for that particular SEG. We want vehicles up there to be safe.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- On what basis are you arriving at that figure, \$45,800?

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- That is in respect of spare parts and maintenance, Madam Chairperson. We spoke to the people in the garages, they say that it means spark plugs and those types of things that

are cleaned and not well maintained. So, that is the costing that we have looked at and they would need that for the vehicle, Madam Chair.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the increase in the amount for spare parts and maintenance does not mean that the accident would not have happened and nor does it mean it will prevent any accidents, but we can be rest assured in this Committee of Supply that His Excellency's vehicles are safe vehicles, they are all road worthy vehicles, they meet the LTA Standards and by increasing the Budget, it does not mean that accidents will not happen.

Madam Chair, that is all I can say in respect to this. I mean, it is enough for them and we have agreed and they have agreed and they do not believe that this is going to affect them adversely.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Madam Chair, we drive around in vehicles ourselves but we do not have accidents like that. They need to be sure that it is well maintained and the drivers are safe drivers.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- This figure was submitted by them, the drivers themselves.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.-That is my motion, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There is no motion, you will have to move an amendment to that, but then you must have a very strong justification to move an amendment, especially with the figures that you have mentioned.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- It is not much, Madam Speaker, that Head 1 – Office of the President, be increased by \$45,800.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will give you a slip for the amendment that you are proposing.

We will now move on, are there any other comments, particularly Head 1?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I do support the motion for an increase in that, Madam Chair.

The only indication that we have here in this House is the numbers. I agree with what the Honourable Attorney-General said that the increase in numbers or decrease does not mean that there will be an action but here, we are only guided by numbers. And relative to what has happened, it means that the numbers are not enough. It means the numbers allocated last year was not enough to avoid that problems, so we need to increase it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You have supported that motion?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes, I am supporting the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The amendment is being drafted. Honourable Bulitavu?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- The Honourable Minister for Economy, given that there is also a Government Vehicle Leasing Programme and there is an allocation here for maintenance and spare parts, do they have vehicles that are leased out or is it their own vehicle?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- His Excellency's fleet?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Some of the vehicles are leased out, there are some of the older vehicles of course throughout Government. Some of the vehicles of course owned outright by Government, the older ones. Some of the newer vehicles in some of the Ministries, the specialised ones are also bought. You do not lease specialised vehicles.

In respect of how many vehicles are leased and how many are not leased, when you say His Excellency's fleet at the moment, I cannot give you that information. I might give it you in the evening.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other input to this debate?

There being none, we have an amendment that we will have to deal with before we debate on the Head.

An amendment has been moved by the Honourable Leader of Opposition, that:

Head 1 - Office of the President be increased by \$1,600 in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 4 - Spare Parts and Maintenance, from \$44,200 to \$45, 800 and this motion on this amendment has been seconded, we will now put it to the vote.

Vote Cast:

Ayes	-	14
Noes	-	28
Not voted	-	10

Motion is defeated.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

Head 1 – Office of the President

Head No. 2 – Office of the Prime Minister

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- For the Office of the Prime Minister, the floor is now open for any comments?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Chair, on Head 2-1-1(3), can the Honourable Minister explain why there is a substantive increase of \$1,500,000 in Overseas Travel? Why is there an increase, Madam Chair?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Can you just repeat what you have said?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Why is there a great increase, Madam Chair, on Overseas Travel for the Prime Minister?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Would you like to move an amendment to increase, decrease or cancel?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- I only want an explanation on that, Madam Chair, whether that can also be clarified whether that includes the accommodation, meals and his security detail? The same question that I asked about His Excellency, the President.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I understand Head 2, Programme 1, Activity 1 is that what we are talking about?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Head 2, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 3.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, the increase Honourable Chair, the variance, I have just been given the figures by the Ministry which is about 4.2 percent. The reason it is being increased is because the Prime Minister does need to travel.

What we are trying to do in this Budget as we have done in the last couple of years, we have been trying to fine-tune all the allocations because we found a trend in particular many of the operational numbers is true for many Ministries because when there was an overspend in a particular SEG, they would vire from the other SEGs which is what we do not want to do. So, it is a true indication of the commitments the Honourable Prime Minister has.

As you know that he is a true statesman, he is recognised by the international community, he does get asked to come and speak in international events, and so he has to go. Therefore he does that, and that has actually put Fiji in the global stage. So, the subsistence of course, including the travel, the local travel and of course it also includes his entourage. The overseas travel is separately put in.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, I have two questions to the Honourable Minister. I see that Head 2-1-2 - International Cooperation and Research Division, I really do not see any element of research there in any SEG but maybe he can explain that.

The other one is SEG 10 – Small Grants Project of \$9 million. I understand that is handled by the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is micro-enterprise.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I am just wondering why is it here? Could it go with small and medium enterprises? I know the Honourable Prime Minister likes handing the grants.

Maybe it is better that it is moved to the Ministry which actually deals with small and medium enterprises and small grants.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The question is clear.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, Honourable Prasad as was highlighted in the Honourable Prime Minister's statement on the Budget, he highlighted the fact that the Small Grants Project is actually for, in particular, community projects. The Ministry of Industry and Trade allocation is actually given as a grant to people who want to develop their micro-enterprise businesses.

This, for example, takes care of, there may be a school that needs a water tank, there may be a school for example that does not a floor, water projects, et cetera. That is what it addresses. There has been allocation about this for a few years.

(Inaudible interjection)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The research, I am sure, the capacity is built-in. You have a new Permanent Secretary who has building the capacity in the PM's Office, but there would not specifically be a research *per se* allocation, but I am sure it is all being done.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chairperson, Head 2, Activity 1, SEG 7 – Special Expenditures.

Madam Chairperson, Climate Change is our new norm. The Honourable Prime Minister must need seed money for the Prime Minister Disaster Relief Fund. It is grossly unfair that when natural disasters strike the Prime Minister is expected to do fundraising when he needs to be the first one out there helping to access needs and being able to respond strategically to those immediately. I see a very small allocation of \$58.100. I mean if there is any other allocation out there in some other SEG, if not, then we will move to increase it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I think we will take that as a proposed amendment that you want to

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, no.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You want to remove it?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, I could not understand what you said, Honourable Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chairperson, this is on SEG 7 – Special Expenditure.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Which provision?

HON. P. SINGH.- Activity 1.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes. \$58,100.

HON. P. SINGH.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Protocol and Hospitality.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Protocol and Hospitality Expenses.

HON. P. SINGH.- Yes, Madam. This is Special Expenditures for Prime Minister and what I am trying to insert is that this must be increased because the Honourable Prime Minister must have seed money during disasters. Now with Climate Change, he needs to have more funds in his office in that section to attend to immediate needs of the people during disasters as the Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, this not for that. It says Protocol and Hospitality Expenses. I assume that is what we are talking about? Programme 1, Activity 1?

HON. OPPOSITION. MEMBER.- SEG 7.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- SEG 7.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- SEG 2

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Special Expenditure. Protocols and Hospitality Expenses (\$58,100).

HON. P. SINGH.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- But it has got nothing to do with disasters. Is to do with his office when there is protocol, when he gets visitors, et cetera, there are hospitality expenses that may need to be met because, for example, if he is entertaining a Prime Minister visiting dignitaries from overseas, that is what that expenditure is for.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chairperson, a new insert that this expenditure includes an immediate disaster response from the Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, when we get to Head 50, you will see as we did in last year's Budget, we have an allocation for immediate response to disasters, we actually have an allocation for that. It does not come from the PM's Office allocation under the Estimates.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Chairperson, I wish to ask a question on Head 2, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 1. There is a huge difference that I consider from \$2,538.3 million to \$1,943.3 million. Could you explain why the difference in that - Established Staff?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- As I said earlier on, Honourable Niko Nawaikula, these are revised estimates, we are taking from different parts. There is a variation that is shown, but the variance in fact as I have just got the figures from the Ministry of Finance that the variance in dollars terms is not there. There is no variance *per se* but unfortunately this is what is it. So from next year, for example, when we present the next Budget, we will be able to then compare the like financial years to with another like financial year. Thanks.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Chairperson, on Head 2, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 4 – Spare Parts and Maintenance. Since the Government has this vehicle leasing arrangement, does that include maintenance and servicing of vehicles? Or what is this spare parts and maintenance, Madam Chairperson?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, again as we stated, the entire Government fleet is not leased. The cars are not on a leased basis, some vehicles are leased, we are trying to get more vehicles in the lease programme, but obviously not all the vehicles can be leased.

So there are some that are still not leased, we are on them, but of course this also caters for, for example, in the event if there is a necessary need for any out of the lease expenses that may arise.

So for the first time also you will see there is a reduction overall of Government expenditure regarding maintenance of vehicles. Because we also now as part of the leasing arrangements, we also have comprehensive insurance that is covered as part of the leasing arrangement. So previously what used to happen was when a vehicle that was bought, if it had an accident, for example, if the left side got wiped off, if there was no specific allocation in that Ministry, it would be parked until they got the allocation for it. As someone highlighted the other day, we would then have those vehicles cannibalised because people take out parts from it because there was no budgetary allocation. So this essentially, Madam Chairperson, is that to cater for any out of expenses for vehicles that are not leased and any of the maintenance cost that may arise even from these vehicles.

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson, we just want the Honourable Prime Minister to be safe whilst his on the road. That is a safety question.

(Laughter)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6. I need an explanation or clarification why the Fiji Mahogany Trust is under the Office of the Prime Minister? Then I have a motion for an increase. I note that there is a big decrease from \$776,800 to \$250,000 for this year.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You would like to increase?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- To increase to \$600,000.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. We will give you a slip.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Then I need a clarification, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Clarification on why this is under the Prime Minister's Office?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The reason why that is because the Honourable Prime Minister is the Chairman of the Council and obviously as Chairman he deals with the Fiji Mahogany Trust. It has always been there, it was there last year too, Honourable Ratu Kiliraki, if you noticed it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other proposal for amendments? Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chairperson, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5 – MIS - Annual Maintenance Fees. I see there is a reduction in this allocation in the Estimate for 2016 from \$449,000 to \$211,000. Can the Honourable Minister explain what this MIS - Annual Maintenance Fee is, before I can move the motion to review that figure?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Clarification please.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sure. It is the software that is there within the office itself and that is the fee payable on annual maintenance fee base. I mean, why would you increase it? In the same way, if you look at the Ministry of Economy you have an agency that was negotiated by the previous Government in respect to the FMIS. We pay an Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) of \$1 million a year, so these figures are actually per the contract itself. Most annual maintenance fees, the annual maintenance contract are for software that is maintenance fee built into that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other input? There being none, thank you, we have another amendment.

HON. A.M. RADORDRO.- Madam Speaker, just another clarification on Programme 1, Activity 2. I note that the allocation for Operating Grants, SEG 2, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6. Can we get clarification on this?. This is a new allocation under SEG 6.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Which allocation are you saying?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 6.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Rotuma Island Council.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The total allocation is a new allocation under that SEG in the Budget. It is on page 16.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I could provide that clarification. As you know, Honourable Radrodro, that allocation has always been made. The Prime Minister's Office has always made those allocations. It is just that it is now being placed in a different SEG, with different Programme and Activity. It used to generally sit under (from recollection of memory) General Administration. Now, that has been separated from that particular Activity and put in a different Activity, this is why you see the previous year, it does not show anything at all to compare it with. The allocation is there, it always be within the Prime Minister's Office. It is just a relocation of it in a different activity.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Is that allocation consistent with previous years or has it every increased or decreased?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, there is consistency.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, there being no other input, Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- There is a new item that appears on Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 10 in the sum of \$9 million. Could you give explanation on that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Nawaikula, again as the answer to the Honourable Radrodro is that the Prime Minister has always had the small grants project. It is now relocated within a different activity. That is why we do not see an amount in the previous year.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Before we carry on, we seem to be having a number of repetitious issues coming. Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Just a quick one, Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 10, funds for the education of needy children. Is it for FENC allocation?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes.

HON. M.D. BULITAVFU.- Madam Chair, SEG 10, Programme 1, Activity 2 on Small Grants Projects, \$9 million.. Last year, it was \$7 million, Honourable Minister. This year, it is about \$9 million. Why there is an increase, what is the basis?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There is an increase in demand and obviously, as you would know, after Winston, there are places that may need small repairs in there. For example water tanks and the Honourable Prime Minister sends out his programme. He is the most extensively travelled Prime Minister in the history of this country. He has been to nearly every corner of Fiji, so it does go to the spaces and people do talk him. He does attend to these needs sometimes. Those needs have a value of \$1500 or even \$800. He does not give money, he actually gives particular projects or something that is needed, drainage is needed, the water storage, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, again the Honourable Dulakiverata hiding behind the Honourable Suliano Matanitobua saying that its campaign coming slowly, there were campaign funds, SDL had it, so they campaigned too.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- No.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Check the Budget, check the Budget. SODELPA, SDL, basically the same thing. SVT now, of course.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- I move that this amount should be reduced. *Vinaka*.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There is an amendment, please fill in the amendment form. While the amendment form has been filled, let us have a look at Programme 2 – Cabinet Office and that has also included the Prime Minister's Office. Any input to that?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Head 2, Programme 2, Activity 1. I was going to ask about spare parts and maintenance but know that, that is not about the Honourable Prime Minister but that is not the question. My question, Madam Chairperson, is on SEG 7. These are special expenditures. The question is the ex PM's benefit, \$100,000. I just want to ask the Honourable Minister for Economy because it was promised in this House, two former Prime Ministers, Laisenia Qarase that today would be a provision of a ministerial type vehicle and a driver and also an allocation for staff of \$30,000. Can the Honourable Minister elaborate on that – to clarify? Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The ex PM's benefits there obviously applies to the former Prime Ministers of Fiji who are alive and they of course, include Sitiveni Rabuka, Mahendra Chaudhry and Laisenia Qarase. There are certain provisions in the law that entitles them to certain benefits and in respect of the former Prime Minister, there are issues that he has raised and we have told him that we cannot, for example make those payments unlike he complies with the laws. For example, he has requested amounts to be paid for the salaries of staff and what we have said to him, he needs to provide evidence of the fact that those staff have actually been paid. To-date that has not been provided.

If you read the law that relates to this particular provision, it actually says it must be paid to the staff. If he says that he uses services of the staff, we need to know who were the staff that were employed and what were the amounts to him. It is not a blanket \$30,000 amount that needs to be paid to him. As far as the law is concerned, all the benefits that he is entitled, as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, there were some outstanding monies going back about two years ago, an amount of in excess of \$.5 million lump sum was paid to him before Christmas, I think the year before last and he has been whatever is due under the law, as far as his compliance by the recipients of these benefits with the law.

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- Madam Chair, I am only asking this question because our current Prime Minister, one day will be looking at this benefit also and we would like him to be treated fairly. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other input into this?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- And I will follow the law.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no other input, we will now deal with the proposed amendments.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Just one question, Madam Chair. Head 2, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 4 - the upkeep of PM's residence. It never appear in last year's Budget. This is the first time it is appearing.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We have to pay for the upkeep as required for the PM's official residence. As you know that His Excellency the President, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Chief Justice, there are three different Heads of the three arms of government and they need to be given an official residence. There needs to be a maintenance upkeep of that. You should be happy that we are actually showing so next year, you can pick on this to see whether it is over spent or under spent. This is why we are making specific provision as opposed to it being vired from other SEGs, as it was done previously, even with the previous Prime Ministers. Some of them have their homes renovated, of course, individual homes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, on the same activity – Head 2-1-2(5) – Goods and Services, there is an expense of Boards and Committees there. Can we get a clarification and details from the Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sure, the Boards and Committees, essentially there are certain Committees that the Boards and the Prime Minister attends to or his Office provides Secretariat services to, for example, the Mahogany Industry Council, or there may be other matters that the Honourable Prime Minister is involved in where his Office needs to look after those Boards and Committees. So, that is related to that.

Again, what we have done, you will find in all the Ministries, we have tried to break down the expenses as much as possible into finer details, so it is specific to that. Previously, it was kind of put in a General Fund and people used it. What we are trying to do is, there are specific expenses for specific areas of expenditure.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will now go on to the amendments. We will deal with the amendments.

The Honourable Ratu Kiliraki has moved that:

Head 2 be increased by \$600,000 in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6 – Fiji Mahogany Trust to increase from \$250,000 to \$600,000.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- I beg to second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Would you like to speak on your motion?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Yes, Madam Chair. We refer here to the Fiji Pine Trust, they have an allocation of \$0.6 million also. This motion is for this allocation to go to the Fiji Mahogany Trust to be able to help the landowners as is in the Fiji Pine Trust also, establish nurseries and to proceed further from their current position in the Fiji Mahogany Trust. So, the way forward is for this \$600,000 to be able to empower the landowners to be more proactive in the Mahogany Industry.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Does anyone else would like to speak on that motion? We have the amendment that I have just read.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, can I speak on that?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, again the Honourable Kiliraki has spoken about the Mahogany Trust and Mahogany Industry. Not once in the past two or three years has he taken out the opportunity to even sit down with us to try and understand what is happening. He simply comes here and gives his rhetoric, not even wanting to move away from what the changes, the recognition of the changes that has taken place. . He does not even understand what is happening with the replanting. He does not even want to acknowledge the fact that poundage s increased. He does not want to even acknowledge the fact that the lease payments have increased from the peppercorn rent that was paid previously.

He does not understand, nor does he want to understand the fact that FHCL, notwithstanding the fact when he talks about the glory old days, when all its hunky dory had a debt stock of more than \$16 million, today the debts stock is about \$4 million to \$5 million, he does not want to understand that. He is simply saying this allocation so that he start doing that. He thinks that just by increasing the \$600,000, that suddenly everything will become hunky dory.

You must take out the time, Honourable Kiliraki, if you are truly concerned about what is happening, if you really want to know, sit down with us and we will explain it to you. If after that you do not understand, if you do not appreciate, then we can go, part our ways, but at least please, make the effort. Try and stop misleading the people of Fiji with the rhetoric that you have come on board. On one hand you are complaining about sustainable Mahogany Industries Limited, you know just a few ago. Yesterday I heard you complaining about why they have left. You wanted them out. Now, they are out but you are even complaining about them. What do you want? That is the reality.

The reality is, Madam Chair, is that he is misleading, and the fact is, by changing this amendment, it is not going to make a difference. What will make a difference is a substantive

recognition of the fact that as a valuable resource, that we are trying to ensure that the landowners actually benefit from that, that the grading is done properly, the corruption stops in the forest where regrading is taking place one and two into four and five. These are the kind of things that are taking place.

If you read the objective of the law in place, it does even say, it is to empower the landowners, to ensure they get a bigger share and a bigger pie. He also does not recognise the fact that all the land lots that are held by the *iTaukei* landowners themselves where they do not fall under the FHCL lease, they are free, they are free to harvest that. They are free to sell it to whoever they want to. They are free to grade it whichever way they want. That is the fact.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- There is nothing to harvest.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You do not understand!

That is the fact, Honourable Kiliraki. Please, I urge you, if you are really concerned, come and talk to us.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Anyone would like to speak on that? Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- First, Madam Speaker, I wish to remind the Honourable Minister, what about you seek his advice. When you become personal, you are already lost, so speak to the issue.

(Chorus of interjections)

I do not think, Madam Chair, the Honourable Minister understands what the issue is. The issues from this side of the House is that, essentially, this was a resource that belonged to them.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, you do not understand.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Mahogany belonged to them, and there was

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It was owned by FHCL, you know that.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Chair, like Fiji Pine they were promised that this was going to be their port of gold, and it was taken away from them. So, how can you explain that hurt? That is the reason why time and time again we are addressing this issue, because you took it away from us. Why should you be administering it when it belonged to us? So, we will not, we will not be silence ever until this is resolved, and this is one of the way that we are doing it, within the opportunity that we have here, is to be inquisitive.

If you look at who will benefit from this Industry, everyone; the Government, those who cut the timber and those who are there overseas, and the minimum, the very minimum, the bark of what is left is given to the landowners under this so-called Fiji Mahogany Trust.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, no!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And, the amount that we are seeking here to increase it will help them. So, the issue is, this was our resource, you took it away from us, we will never be silent.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone else would like to speak on the motion?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, mahogany is a very sensitive one and also very confusing. More confusing when this lot took over.

(Laughter)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, I suggest a way out of this. We need to be all clear about it. If you ask everyone in this room today, if they understand mahogany, I do not think the majority will understand.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- (Inaudible)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- What I would suggest, Madam Chair, is for the Committee on Natural Resources to hold hearing on this and provide a report in Parliament so that we can all understand what it is. It sounds like a secret organisation. I mean, we only hear you say about the guitars and all that, but we do not really know what it is. It is like a secret society, operating on its own. So, Madam Chair, I suggest, put this to rest, get a Committee, Natural Resources to look into it, give us a report, we will understand it and everyone is happy. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Please, clarify do you want the amendment be put to rest?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The amendment is being put to rest.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, can I make the right of reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, just a clarification from you. Under the Committee of Supply, we are not restricted to talking only once, and I would like to clarify some of the assertions that have been made by the Honourable Nawaikula.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, do.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Chair. No one has taken away the ownership. Please, you know that, Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is ours, you took it away. It does not belong to the Government.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Nawaikula, please, do not just say it. Please, I do not want to get into this tit for tat.

Madam Chair, the Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited prior to the Mahogany Decree had those leases. Those leases were issued by TLTB (then NLTB) to Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited. Those leases are still held by Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited. That is a fact, that is a legal fact. You know that. Madam Chair, those leases continue so how has there been any infringement on the legal or the possessory rights of the landowners? It is simply a management of the leases by Fiji Hardwood Corporation and an attempt to brand the Fijian mahogany to a greater level so when we sell Fijian mahogany, we are going through a transition phase when the debts of Fiji Hardwood Corporation that

have been reduced by three-fold completely vanishes, we are then able to get the landowners to even get a bigger stake in it.

You had Fiji Mahogany Trust being a shareholder in Fiji Hardwood Corporation, a company that basically had a debt so the Fijian Mahogany Trust as shareholders who are also liable and culpable for the debts that they did not incur themselves. It was done prior to that. It was only after 2007, this is the irony of it, which is lost on them. Notwithstanding the fact that this is one of the most valuable resources, only after 2007 did Fiji Hardwood Corporation make a pittance of profit, prior to that, every single time, including when George Speight was around, they made losses. That is a reality. You do not need to take my word, go and read the annual reports going back to the 1990s, it is all there. Those reports were done before our time so the reality is, what used to happen, Madam Chair, is that, you had places like Nukurua where you had some unscrupulous business people coming along and maybe seeing the *turaga ni koro*, maybe seeing a chief, paying them, say maybe \$50,000 or \$10,000 but taking out \$0.5 million worth of timber out of the forest, \$1 million worth of timber out of the forest, this is why we used to see late at night all these trucks carrying heavy mahogany timber, but this was the kind of pilfering and the stealing that was going on.

What we are trying to do, what the law tried to do is to say, "Look, this is a valuable asset, we need to police it, we need to monitor it, so ultimately, everyone benefits from it". Some of the licence holders at the moment, Madam Chair, are also landowning units themselves who have access to that. As we said in this House, licence or grades 1 and 2 will again be called for tenders by the Mahogany Council, chaired by the Honourable Prime Minister. The licence was expired, it was not renewed, SMIL chose not to renew it, now tenders will be called. Anyone is free to apply for that. Honourable Ratu Kiliraki and his group can apply for that, whoever it is. That is the reality. You are now spinning a story to say it has been taken away. It is in the same way that if someone leases, some *itaukei* land or crown land, you are saying it is being taken away, no, they are being paid lease.

Honourable Nawaikula, you worked for TLTB, you should know the history of this. You would know that the landowners back in the 1950s when the British Government planted these mahogany forest, it was planted by them in the 1950s, that is why they are maturing now, they paid the peppercorn rent - one shilling, two shillings, that is what they were paid. They are no longer paid peppercorn rent. Please, accept the facts, these are the facts.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- There were arrangements.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What arrangements?

The reality is, they were paid peppercorn rents and we have now moved along. They are now being paid proper lease amounts, the reforestation took place, its stopped, it is going to recommence again. We have a very good CEO that is in place, we have Mr. Adrian Sofield who is the Chair of the Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited, that is lost on some people, they do not have their facts. These are the things, Madam Chair, that is taking place.

What we are saying is that these efforts actually will provide a fantastic windfall for the landowners. That is what is being done. There is not, in our interest to try and usurp anyone's possessory or legal rights.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- So, give it to us.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Who you?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Landowners.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The people of Fiji are watching, Honourable Nawaikula, and they have heard what are the facts. Madam Chair, I would oppose this motion to increase this very superficial way to supposedly try and improve the lot of *itaukei* landowner management, some real work is being done to give them a windfall from the mahogany forest. Thank you.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I am tired of making myself clear. I have been implicated so I need some explanation.

The truth of the matter is this, the purpose of the whole mahogany industry was to replant forest and give the ownership of the trees to the landowners. True, I was at NLTB and I can confirm that. True, there was peppercorn rent only for the leasing, planting and if you care to go back to the conditions of the very first leases, it says, “the whole tree belonged to the landowners”. Then NLTB and the Government became greedy. They re-issued leases in the name of Fiji Hardwood, they surrendered the old one where the conditions there were very specific, giving the ownership to the landowners, and they issued new leases to Fiji Hardwood with the ownership of what we now call “stumpage”. That is the fact of the matter and you know that. That is what I am saying, we can go to heaven and back, that belongs to us, we will never be silent.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki you have the right of reply.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I thought the amendment was a simple one ...

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I thought so too.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- ... and it is unfortunate that the Honourable Attorney-General has expanded the scope of the motion, because I simply asked for the increase because as in the Fiji Pine Trust, they assist landowners through establishment of nurseries, raising and nurturing the distribution of, in this case, mahogany seedlings.

I will expand on that, Madam Chair, because for two years there was no replanting and in the effort of replanting, they were taking seeds from the plantation and planting it in the ground directly from the plants in the plantation.

Colo-i-Suva is in there for a Research Station. The seedlings for the current plantations all come from parent trees that are in Colo-i-Suva because those are the prime mahogany that can be transferred to other plantations. Why? Because of the quality. And that is very important because as you know, if we plant from a poor quality, the product will be poor and that was the main reason for the nurseries and the Research Station at Colo-i-Suva because the parent mahoganies are still there.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Tell them, tell them.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- They used those seedlings in the nurseries and be transferred to any other plantation in Fiji for the prime product of mahogany. What we are getting now, they are

getting seedlings from the current plantations and what happens, the deterioration of the quality of the mahogany because the seeds are poor. That is the main essence of this motion, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. We will put this motion to the vote. Does anyone oppose this motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”).

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, we will put this to the vote.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	28
Not Voted	:	9

Proposed amendment is defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will now move on to the next motion for the amendment and this motion has been moved by the Honourable Dulakiverata that Head 2 be decreased by \$2 million in respect of Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 10. Would you like to speak on your motion?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, \$9 million allocation for these small grants. Once the Honourable Prime Minister goes around, there are lots of requests that come from the members of the public and I am sure what they request are already covered in all the Heads with other ministries. So, there is no reason for the Honourable Prime Minister to be carrying this big amount of money. He is the Honourable Prime Minister, he can just direct all those requests to the relevant ministries and they can address that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone second that motion? There had been no seconder. Motion is now open for debate. There have been no other input...

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I beg to second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The motion is now open for debate. There being no other input ...

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- We will give an input, Madam. Madam Chairperson, I concur with the motion raised by the Honourable Dulakiverata. Even this is very unsafe Madam Chair to give the Honourable Prime Minister \$9 million just to move around. It opens up plenty short cuts to people: they come around; they do not follow procedures and they come to seek assistance of all kinds and this could be also viewed as a vote buying thing, because you do not know the intention of people and the intention of the giver and it all comes down to that. Most people, they take advantage of this, just knowing the Honourable Prime Minister is coming over next week, they hear it over the radio, they try to make themselves available in wherever the Honourable Prime Minister is and knowing the good heart of the Honourable Prime Minister, he accommodates everyone. He gives his number to everyone and he never says ‘no’ he says ‘yes’ and that is why people follow up because his ‘yes’ does not eventuate.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It depends where it is to.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Sometimes. Madam Chair, I support the motion because it has to be maintained at the amount, I think it is being reduced to \$7 million. We should not make *TC Winston* an excuse to increase this because there are other programmes in the Budget which people can apply to, they can provide their application, the requirements of the applications that are there, the conditions that they have to meet and they should not come by this way Madam Chair, they become parasites and it is a bad culture to encourage people to come this way, because you make them work harder, you teach them what to do, you tell them what you have there, if you got your one-third and whatever we can assist that by other means that you have talked about yesterday, Madam Chair on how sawmills can open up. Some other tax concessions to help them. It is just a bad thing because he could be taken in a very political gink, it can happen here. That is why Madam Speaker, I support the motion that this be reduced because it is unhealthy.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Hon. Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Chair, I think we should be pragmatic, we cannot deny the fact this is buying for support – simply that. Whether it is SVT, SDL or whatever this amount should be taken away.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- SODELPHA?.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Even SODELPA. We must be principled.

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- As an indication, the last time I was in Vanua Levu....

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, I cannot allow you to continue because you have moved away from the motion. You are not moving to reduce it by \$2 million, you are moving to take it away completely.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I will take that away. Lastly, an example that I had was that in Vanua Levu, in Vaturuva after this Honourable Prime Minister handed out all these, they decided to make a *matanigasau*. So, that is a fair indication of how these changes or the real purpose of this. I support the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Hon Minister for Agriculture.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chair, as Minister responsible for rural development I just wish to say that the biggest beneficiaries of these are the *iTaukei*. We cannot deny that. I am surprised that Honourable Bilitavu mentioned that rural people are parasites because when I was Commissioner Northern, most of the allocation goes to the people of Macuata.

Madam Chair, funds in other agencies, particularly with the Commissioners are limited and before, the Honourable. Tikoca would know as a former Commissioner, Commissioners used to have what they call 'good banks', but now the good banks have been taken away, because it was abused and that is why the additional funding in the Prime Minister's Office. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable. Dulakiverata, would you like to speak in reply.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Yes, Madam Chair, I think enough had been said on this motion.

(Laughter)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you Honourable Members, the motion is before you, does anyone oppose the motion?

(Chorus of yes and noes)

There being Opposition, we will put to the vote. Parliament will now vote.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	-	16
Noes	-	28
Not Voted	-	8

There being 16 Ayes, 28 Noes and 8 Not Voted, the motion is defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will now vote on Head No.2.

Head 2 - Office of the Prime Minister

The question is, that the amount of Head 2 Office of the Prime Minister be approved? Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- The last one. On Head 2, Programme 1, SEG 7. This would be a new insert,. Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Which Activity?

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- It is either Activity 1 or Activity 2 - SEG 7.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Please just mention one – which one?

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- SEG 7, Madam Chair, and I will explain why.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Which Activity?

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- Activity 1, SEG 7. This one Madam Chair is on something that is very close to everyone's heart and this will be a new insert in here, in respect of the referendum which we have heard in respect to the flag change.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- The flag is very close to....

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- That issue does not qualify and no allocation made and it does not qualify in this phase of the debate. I will now come back to the vote and Parliament will vote on Head 2. The question is, that the amount on Head 2 - Office of the Prime Minister be approved, does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion, open the vote.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	30
Noes	-	13
Not voted	-	9

There being 30 Ayes, 13 Noes and 9 not Voted, the motion is agreed to.

Head No. 3 Office of the Attorney General

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments on Head No. 3. Honourable Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chair, in relation to Programme 1, Activity 1 SEG 5, at the very end, it has \$500,000 for the Drafting of Law. If this is in relation, Madam Chair, to the Drafting Unit in the Attorney-General's Office, I would like to move that, that amount be reduced by \$300,000.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Does anyone second that motion?

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- I beg to second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, I seek clarification from the Honourable Attorney-General before I move a motion. Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 – the allocation under Fiji Reform Law Commission (\$300,000), what is the scope of the Commission's work? Also, what entails within the revision of laws which has an allocation of \$450,000? I need some clarification on that before I move a motion to increase that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the Law Reform Commission, as you know we used to have a fully-fledged Commission that looked at the variation or changes in various laws. That work still continues. We do out-source that work sometimes. Initially what happened, few years ago the Reform Commissions because there is no specific allocation for revision of laws, so now we have broken that up. The revision of laws, as you would see that there was a motion I had brought and it was approved by Parliament for the consolidation of all the laws, and we will be bringing a motion tomorrow under Standing Order 51, to just simply consolidate that and have that all brought in. So, that it is part of that programme.

The Law Reform Commission essentially relates to any legal reform changes that we want change the areas that may not even come between the purview of Parliament. So, you may have recalled that a few years ago, there was a review of the penal code that was about a 100 years old. That was then reviewed through the Reform Commission basis which became the Crimes Decree. So, we modernise the laws and we bring in computer laws and all of that. So, that is the difference.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, I want to move that we increase the allocation for Fiji Law Reform Commission and when I speak on the motion, I want to suggest why I am moving an increase for that Commission.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do we have a seconder?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I beg to second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other proposals? Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- On the same SEG 7, Programme 1, Activity 1 – Review of Land Lease Arrangement (\$200,000). What would that be?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Honourable Singh for this. Madam Chair, through you, as you know that in the West there has been a lot of complaints in respect to some of the legal matters that have emanated where, for example, people have been given consents but they have not been given full leases. For example, leases had expired and you have two or three brothers sitting on a tenancy that is about to expire. One of the brothers have got it and the other brother has not got the consent. So, this is essentially (and we highlighted this in the last year's Budget Address also) is to go out and look at the various outstanding legal issues pertaining to that. So, it will also include, for example, public consultation on that, hearing people's personal grievances to ensure that we tidy up because there are many loose hands and some times some officer in TLTB may not do the right thing or may be some officer in the Lands Department in the Western Office may not do the right thing. So, his essentially is to provide the legal way out in respect to some of the lacunas that do exist because of the law being applied incorrectly or where there has been a duplication of approvals, and that is to resolve that essentially.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Radrodro.

HON. A. M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 1 – this question may even arise as we go further into the Estimates, the need to have staff numbers. As we see here, the Budget allocation has now increased from \$2.2 million in 2014 to \$3.4 million, and then it has gone up to \$5.06 under SEG 1. Can we get an explanation from the Honourable Minister on the purpose of the grounds of this increase?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Radrodro, as highlighted earlier on, yes, there is an increase but those figures like I said, do not essentially capture the actual increase because we are not comparing apples with apples, we try to give a rough estimate as close as possible, but I can tell you the variation is an increase of about 37.3 per cent. That essentially is to ensure, not just the numbers, but we are paying people the right amount of money to keep them because one of the issues that we did find as has been a problem (Hon. Karavaki will also tell you this and those who work in the Attorney-General's ChamberS) that whilst Government is very good at giving intake salaries being very reasonable compared to the private sector. However, as we find as the years go by, the salaries actually stagnate. So, you train people, four five years within the system, they go up, they attend

courses and upskill themselves and because of the fact that we are not able to retain them, they get swapped up by the private sector. This is one of the reasons, so there has been, apart from the fact that we are trying to get a full complement of the people, it is also to get the right salary base to be able to retain people within the system.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Radrodro.

HON. A. M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, on the same Programme, Activity 1, SEG 6 – there is a Legal Aid Commission of \$5,022,140. Can I ask the Honourable Minister, is the same principle also applied for the allocation for the Legal Aid Commission?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The reason why Legal Aid Commission has increased is because we have opened so many offices now. We have now offices in Nausori, Suva, Navua, Sigatoka, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba, Tavua, Rakiraki, Savusavu, Labasa, and we are opening one in Taveuni, we have one in Nabouwalu coming up, we are opening one up in Kadavu and Rotuma, we are going to open one up in Ovalau. There are three in Cakaudrove. So this is the reason why you have seen the increase.

In the same way, for example, when you go on to the next SEG on justice, we are opening up new BDM Offices in Sigatoka, Navua, and Korovou. This is essential to provide extend the services. So, once you open up new offices, obviously you need to hire new lawyers and that is why you have that increase. There is a Constitutional requirement for us to provide legal aid services.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Radrodro.

HON. A. M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, can I propose an increase in the allocation for Legal Aid Commission.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do you have a seconder?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, I beg to second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do you have any other input to the debate? Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair, still on Head 3, Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 8 – Development of the new airport in Vanua Levu with the amount of \$200,000; can we be clarified on that because I understand two years back, we were trying to make Nausori a full international airport. Why can we not do this first before going on to Vanua Levu?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, that does not mean that Nausori is not going to go ahead. AFL is funding a lot of its projects on its own back.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 6 – the grant to Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (\$2.5 million), Madam Chair, CAF is highly a specialised area and I seek clarification on whether this is sufficient to bring in the kind of expertise we need? You need people to monitor the performance for Air Buses and Boeing and these are very difficult people to get. Is this sufficient to meet the needs of those people?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This was obviously done with some consultation with CAAF. CAAF also, Madam Chair, raises its own revenue, so what we are trying to do is to ensure that some of these statutory bodies that are also raising some revenues, uses that revenue for their operations too. So this is sufficient to be meet that cost.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other input to the debate? Honourable Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chair, I am referring to Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6 – Media Industry Development Authority \$300,000. I would like to move a motion that that should be protect under R, or is that not in the Standing Order?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No, we are not raising the Standing Order right now.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- It is not covered in the Standing Order?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Standing Order is in Parliament but this is the Committee.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is only increase or decrease.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- So you want to increase, decrease or remove?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Remove.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone second that motion?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- I beg to second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other input before we go on to the debate? Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Head 3, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 – Review of Land Lease Agreement \$200,000. Can I have some clarification on that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, a similar question was asked by Honourable Singh and I have already answered.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There being no other input, we will now get into the amendments.

Firstly, we have an amendment that has been proposed by the Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad that Head 3 be increased by \$2 million in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7. I would like to ask Honourable Prasad to speak on that.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the Honourable Attorney-General for explaining the work of the Fiji Law Reform Commission and also the separation of the allocation from the Law Reform Commission specifically for revision of laws.

Madam Chair, I am suggesting a big increase because I think it is time now for us to look at the review of some of the Decrees. As you know when the Constitution was put in place as per Section 173 of the Constitution which talks about preservation of laws, many of the Decrees have remained in

place and two years into Government then after the Election and having articulated the problems with a number of Decrees.

It may be an opportune time for this Parliament and indeed the Government to undertake on its own, true and independent Law Reform Commission to look at some of the more controversial Decrees that are preserved within the Constitution. Fortunately, Madam Chair, under the same provision Section 173 of the Constitution does allow amendment to some of those Decrees.

Instead of us bringing this issue direct to Parliament, I would respectfully suggest that the Government actually accept that increase for the allocation for Fiji Law Reform Commission and use that increase allocation to review some of those Decrees and bring to Parliament through a Joint Committee or whatever means that is possible for us to look at that because, Madam Chair, many international organisations have talked about certain Decrees such as the Media Decree, the Public Order (Amendment) Decree and others which the Parliament, I think, should be ready two years into Government and two years of our Parliament, to be able to review some of those. I think it is a very useful suggestion to increase the allocation and I hope that the Government will accept that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Does anyone would like to have an input to that? There being none, and I take it there will no Right of Reply. Does anyone oppose this motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on this motion.

Question put.

(Chorus of interjections)

(Laughter)

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	13
Noes	:	29
Not voted	:	10

Proposed amendment defeated.

Thank you. We will move onto the second motion on the amendment.

Honourable Aseri Radrodro moves that Head 3 be increased by \$500,000 in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6 under the Legal Aid Commission. Would you like to speak on your motion?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, basically the motion is to ensure that the people who are doing the work in the Legal Aid Commission are fairly compensated. As mentioned by the Honourable Minister that SEG 1 part of it is the review and increase in salary of the staff in the Attorney-General’s Office. Therefore the Legal Aid Commission also warrants staffing since its office visibility has now started to increase. I think it is about time that their staffing also gets a review in their salaries, also the scope of work that has been conducted by the Legal Aid Commission has

probably increased, not only criminal cases but also civil and domestic activities and therefore warrants a review of salary.. The Honourable Minister can correct me on this.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Does anyone want to speak further on the proposal for the amendment? There being none, thank you. We will now vote on this.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, can I seek clarification. Honourable Radrodro, I am sure you may have known this information offhand but the staff of the Legal Aid Commission are one of the highest paid lawyers on graduate intake. In fact, it is a very highly sought position to become a lawyer in Legal Aid Commission. In the Legal Aid Commission, in fact provides one of the best working environments for lawyers.

They are now the largest law firm in Fiji, if you like. There are more than 40 lawyers within the Legal Aid Commission and the Commission itself which is an independent body, looks after the staff because they do provide extremely good services now and free services and it is now means tested. People who do not get access to, for example, services both in criminal matters now and civil matters also including for wills and probates they are provided by them too. Including mothers, maintenance issues, so these services had been extended, and no doubt the Commission will look after the staff. And so the reason why we oppose this motion is because the staff actually are being looked after. But in the future of course if there is a need, all those changes will take place, we most definitely will come back to Parliament on that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, I would like to speak in support of the motion, it is a very good motion when seek to to increase the allocation for Legal Aid Commission. We agree that Legal Aid lawyers are paid sufficiently but there are not enough lawyers all across our Legal Aid offices around Fiji. There are 40 all around, you come to Labasa there is only three of them there. One will be at prison visit, the other one will be engaged in the Courts and the people line up in the office there and there are plenty cases.

Even prisoners who come for hearing when they come to court, the lawyers are not available. They take a date and they go back because lawyers are not available. Even some prisoners who are in remand they still wait for lawyers to come but they do not come and visit because they have other engagement either they have got the trial, they have got something else in court or they attending conference. That is some practical reality and I asked the Honourable Members of the House to support this. To increase the amount of lawyers we put in these areas as these are rights of the people to be represented, whether accused, they should be properly represented, everything that they want to be affidavits and everything bail applications to be provided on time.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Aseri Radrodro, would you like to speak in reply?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for his clarification on the matter and I stand to support that this motion is to be put through in this House as we know that as being alluded to by the Honourable Member, the scope of work of lawyers at the Legal Aid Commission has increased daily. As we know, the number of people who appear in the court has also increased and therefore they tend to get Legal Aid Commission lawyers and not to the Attorney-General's lawyers, so therefore I support the increase.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, does anyone oppose the motion?

(Chorus of yes and noes)

There being Opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	15
Noes	-	28
Not voted	-	9

There being 15 Ayes and 28 Noes, 9 Not Voted, the Motion is defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The next amendment has been moved by the Honourable Semesa Karavaki that Head 3 be decreased by \$300,000 in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5. Does anyone second the motion?

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Chair, I second motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Semesa Karavaki would you like to speak on the motion?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you, Madam Chair. SEG 5 covers the drafting of laws. Drafting of laws in the Attorney-General's Office, we understand that all the other expenses are covered by the other SEGs, the Personal Emoluments for those who had worked there are covered there. This is as I understand is only for the Activities that revolve around the drafting of laws. I think this does not cover any brief to any outside Drafters to come and draft laws, but this is to cover all the Activities for those who are employed there to draft the law. That is the reason, Madam Chair, that I think that \$500,000 is a little bit too much and \$200,000 would be sufficient to cover all the work that they are required to do. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone else would like to speak on the motion? Even the seconder is not speaking on the motion? Thank you. I take it there will be no right of reply, would you like to make concluding remarks. Thank you.

We will vote on the motion, does anyone oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	15
Noes	-	29
Not voted	-	8

There being 15 Ayes, 29 Noes, 8 Not Voted, the Motion is defeated.

Thank you, Honourable Members. We will now vote on the Head. Parliament will now vote on Head No. 3. The question is that, the amount of Head 3 – Office of the Attorney-General be approved, does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

Question put.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, just some other questions relating to Programme 1, Activity 1.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are you proposing an amendment to increase or reduce or remove?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Yes, just the clarification before we propose the motion, Madam Chair, on Activity 1, Programme 1, SEG 5 – does any expense of legal experts - \$400,000. Can we get a clarification on this before we move a motion?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, would you like to clarify?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sometimes, Madam Chair, we do need to get experts from outside. The specialisation and expertise in very detailed respective areas are increasing. We, for example, need to sometimes engage with the expertise that does not exist in Fiji and that is why the provision is made for that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Aseri Radrodoro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, I proposed a motion for reduction of this amount.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Can you just fill up the form? Does anyone second the motion?

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair, I second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- I seek clarification from the Honourable Attorney-General. Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 – Review of Land Lease Arrangement - \$200,000 allocation . Can you explain what is that all about?

(Chorus of interjections)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- That has already been explained.

(Chorus of interjections)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, is the form ready? Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chair, legal experts expenses of \$400,000 which the Honourable Attorney-General explained. I just seek one clarification, does this also include the actions against Government whether the Attorney-General defends the Government in actions where our legal experts and expenses of \$400,000?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Legal experts and expenses of \$400,000. In SEG 5.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, whenever there is no expertise that exists within Fiji, actually when we need to get lawyers from outside, then we use those services. Now in respect, you have asked me specifically about civil cases against Government it could arise from that but for the past number of years all defence being done by the lawyers in house.

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, we will move on to the proposed

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, I want to raise another clarification. Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5 – Constitutional Office Commission - \$50,000. How many times have they sat?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I cannot tell you the exact figure or the amount, if you have warned me before I could have go that figure for you, but perhaps you are more interested in the money. So far all the sittings of the Constitutional Office Commission., the arrangement, the secretariat expenses whether it is morning tea or afternoon tea, et cetera was carried forward through the Attorney-General Office to the General Funds. So we have allocated a specific amount for the specific function as you have been provided. Again what we are trying to do is have specific cost for specific expenditure that does take place.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Who wanted that clarification?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, it is not done.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Is that okay? Thank you. Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Head 3, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 – Review of Land Lease Arrangement (\$200,000). Just a clarification, why this amount is here when the Government is not responsible for Native Land?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The Land Lease Arrangement?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I have already answered the question.

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- That have been clarified. Thank you, there being no other, Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1 and again Constitutional Offices Commission. For one sitting, how much would that cost?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I have already answered the question regarding COC.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No, that is how many sittings, that was the question raised, but how much does that cost you for one sitting, so that we can calculate how many sittings are you expecting to do next year?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the COC is an independent body, it is not for the Minister for Economy to tell them how many times they will sit. It is up to the Chairman to decide how many times they will sit. You do not understand the meaning of independence. That is the calculate expenditure that has been put in by them, and therefore, there is money but constitutional bodies and independent bodies do not let the Ministry of Finance or the AG's Office determine how many times they will sit. It is determined by the Chairman of the COC.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, I would like to add on to what I have just said. That question does not answer the mathematics of what I am asking. So, if you said that it is \$50,000 in a year, that you have a rough idea. So, one sitting, two sittings or 10 sittings? That is exactly what we want to know.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I think the issue has been clarified.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I have answered the question.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Madam Chair, we will now move on to the...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, the question is not being answered properly. So, now we are confused about \$50,000 sittings, ...

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No, we need to clarify this before we take... How did you arrive to that? That a calculation, that is why we are here. How did you arrive to that? If you do not know your formula, likewise everything else is assumed.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will now move on to the proposed amendment.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 7, can I seek a clarification on the allocation there, Civil Aviation Security Programme - Asia/Pacific (\$20,000)? What are the activities involved?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Honourable Member. These are the activities that are being carried out by CAAF and we give a specific allocation for them. There is a security programme that Civil Aviation does have both, in respect of liaising with different countries but also in terms of the Civil Aviation Internal Security Programme internally that they built in. As you know, there is a need to be compliant with ICAO and ICAO sets various standards. So, they need to have a specific allocation for that because many times, you have to show these expenses, so IKO to show there is specific commitment to that particular programme.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will now go back to this proposed amendment by the Honourable Radrodro.

That Head 3 be decreased by \$200,000 in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5, Legal Experts expenses. Would you like to speak on your motion?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, first of all, the allocation that is given there, there is no basis in terms of clarity of what legal expertise that is needed. Secondly, what the Ministry is doing to ensure that we attend to this on a local platform. We do not have a training methodology to ensure that we

are able to cater for this legal expertise. We still need these legal expertise expenses, whatever they are. Why is it that the scholarships for law students at the university has been taken away on the Toppers scholarship, if you need the legal expertise?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone else wants to speak on that motion?. Honourable Bilitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, in relation to the other question and probably for this one also, the motion that is before us. We have figures here in this Estimates and we are finding it very hard on how we have arrived to these figures. We are asking all these questions for clarification on how it comes up here and the technique being used by the Honourable Minister is either he blames the secretariat that they are the ones who brought these figures during the consultation. It is contradicting because the last time he said that for the Constitutional Commission, he said that the Attorney-General's Office was paying this, previously, and it is the first time it has appeared here. So, how did they come to \$50,000 whether it was because of the previous cost that the Attorney-General has incurred or whether these figures has come from the independent constitutional commission.

As for this one, Madam Chair, how did you arrive to \$150,000 and given that \$150,00 was allocated last year in the 2016 Budget in December and whether from that \$150,000, how much has been used already? How much is left or whether nothing has been done?. These are the things that this side of the House is finding it very hard to comprehend the figure that has been attached here, so we can move whether to increase or decrease, whether the work has been done. Those are the specifics, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, I just add on to that. The figures, if it is not clarified, it could also be used to sort out past expenditures. So, we need clarity on these issues so that we know this is not going to be referred back to pay for something that cannot be met last year. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other input to this motion? There being no other input, we will ask the Honourable Radrodro to speak in reply.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Chair, I have nothing to add. I think, I have said mine.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone oppose this motion? There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Vote Cast

Ayes	-	13
Noes	-	29
Not voted	-	10

Motion defeated.

Thank you, Honourable Members, we will now vote on the Head. Parliament will now vote on Head 3 and the question is, that the amount of Head 3 – Office of the Attorney-General be approved, does any Member oppose the motion. There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Vote Cast

Ayes	-	29
Noes	-	14
Not Voted	-	9

Motion agreed to.

Thank you very much, Honourable Members.

Head 3 agreed to.

Head 4 – Ministry of Economy

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments on Head 4.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, just a clarification on Head 4-1-1(1). I note that there has been a fluctuating movement in terms of Unestablished and Established Staff. Can we get a clarification for the Honourable Minister whether this clarification will reflect in the change in the number or the review of the salaries?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, Honourable Radrodro, can you please repeat your question.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 1 and 2.. it says that there has been a fluctuating amounts in the respective SEGS. Can you just inform the House or clarify whether this fluctuation reflection a reduction in the number or change in the numbers or change in the emoluments.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you. In fact, there is no huge variation. In fact, SEG 1 has a variation of about 1.1 per cent. If you look at the figures, SEG 2 has a variation of 0.2 percent. One of the reasons being is that you will note that we had mentioned the creation of the Construction Implementation Unit that has brought about the increase in the FNPF and the allowance that has been paid. So, you will see those figures levelled off in the next financial year, but you can see there is not much variation.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wish to seek some further clarification from the Honourable Minister and then I will decide whether I need to move a motion.

Madam Chair, as I have said before, Requisition is not necessarily a bad thing for any Minister of Finance or Minister for Economy, in our case now, but as we also said, that if you add the Requisition in Head 50, which obviously would also come under the Minister for Economy and the Requisition under the Ministry of Economy, it is unusually high. We discussed the merits and demerits of Requisition. There is always issues about accountability, transparency and how ministries actually complete projects. But there are pros and cons of having large sums in Requisition as well,

and as I said in my Budget contribution, and I wish to pose this question to the Honourable Minister is whether the staffing requirement or the staffing capacity within his Ministry will allow him to deliver the programmes and activities budgeted under Requisition? One Minister of Finance many years ago, Madam Chair, got very, very upset with me in 2008 to 2009 when I said that a lot of the funds under Requisition, and operating surplus or savings that he was trying to show, was partly because the amounts on Requisition were not effectively and efficiently handled, and therefore things were not happening. Therefore, you do not spend that money. So, my question to the Honourable Minister is, how confident he is and whether he needs an increase in Personal Emoluments in terms of staffing and his ability to actually ensure that all the funds under Requisition, under the Ministry of Economy, as well as under Head 50 is used as the Government has planned to use? Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I thank the Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad for the question. If I could take the Honourable Members from pages 26. You see on page 26, Programme 1, Activity 1, there are only two “Rs”, both of them relate to FRCA, as with all grants. And, if you add those two up, that is about \$53 million. So, you can take off \$53 million from \$56 million on Programme 1, Activity 1, in other words the Ministry of Economy for that Programme has about less than \$3 million.

The next “R” under Ministry of Economy is on page 31, which is the Audit Software and Support (NZMFAT), that is through the New Zealand Foreign Affairs Department - \$134,000. They won that, of course.

And, the next “R” is under Bureau of Statistics which is the Employment and Unemployment Labour Force Survey of about \$600,000, and the other one is Population Census which is \$7 million. As you know, Madam Chair, that Fiji is due for the next population census next year. So, they are the only ones under “R”.

Regarding the “R” under Head 50, the bulk of it is, of course, to do with rebuild which is from memory about \$120 million. Now, we have the Construction Implementation Unit that has been created so the former staff, some of the ones who were with PSC then have now come under the Ministry of Economy. We have a Construction Implementation Unit, we have a Manager for that. We are also, as you know, outsourcing a lot of the work, so they will essentially oversee the management of that work, so we are confident that there definitely will not be delays. But, what we are also concerned about is abuse, and the example that I gave earlier on when we were discussing Head 1 was that it has even happened when we have had “R” under the respective Ministries. So, one of the mandates we have given the staff is to essentially oversee the desk officers.

One of the other reasons why we brought Economy is that there seem to be a demarcation between Planning and Finance. So, the Finance people would simply be on the day to day matters and Planning would only be looking at major projects. There was no understanding of the symbiotic relationship between the operations of a Ministry and the long term asset build of the Ministry. So, what we are trying to do is also build the internal capacity so those officers also understand finances on day to day basis, but also able to understand, for example, capital projects and overseeing those capital projects.

To give you an example, and I think this needs further elucidation. For example, the people from Planning would come along and say, “Look, we need a Women’s Prison in Lautoka.” As you know, it has already been built, but the people who look after the Corrections Services Office, the Desk

Officer that does the operations will not necessarily recommend that we increase the salary because obviously if we are going to build a new prison, you need more prison wardens. So, they will look after the operations side.

So, sometimes you have constructions that has been approved by Planning, but the other arm does not see that we should give them enough operational resources. So, what we are trying to do is get them to work together and that is the reason why we have got them to blend together as opposed to operating as different units. So, we have the confidence to be able to do that. We are also encouraging a lot more work with the private sector so we can do a lot more outsourcing and get more works done all at the same time. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I need a clarification on Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 2 – Overtime (\$50,000). What is the \$50,000 allocation for overtime, is this enough in regards to Government Wage Earners?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The question is, is it enough? Yes, we believe so. In fact, previously it used to be understated. So, this is after a couple of years of experience. As you know, for example, during Budget time, the staff need to be dropped off home so a lot of the salaries used to do with, for example, the drivers who worked overtime, this is what caters for them, and also this is why we have the allowances that is built in there together with the wages. We believe that overtime of \$50,000 is enough for the time being, based on past experience.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do we have any other input? Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Chair. This is just another clarification. I know we talked about this issue quite a lot, which is Climate Change Policy, Climate Change Financing Initiative and Green Growth. I am kind of a bit ambivalent about the location of, I know the Honourable Attorney-General explained this a little bit in terms of bringing this into his Ministry, and primarily, I think it was to strengthen the capacity to increase our ability to source Climate Change or Green Growth funds or Climate Change Finance as a whole.

I am still not convinced whether it should be within the Ministry of Environment or it should be within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? How do you link those three arms, because I think a lot of the international things is really Foreign Affairs. A lot of the technical issues is with the Ministry of Environment, and maybe a lot of the planning issues come through your Ministry. So, the question is whether the allocation that you have here is going to be enough, because....

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Which allocation? Where?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Which Programme?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Programme 1, Activity 10, SEG 7. Sorry, Madam Chair. What I am interested in is Programme 1, Activity 10, SEG 7.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.-

If we think that this is where it should be, whether the allocation is enough, because as I said before there is quite a bit of funding available, Madam Chair globally but as the Honourable Attorney-General

quite rightly pointed out before, it is not an easy source of funds. It is actually quite difficult. It would require some real capacity and expertise in terms of writing proposals nationally or regionally, and I am hoping whether what is allocated is good enough.

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister, the allocation is sufficient.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I know it is sufficient, Honourable Prasad. The reality is that Climate Change needs to be mainstreamed. How do you mainstream it? That is for example, planning seeds with say, Ministry of Fisheries. When before the Budget is planned, the planning people we want them to consult all the different ministries continuously. So, when the Honourable Ministers team says `we want to set up for ice plants, we have our client, we have the green growth not just the fund but the green growth framework. So the framework team people, the climate change people sit down with these people and say “ look how can we make it more adaptable.” So, when we are going to set up an ice plant are we putting solar payments on it? One of the things that we highlighted in the Budget Address was that now we want the Ministry actually to give us three to five years plans in terms of that ministry’s plan.

So, for example for Minister for Fisheries says “I want to set up 10 ice plant, these are specifically the locations, this must be standardised size, got a climate fitted. Then we can also go out to donors and say “Look, this is our plan and by the way we got it actually adapted to climate change we are able to access funds either through grants, we are able to get cheaper sources of funding. So, we have successfully done with Water Authority of Fiji, we got another one.”

The other issue that I do not know if the Honourable Members will remember or not is that we have highlighted that we have also put up FDB to be the national accredited organisation to receive climate change funds. So, we are hoping that there is a meeting in Samoa so that the board of the fund is meeting in Samoa later on this year and they will make a decision whether FDB should be in a credit institution or not. At the moment no Pacific Island country has got a national institution that is accredited. So, this is why when we got those funds it is only through ADB.

Now you will see Honourable Prasad, in that same SEG Climate Change Financing Initiative. This is the other matter that we had raised and we had also discussed this in this Parliament where we had offered Fiji to be the centre if you like, to be able to provide training for other Pacific Island countries including our staff to be able to come up to speed with these maze of bureaucracy that you have to overcome to access those funds. Now, those funds in fact do not just come through grants but soft loans. The UNESCAP has agreed. The Honourable Prime Minister when he was in Thailand pushed for this initiative also and the Assistant Secretary General from Bangkok was here recently and after his visit they have agreed. So, we are hoping to have the first set of training done in August and September of this year. So, Fiji is providing seed funding (you know the bureaucratic organisation, just give them a small space in Ministry of Finance) So, it sort of a four pronged approach. Now, of course when for an example we do not attend all the international forums. So, if we have our very capable ambassador that was referred to earlier on this morning the Honourable Tikoca, in Geneva, if there is a particular forum that he needs to attend we do not all go toddling off to Geneva. The Honourable Prime Minister does not, I do not, the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs, our very capable ambassador actually takes on those issues. So, that is how Foreign Affairs gets involved. If for example their GEF Funds. The GEF Funds are through UNDP. It involves Agriculture, Bio security and the Ministry of Environment. So, that is how they coordinate to. The reason why they are with planning is to have a national approach.

HON.RATU K.KILIRAKI.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 3.- Travel, \$200,0000, Subsistence and Telecommunications. Madam Chair, you see they are just reflected in all activities to programme 2 that are reflected in this travel, subsistence and telecommunications. It is reflected on all those Programme 1 and 2 and various segments in the activities. So, we need a clarification, thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The reason why they are in the different programmes and activities because they are related to those programme in the activities. I assume that is the question.

HON.RATU K.KILIRAKI.- Whether it is overseas or domestic travels.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It includes both for when the staff travel. A lot of the travels that we for example get for overseas sometimes they are funded by the donor organisation or the respective agencies and sometimes they are not. So, these caters for that overseas travel. It is just not me so a lot of the staff travel from the Ministry of Economy. They may go for example training, press conferences, UNESCAP meeting and various other places so that is to cater for them. You will see, for example, accounting and policy, travel is only a \$180. Accounting and policy people do not travel much. They may travel from here to Nausori but they do not go overseas.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other input,Hon. Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Chair, still on that Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6 FRCA Operating Grant. I think Madam Chair, there is a decrease from the actual, it is about \$44 million actual then there is an estimate of \$42 million. Why there is a decrease, I think when FIRCA has been tasked to collect more revenue.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The collection of FRCA has got nothing to do with the grant per se. It does have an indirect implication. You see whatever FRCA collects, we put it into our account and then we give them a grant in the same way with LTA. When LTA, they get a grant from Government. Whatever revenue they collect comes into Consolidated Fund so we give them the grant. That is why it is under R they need to provide their various documentation requisitions of the staffs, the desk officers checked that whether they met up with all the requirements then they release the grant in the next quarter to them. That includes for example the Operating Grant you will see includes of course their salary which is a bulk of it, which is about \$32.6 million, that is the staff salary, training cost of \$500,000, Communications, \$720,000travel and accommodation, operating Cost, Property Expenses, Water and Power Supplies, Miscellaneous et cetera, they of course payfor VAT too, Then you have the capital grant, that again is the IT modernisation and also as you know you have ASYCUDA which is a new online tax system that we make it available for customs agents, we want them now to take the next step forward where you can actually make online payments for a customs clearance, et cetera they do simply the cost of doing business in Fiji.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Hon. Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you. Because I can see the figure has decreased from the actual which was \$44 million it has decrease the estimated operating grant there is about \$42 million.

Why there is a decrease whether there is decrease in number of people they have been downsized or ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, in fact like I have said Hon. Bulitavu earlier on that we need to look at this because the variation does throw out different figures because we are taking one half from the other year, and the other half from the other year. So, it is not exactly and exact figure for you to compare with, I can give you the variation. One is of course the Operation grant variation of about 4.5 percent in respect of the actual SEG 10 is increasing in 2.2 percent.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 10, FRCA Capital Grant of \$11.7 million. What is that for?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I have already answer the question.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Already answered.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.-Madam Chair just to add on to that I think the Hon. Attorney-General is answered in regards to IT upgrade that has been done there. But I think last year to this particular \$10 million grant was to purchase the cash register I suppose whether that has been purchased or not and there is an increase in the estimation last year was \$10 million now it is increased to about \$11 million. Why is there an increase and whether that has been bought, the cash register?.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- In my Budget Address I had ighlighted and I have said that those machines are actually coming on stream later on this year. So, they obviously engage the services Japanese company, I do not know their name of them, which providing the technology and it should be in placed later on this year so that includes all of the cost of those are exhibit to.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.-Any other input? Hon. Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair just a clarification on FRCA Operating Grant. I know the Minister has already explained it. Does this also improving any salary review or salary increase for a staff in this particular fiscal year.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I think on the consultation the figures that they have requested they believe is enough.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. It seems that there are no proposals for amendment. We will now vote of the Head 4. The voters machine is not working so we will take a break and have afternoon tea. When we come back we put this to a vote.

The Parliament adjourned at 5.11 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 5.40 p.m.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, it was recently brought to our attention that there was an anomaly in the result of the votes today. After a systems check, we identified that when tallied, the numbers of “yes”, “noes” and “not voted” came to 52 instead of 50.

The numbers will be adjusted accordingly and our records will be corrected to reflect this. The two extra votes were all in the “not voted” column and were votes of Honourable Konrote and Honourable Sanjeet Patel. It went back. The problem has been rectified. Thank you.

We will move on from where we left off and the Parliament will now vote on Head 4. The question is that the amount of Head 4 - Ministry of Economy be approved. Does any members oppose the motion? There being opposition, Parliament will now vote on the motion.

Question Put.

Vote Cast

Ayes	-	25
Noes	-	7
Not Voted	-	18

The motion is agreed to.

We will move onto the next Head 5 - Ministry of iTaukei Affairs. The floor is now open for any comments. Honourable Ratu Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Head 5-1- 1 (6) – Provincial Council. The allocation here is \$118,517 million. I request if this can be increased to \$2 million.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Chair, I beg to second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Are there any other amendments being proposed? Honourable Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Head 5-1-2(7) – records and documents for NLC to be increased to \$200,000 from \$32,000.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- I beg to second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, Head 5-1-1(6) – the allowance of *Turaga-ni-koro*, I move that that be increased to \$2.5 million.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do we have a seconder?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- I beg to second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other amendments?

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chair, I just seek a clarification. Head 5-1-1-7 – that is \$60,000 for implementation of traditional curriculum.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, as you know that there is a leadership workshop that is held at Nadave and in Nadave when they have the training, they have the training materials and that is part of the training materials for the Nadave CATD and that is the curriculum, course material, et cetera, that allocation is made for that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Head 5-1-1(5) – *iTaukei* roadshows. Can we get an explanation of what that is for?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Chair, *iTaukei* roadshow is a list of officials from the Ministry of *itaukei* who go out and explain to the public at large, especially the indigenous population of what is happening with regards to the issues that they are interested in including the land, *Vola ni Kawa Bula* and everything.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Vadei.

HON. A.T.VADEI.- Madam Chair, I just want to find out from Head 5, Programme 1, Activity 1, which SEG reflects the disabilities in our villages and our *tikinas* in our islands or in our provinces?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Is it under any SEG in here? Is it reflected here?

HON. A.T.VADEI.- I am just asking the Minister in which SEG it is reflected from the village, the disabilities?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No, it does not qualify because it is not in here.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, for the Honourable Members' benefit, when we have assistance for people with disabilities, it is for all Fijians everywhere, whether they are in villages, towns, cities or squatter settlements, it is for everyone.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Head 5-1-3(7) – Cultural Mapping Verification. I acknowledge that some good things are happening here but I only need clarification or explanation as what the \$33,400 is there for?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Chair, the Cultural Mapping has been completed in eight Districts in 41 villages in the Nadroga/Navosa Province. In the new financial year, it is expected to complete 15 Districts in 81 villages. This is the mapping of cultural activities in villages and provinces, something that we encourage the Ministry to go out and do.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you Honourable Chair. Please can we go back to Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 – Implementation of Traditional Curriculum. Can we have more explanations on that?

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- That has been answered already. Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 – Child Protection Programme \$42,000 – R. I note that there is an allocation in the Poverty Alleviation and Social Empowerment of \$1 million. I need a clarification on that, Madam Chair.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you Honourable Kiliraki. This is specifically an aid programme through United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), they give this specifically to go out and work in the villages. So that is where the funding is coming from. The other one is with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare that is overall everywhere but this is specific to villages by UNICEF.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, can I ask the Prime Minister a more general question on Programme 1, Activity 3 – *iTaukei* Institution of Language and Culture and the total allocation of \$880 million.

When I look at the activities, either the name does not reflect what the Institute ought to do because if it is an Institute for Language and Culture then the allocations there, particularly books, periodicals and publications, it does not talk anything about teaching or support for language and culture. So I am not sure whether this Institute is actually in the right place, whether it is getting the right support and whether its allocation is good enough? Because potentially it should be a much bigger activity, a progress than what it is.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- No, very simple, Madam Chair. This is not a formal institute and the programmes are highlighted under that SEG. It is not a formal institute and I think I know what you mean, it is not a college or sort of school.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 10. Can there be a clarification on Demarcation of Un-Surveyed Lands and Survey of Un-Surveyed Lands. What is the difference?

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- For a surveyor, it is very simple, it says demarcation of un-surveyed lands and survey of un-surveyed lands.

(Laughter)

Demarcation is the marking and the surveying is the survey. The demarcation of the un-surveyed land is undertaken in Serua and Lau and it also includes the purchase of a vehicle aligned to specifications including allowances for landowners assisting with the exercise including the recruitment of two technical officer posts. It is really to identifying the un-surveyed land and surveying is to survey the land.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other comments?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- I just want to have a fair idea, why do you separate the two operations because before you go and survey you already have demarcated the area that has to be surveyed. Why do you have two different Heads?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- They go into different areas.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other comments? Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K, KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6. I just need a clarification on the *iTaukei* Affairs Board of \$3,974,583 and an explanation on the amount of allocation.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. This grant is to cater for the personnel emoluments of board staff and this also includes the appointment of the Conservation Officer in each province.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Again on the Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 10. I move that the amount allocated for Demarcation of Un-surveyed land and Survey of the Un-surveyed land to be increased to \$1 million.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. I will give a form to fill for that amendment. Any other input to the Head? Honourable Bilitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 – Village By Law which is pegged with \$100,000. Last year the same amount too was done for Village Bylaw consultation, whether this is going to complete the whole process or it is still an ongoing process from last year?

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Chair, the Village By Laws consultation to commence in conjunction with the Provincial Council Meetings and it is an ongoing process. The allocation entails are logistics and administration costs. It is an ongoing process.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other comments? Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 7. I just need a clarification on the significant decrease of the allocation from last year from \$511,300 to \$102,000 for this Budget year?

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 7.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Decrease.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Why the decrease from \$511,000 to \$102,000.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Sorry, Madam Chair, this is to do with the computerisation of VKB which has already been done, so the figure is reduced.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other comments? We will now deal with the proposed amendments. The first one we have with us is from the Honourable Ratu Nanovo who moves that Head 5 be increased by \$2 million in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6. Do we have a seconder?

(Hon. Member interjects)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. You may speak on your motion, Honourable Ratu Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Currently I understand that all Provincial Offices surrounding the country have been partly financed by the *iTaukei* Affairs Board but half of the staff within any Provincial Office is paid by the *iTaukei* Affairs Board and the balance of the staff are paid by the levies that the provincial people do pay every year. As well as the up keep of the provincial office to meet the electricity cost, the transportation and other small expenses that the offices normally incur are now paid by the people themselves that in many instances, Madam Chair, when the levies are not been collected properly, it tends to affect the operation of the provincial office.

On that, Madam Chair, I request with the amount to be increased to \$2 million so that the full operation costs of the officers are met by the *iTaukei* Affairs Board. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON. – Thank you. Do we have any other input to that motion? Honourable Bulitavu?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, I would support the increase which is in the motion. In regards to the services provided by the provincial offices which sometimes there is lack of resource because of failures of some of the natives to pay their levies or *solis ni yasana*. Also, the burden comes down to the *vanua* to organise even provincial day to have *solis* and *meke*s in order to collect money for the provincial office to operate.

Most of the services, like photocopying and other things that they rely upon even phone calls even to come and register a new born at the provincial office and to send that birth certificate to Suva for the update of the new VKB (*Vola-ni Kawa-Bula*) the computerised one, and we do not have any computerised system at the provincial office. All that is done manually and even birth certificate reaching NLC sometimes they get missing until the one that comes from the island or comes from Vanua Levu or Kadavu come rights to Suva to do a manual registration with NLC.

These are some of the areas and the other areas which I would like to support too is to at least put some legal officers at provincial level for them to deal with landowners affairs in regards to Deed of Trust, Statutory Declarations and all these legal avenues being certifying things. This is the first contact point for *iTaukei* people most of them do not know where Legal Aid Commission is. This is the first place for them to seek help or to enquire for anything that needs to be done. So if these services needs to be extended in the provincial level and I do support that, this particular motion to increase this allocation for those services to be provided by the Provincial Council.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do we have any other input? There being none, Honourable Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Yes, in additional I support that the increase is genuine. In the last *TC Winston* all the *turaga ni koros* from Lomaiviti Group came down to my home to be witnessed by the

Ministry of Health. So they are the first point of contact forms for Universities and people obtaining approvals in the fisheries and other things. They have to come to Suva for those and they have to pay their own fare across. Their logistical support is only made by them so I fully support the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There have no other input, I give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Nanovo to speak in reply. Would you like to speak in reply or shall we put this to the vote? Thank you, we will put this to the vote. Does anyone oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- There being Opposition. Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	16
Noes	-	28
Not voted	-	6

There being 16 Ayes, 28 Noes, 6 Not Voted, the Motion is defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will move on the next proposed amendment and this is being presented by the Honourable Viliame Gavoka that he moves that Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs, Head 5 be increased by \$1,426,000 in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6. Does any Member second the motion?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Chair, I second the motion.

HON CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Gavoka to speak on his motion.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. The motion is to increase the allowance for the *turaga ni koros* all across the country.

What I am proposing here is more than doubling what they currently get. Madam Chair, for those of us who live in the villages these are the unsung heroes of life in the rural areas. They come under so much pressure, they are virtually, I would say if you need anything done you go to these people and it is from sunrise to sunset and beyond. Anything that needs to be done you look for the *turaga ni koro*. He is blamed for everything, he is expected to do everything,. I came from a corporate environment and being located in the village, I admire this people. In my corporate world I had policies, I had procedures to follow, I had many things and the backup to help me in doing my work.

These people, Madam Chair, I cannot describe how they do things. Somehow, they get things done in the village community. We think we are busy here, try live in a village you will see how busy it is. You want to ask of anything how is it going Monday is here, Tuesday is there. I often ask the question you are busier than us. That is the life that we do not seem to appreciate and the coordinator up all these; the person who answers all this is the *turaga ni koro*. I take my hat off to this people, when something is to be done, when you need to clean something he is the one you call and everyone expects them to act.

When you know how much they are being paid you just wonder how is it that, that they continue to do what they do for the good of their villages, for the good of their *vanua* and they are conversant with the laws of the country, they know how to liaise with the authorities and they are conversant with the tradition of the land on how to liaise with the *vanua*. They are the mediator in disputes, they are everything, Madam Chair, and I would ask this House to recognise them and just pay them a bit more. That is what I am proposing, Madam Chair, thank you.

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Are there any other input to the motion? Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Chair, I rise in support of this motion. As my fellow colleague has said, the *Turaga ni Koro* performs a very vital role in the village. I believe, Madam Chair, they are paid \$50 a month and they are paid three monthly. It is an allowance or whatever you might want to call it.

They are the first point of contact, particularly for Government officials who come around to the villages and Government officials come around at their own time, so that the *Turaga ni koro* has to be there to welcome them, whether they are earlier or whether they are late or whether there are different groups coming into the village. So, they are very important in the life in the village. They do not have any time to do any planting or any fishing, so for them to get this amount, Madam Chair, which comes to \$50 a month, I think is a very miserable sum. I support this motion before the House.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other input? Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I support the motion. I think the *Turaga ni Koros* deserves a pay rise. I think they have been overworked and underpaid and as you know, Madam Chair, they are the point of contact in the villages, especially for Government officials coming to the villages. They spend more time doing all these official work without looking after their families and they are underpaid.

I support the motion, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other input? Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I am standing simply to acknowledge how much work the *Turaga ni Koro*'s do. All of us here who deal with or go to the village will know and will agree with what Honourable Gavoka has said. You come at midnight or at lunch time and they will be sitting in their house doing their house chores and they are called out. Even sitting down eating because an official from the government comes in. To know that they are only paid \$50, I am hoping time will come when their contribution or when their work will become recognised and they will be fully employed and paid.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, I will ask the Honourable Gavoka to speak in reply.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, my colleagues have outlined the way they feel about the *Turaga ni Koros* and it is all very true. I am sure the members of government who are very mobile across the country will agree with me on that, that mobility and what they try to accomplish is largely accomplished because of the co-ordination and willingness of the *Turaga ni Koro* to do what they need to do at the village level.

Some of these people, Madam Chair, would be co-ordinating the activities of a village of 100 families or 200 families. That is a huge ask, Madam Chair. Most of us, have led organisations and you know that when you have units or numbers like that, you have your assistants, your managers and your supervisors, but they do not have that. They do it all alone. I would urge the House, please, I know we differ on many issues but I think everyone can agree here that they are pivotal in the work that they do at the village level.

When contacting them, you need to call them by phone. Do you give them any support for their phones? I know most of us would give them credits, we all experience that but that is how they get things done. I would just urge everyone, please let us put our differences aside and let us just give a bit more to the *Turaga ni Koro*. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Chair, I just want to let the House know that the *Turaga ni Koro* just had a pay rise. The *Mata Ni Tikina* has never been paid before, we are now paying the *Mata ni Tikina* now. The *Turaga ni Koro* contrary to what the Honourable Gavoka is saying, they have the *Mata ni Vanua*, they have the chiefs, the *Turaga ni Yavusa*, they are there to assist him. He does not do anything on his own.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- No.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Have you been to your villages lately?

(Chorus of Interjections from Members of the Opposition)

The bottom line is, Madam Chair, they have just had a pay rise, and so is everyone else.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote on this motion that is before you. Does anyone oppose the motion?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I have the last say on this, Madam Chair, because it is my motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You have made your right of reply and we are now in the voting phase. Alright, I will give you the floor.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the pay rise given to the *Turaga ni Koros* but there are different lines of leadership here. *Turaga ni Koro* does both, civil work, the government and traditional work. What the Honourable Prime Minister is referring to is purely traditional. There can be a *Turaga ni Koro*, who is not part of the hierarchy in the village, whereas the *hierarchy* in the village is different. The *Mata ni Vanua*, the *Vimataki*, are all different from the *Turaga ni Koro*. You do not cross that line. He cannot take on the responsibility that is traditional, so I think we need to be clear on this. He is different, he is virtually an administrator on all our behalf, not only the *Vanua*, but he does cross both lines on his own initiative. He gets things done. I think we need to be clear on this. I think we need to look at them differently. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you very much for that. We will now vote on the motion. Does anyone oppose? There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	-	16
Noes	-	29
Noted Voted	-	5

Motion defeated.

We will move on to the next amendment from the Honourable Dulakiverata. That Head 5 be increased by \$1 million in respect of Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 10. That is in the demarcation of unsurveyed lands. Does anyone second the motion.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I second the motion, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- It has been seconded and I will ask the Honourable Dulakiverata to speak on his motion.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Since this is concerning *iTaukei* land, I assume that this is the survey or demarcation of traditional land boundaries. Madam Chair, when Ratu Sukuna first started the demarcation of these land, some of the areas were not completed when he died, so these areas remained to be properly demarcated and surveyed.

Madam Chair, as you know Native land, *iTaukei* land comprised about 90 per cent of the total landmass in Fiji and Government is very much dependent on its development of the *iTaukei* land. For proper management of land, Madam Chair, it is appropriate that all land should be properly demarcated and surveyed so it will reduce disputes and will have proper administration.

Madam Chair, this is a very critical area. You will recall that when the Namosi Coppermine, when they were trying to give a lease there, the dispute was for the unsurveyed or un-demarcated of boundaries in Namosi. That was the traditional *mataqali* boundaries. So that was what caused the delay in the project. It is therefore a necessary, Madam Chair, that all this land that are unsurveyed should be demarcated and surveyed to address the issue. Therefore, Madam Chair, I move that the allocation be increased to \$1 million. Thank you.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Just some clarification, there are two allocations, which one?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Both. One is currently at \$216,212.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- And you want to increase that to?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- To \$500,000. The other one from \$274,000 to be increased to \$500,000. So, a total of \$1 million.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Does anyone would like to speak on that motion?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Chair, I have been sitting here and I have been amazed at the way figures are pulled out of a hat. Seemingly, out of thin air, without any thought of processes behind it.

I think I should congratulate the Honourable Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs because obviously the survey of *iTaukei* land is something that is part of a whole process that has been going on for years. So, it is obviously something that have been planned and I am very glad to hear that it will be done for Serua and Lau so we can stop all the arguments about whether logged boundaries are for pine. But I must say, if you are going to make a suggestion on a figure, please base it on some facts. Think about the work programmes that are in the *iTaukei* Affairs where all of these things are planned. That is my contribution, Madam Chair.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to support the motion, to increase both Activities that are under SEG 10, especially for Lau and Serua. For Serua, I think it is very important because the records at NLC actually got missing, and that was about 10 years ago. Those were records like at the first sitting of the NLC and the claims of land. So, that needs to be done.

For the Province of Lau, the development cannot be done there because there is no Register of Native Land (RNL), and now it has changed to Registrar of *iTaukei* Land. For RNL, then you can have a reserved land, then after that you de-reserve, then you can have a lease and that is when development can start. But without survey, we cannot do anything, and this has been ongoing since the time of the late *Tui* Nayau, I think he was the one who started the survey and it continued, but it is very slow, Madam Chair, given the development that province has been denied. Many investors want to come and invest in the Lau Group in regards to tourism, but they cannot have lease because there is no RNL.

I think there are only two Committees moving around Serua and after Serua they are moving to Lau, and it takes up a lot of activities. From demarcation, they will go to *butuki ni yalayala*, then mapping, and then there will be claims, disputes and parties will have to agree with the ruling that will be made. I think there should be an increase so that there are at least three or four teams to move around so the process can complete fast, and the *iTaukei* people in both provinces are not denied of the development that they want.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. I call on the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I just want to respond to the last speaker on the other side. I remember we asked what sort of formula are you using because we want to clarify how would you arrive at that figure. I did not receive any answer or response on that.

Secondly, do you know that the usual sittings of such is two weeks, and if we had that two weeks, we would have got all the figures from you and we do our calculation, we are pretty good with mathematics. The problem is, you people squeezed it down to one week.

(Inaudible interjection)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- That is why we cannot provide you....

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- (Inaudible interjection)

HON. RATU I. TIKOCA.- Stop, stop, stop that!

I am talking about facts here. What is supposed to be done in two weeks, you reduced it. So, you stay around, you get some guesstimate because we found our guesstimate from your guesstimate.

(Laughter)

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Dulakiverata for his Right of Reply.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, this is a very important issue. When you talk about land, you talk about people, you talk about development, you talk about the whole economic activities. So, it is therefore, Madam Chair, that we should have the base right. All these things are supposed to be properly demarcated and surveyed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote on this motion.

Does anyone oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”)

HON.- CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	16
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	5

Proposed amendment defeated.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Members. We will now move on to the next proposed amendment by the Honourable Semesa Karavaki who moved that Head 5 be increased by \$200,000 in respect of Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 7. Does anyone second the motion?

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- I beg to second the motion.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- I will give the floor to the Honourable Karavaki to speak on his motion.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you, Madam Chair. The reason for the motion, Madam Chair, I was made aware of a visit to the *iTaukei* Lands and Fisheries Commission upon an inquiry that all the *Tukutuku Raraba* of the Province of Serua are no longer there - all have gone missing. So, the reason why I am bringing this up because I particularly requested for some information from Serua because I was working on behalf of some clients.

Madam Chair, I am not aware, maybe there are other provinces of which their *Tukutuku Raraba* are not there. In the case of this situation, they need to gather their *Tukutuku Raraba* again because they cannot wait around when the records are no longer there. So, this is the same kind of work that was done by the Commissioners before to gather the *Tukutuku Raraba* again. And we look at the

allocation given to the Demarcation of Village Boundaries is \$198,000, almost \$200,000. So, the reason why I propose the \$200,000 because that work would be very similar to the work that will be done in demarcating the village boundaries.

However on this, Madam Chair, the work will be carried out in gathering their *Tukutuku Raraba*, they will have to go through more work, as compared with just demarcation of the village boundaries. So, that is the reason, Madam Chair, why I am proposing that we support this because this is very important. We cannot wait around when there are no *Tukutuku Raraba* for the provinces, especially for the Province of Serua. That is the reason why I proposed this, Madam Chair.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone else want to have an input to this?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Demarcation of Village Boundaries as has been briefed upon by Honourable Karavaki. My question is, in the Fijian language when the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs visit villages, they use the word "*Vakamatanitutaki*" and there is confusion in the village of what that means. So, when we ask the representative to present us a word in English that represent *na vosa* "*Vakamatanitutaki*" they could not. So, probably Demarcation of Village Boundaries, but that is not *Vakamatanitutaki*. Can we get a better definition that reflects *Vakamatanitutaki*? Thank you.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do we have any other input?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you Madam Chair. I would like to support the motion by the Hon. Karavaki given that this particular activity for their demarcation of village boundary is very important. The allocation is not enough because there are many villages know that it is a village. But in fact it just a settlement and they have not been registered as a village so they are denied some developments that they come from the Divisional Commissioners and other Provincial officers because they are not recognise. The other people that suffer to is the ones that are going to relocate after the cyclone so that shift too will need another process where they will go on see their new site and that will have to be registered to.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, I will have to stop you here because we are not talking about demarcation of the heritage but the records in document. That particular motion we have completed. I think we now ask Honourable. Karavaki to speak in reply.

Thank you very much, Parliament will vote on this motion. Does anyone oppose the motion?.

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	15
Noes	-	29
Not voted	-	6

There being 15 Ayes, 29 Noes and 6 Not Voted, the Motion is defeated,

Thank you we will now vote on the Head. Parliament will vote on Head 5. The question is that, the amount for Head 5, Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs be approved, does any Member opposed the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	26
Noes	-	17
Not votes	-	7

There being 26 Ayes, 17 Noes, and 7 not voted, the Motion is agreed to.

Head No.6 – Ministry of Defence, National Security and Immigration

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Head 6, the floor is open for comments. Honourable Bultavu.

HON. M.D.BULITAVU.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 1 in regards to Fringe Benefits. Can the Honourable Minister confirm the House how many executive management staff or senior managers they use Government mobile or fringe Benefit Tax?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You want clarification or what Fringe Benefit Tax is? Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Chair, Fringe Benefit Tax is the tax payable to FRCA for use of government mobile phones. The Ministry has a total of seven mobile phones.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable. Prasad.

HON. PROF.B.C. PRASAD.- Can the Honourable Minister advise in this House because I remember there was \$100,000 allocated for the National Security white paper and I do not see any allocation this year. Is the white paper completed now?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.-Which Activity and Programme?

HON. PROF.B.C. PRASAD.- Programme 1, Activity 1, General Administration. Well was said by the Chair was last year there was an allocation of

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 1, Activity 1.

HON. PROF.B.C. PRASAD.- It is not there. What I am asking is that last year those allocation..

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- We cannot go back to last year we are now into this year.

HON. PROF.B.C. PRASAD.- No, I am asking whether the paper has been completed? That is why it is not here.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.-No, we will not go back to the last years allocation. We will only debate on what is on paper.

HON. PROF.B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair is a very relevant question.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Is that the one you are referring to? No, you just said that it was not here that is why I picked it up. Any other comments? Hon. Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Head 6, Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 7. Can we be clarified what does this IBMS project monitoring allocation is all about?

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Chair the IBMS project is the Integrated Border Management System where we have annual payment for IT officers.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Head 6, SEG 5. This is the security industry board allocated for \$10 thousand. Can the Honourable Minister explain what is this for?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Which one is this?

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5 the very last allocation for Security Industry Board.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- This allocation is for Admin and Logistics an Allowance for the Security Industry Board, Security Companies Survey cost. All the security companies we have aboard who looks after them, security companies all around Fiji.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Is there a way of monitoring their activities?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Yes.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Hon. Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair just a clarification from the Honourable Minister on SEG 7, 6117 has been a tremendous increase there from 2014 and we would like the Honourable Minister to just explain why the need for such a tremendous increase?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- SEG 7, Capital Actual Expenditure of \$17,000while in 2014, 2016, and 2017 has got \$911,000..

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- After completing the National Security Strategy the first activity we are doing is reviewing the National Security Council and part of it is the intelligence. In a first phase of it is the allocation of \$611,000for the staffing and administration, we have three phases. So, it is with the Ministry at the moment and by 2018 will be shifted and report directly to the Honourable Prime Minister.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other input? Hon. Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Can the Honourable Minister advise what is involved in the integrated passport issuance system where you have under Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 9, \$450,000 allocated under Requisition. Is it to do with producing the two sets of passport? Or what is it? Because the previous year's allocation were just \$33,000.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- This is the decentralisation of issuance of passports to centres in Labasa, Lautoka, Nadi, Savusavu and also the foreign embassies.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other? There are no amendments, we will vote on Head 6.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- SEG 7 - Madam Chair, with regard to the the Fiji Day Celebrations which is pegged at \$100,000, what are the activities?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- This is the Remembrance Day, Fiji Day Celebrations, those are the activities that we coordinate. Have you been to a remembrance day?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Yes.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Yes, that is the budget for those.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Because there are tents hired and all that. There could be some sharing of the costs between the Fiji Police and also the Military and the band, et cetera. What are some of the activities in regards to that? Whether you should increase or decrease? Whether it is the same? What was the cost last year?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- The celebration is conducted all around Fiji and they are allocated some money to conduct those activities.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. We will now move on. Parliament will now vote on Head 6.

The question is that the amount Head 6 - Ministry of Defence, National Security and Immigration. Does any Member oppose the motion? There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Vote cast

Ayes	-	28
Noes	-	15
Not voted	-	7

The Motion is agreed to.

Head 6 agreed to.

Head 7 - Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations

The floor is now open for any comments.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair, we are just seeking clarification on Head 7-1-2(5) – Expenses of ILO Convention (\$172,500). We understand that there was a meeting on this in Geneva last year and maybe some of the processes are still outstanding at the moment. Can we be advised on what are the processes that are yet to be completed before this whole process is finalised?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Chair, some of the Conventions and meetings held for ILO is an annual event, so it is budgeted for that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Programme 1, activity 1, SEG 5 – can the Honourable Minister give us some details on the Apprentice Scheme, \$400,000 and also the details of ISO Certification \$350,000?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- The Apprentice Scheme is a new scheme that has been recently announced by Government where we give assistance to students who would like to join in training and then be given industry attachment time. ISO Certification is basically based on Singapore. It is on the ISO quality assurances.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, Head 7-1-4(7) – Foreign Employment Services, that is an important activity. The Honourable Minister himself had pushed and I think a lot of people are getting good employment abroad, including the Seasonal Work Programme.

Perhaps, both the Ministry of Economy and you should tell us why those amounts are in requisition? I mean, it is something that probably should be straight forward. Is it necessary to have them under requisition?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- This is an activity that goes through a process and depending on the activities, the amount goes up and down in accordance to the requirement, like for the Volunteers Scheme. It is all dependant on the countries that requires our assistance. And basically foreign employment is a new scheme that we are trying to do in enticing other countries to employ our workers going overseas.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Ratu Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Head 7-1-2(1), why have the personal emoluments increased from \$1.2 million in 2015 to \$1.5 million in 2016? Now, for 2016/2017 financial year, it has gone up to \$15 million?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Member, there is a decrease and not an increase. Thank you. Any other input?

There being no other proposals for amendment, now we will move onto the vote. Parliament will now vote on Head 7.

The question is that the amount of Head 7 - Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion? There being opposition, parliament will now vote on the motion.

Question put.

<u>Votes cast</u>		
Ayes	-	28
Noes	-	15
Noted Voted	-	6
Abstain	-	1

The motion is agreed to.

Head 7 agreed to.

Head 8 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The floor is now open for comments. Honourable Radrodro.

HON. A. M. RADRODRO.- SEG 6, on the trend of expenditures, it has increased from \$3,954 to \$5,691. Can the Honourable Minister give us a detail on why is it necessary?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a re-classification of special expenditure of \$1.3 million. The shifting of the PIDF from SEG 7 to SEG 6. That is why the increase in SEG 6, via \$1.3 million and the decrease in SEG 7.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments? Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Minister advice the House, this is Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6 where you have an allocation, UN Peacekeeping Force for \$200,000. Can you tell us what is it for?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$200,000 for UN Peacekeeping Force is the Fiji Government's contribution to UN Peacekeeping Force.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Just another allocation there Minister, \$12,000 under SEG 6 as well on Programme 1, Activity 1 for International Criminal Court, is this a membership fee or what is it?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Yes, membership fee, contribution, membership.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, SEG 1 on Personal Emoluments, I think there is an increase to \$2.2 million. Last year it was about \$1.5 million from the estimated figures that was there, just to seek clarification whether there is an increase of staff at the Ministry.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Sorry, Madam Chair, the Personal Emoluments is just an increase of \$0.3 million – yes an increase in staff. That is what the Minister for Economy was saying that we are working within the package of increasing some of the pay for our senior staff.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Head 8-1-3 SEG 7. What is the purpose of the allocation of \$100,000 for the Official Working Group on Deep Sea Mining and what is the composition of the official working group?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Sorry, Madam Chair, can I just have that SEG again?

HON. MEMBERS.- Head 8-1-3-7.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Yes, Madam Chair, Fiji belongs to this International Seabed Authority (ISA) and there is a group there that meets every year and this is the allocation that is allocated for that.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 3, SEG 7. There is a UN Military Advisor \$500,000.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Do you want to increase, decrease or

HON. P. SINGH.- No, I am just seeking clarification.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Clarification please, Honourable Minister.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. This is for our Military Attaché based in our New York Mission and responsible for negotiation, discussion and working with the Department of Peacekeeping at the UN in New York.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1 SEG 5. There is a \$20,000 for medical expenses. What is that for? I am just seeking some clarification from the Honourable Minister.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- That is for medical expenses for our staff, \$20,000 to pay for medical bills.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Programme 1, Activity 3, SEG 7 - Fiji Day Celebration \$100,000. I need clarification and explanation to this allocation.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. This allocation is for our 17 Overseas Missions for the Fiji Day celebration.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I suppose that would be the same to a lump sum of the SEG 8 - Refurbishment of Overseas Missions \$300,000. Is that right or is there any specific embassy that \$300,000 is allocated to? SEG 8 says Refurbishment of Overseas Missions \$300,000 and then Fiji Embassy – Abu Dhabi Chancery Expansion \$498,097 – All under R.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. The Honourable Member being a former Head of Mission knows very well that this allocation (Refurbishment of Overseas Missions) is for refurbishing of the change of crockeries, furniture in our Missions. Whether that be in the residences or in the Chancery.

The allocations for Abu Dhabi, we have asked the Ministry of Economy to write it off. The allocation for Abu Dhabi under “R” that is for extension of the office in Abu Dhabi.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There being no other input. The Parliament will now vote on Head No. 8. The question is, that the amount of Head 8 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs be approved. Does anyone oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”)

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	28
Noes	:	12
Not voted	:	10

Head 8 agreed to.

Head No. 9 – Office of the Auditor-General

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Head 9 - the floor is open for any comments. Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chair, I move that Head 9 be increased from \$4.3 million to \$6.3 million.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone second the motion?

Would you like to speak on your motion?

Sorry, we will give you a form to fill. Any other comments?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5 - TeamMate Licence Fee. Can the Minister advise us on what is this TeamMate Licence fee about?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This is a license fee paid for a software that they have within the office.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, Head 9-1-1 SEG 5, can we have some clarification on this Contract Auditing Fees?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the Office of the Auditor-General is an independent office, they obviously farm out any auditing work that they want to carry out and so these are the fees that they pay to whoever they engage in terms of helping them to carry out audits for them, from the private sector.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Are there any other comment? There being no other comment, we will now have an amendment by Honourable Prem Singh who moves that Head 9 be increased by \$2 million in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1 in General. Does anyone second motion?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, in the Standing Orders it does state that there is Committee of Supply referenced to it in the Standing Orders. You actually have to specify where do you want the increase, that is why we are going line by line. He is saying to give a general \$2 million increase, you cannot just plug it in at the bottom, where would the \$2 million go? Contribution to International Organisation, Supreme Audit Institution, Travel Expenses Subsistence, where it will go?

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- I was aware of that and I want him to speak on that now to detail it.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Chair. This is in respect of SEG 1, where we need more staff. Madam Chair, I am speaking on the motion. The Auditor-General's Office needs to be strengthened and this should be prioritised as taxpayers need assurance that their taxes are being put to prudent expenditure and you would note that now that we have the Government side as the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee and the backlog of cases of we would like to see that the Auditor-General's Office are strengthened by way of more staff so that they can carry out their work prudently.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Please specifying you want an increase in the Personal Emoluments, is it?

HON. P. SINGH.- Yes, Madam Chair, in SEG 1.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- On FNPF? You cannot give \$2 million.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, which allocation? It is just the first allocation, Personal Emoluments?

HON. P. SINGH.- Yes, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- From \$3 million to \$5 million? Thank you, does anyone else want to speak on that?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, I do not want speak on this but let me just say this, I think it is an important amendment. We have oversight bodies, Independent Commissions and the Office of the Auditor-General is a very important institution within the whole process of Government accountability, transparency and use of tax payers' funds. I know I have been removed as a Chair of Public Accounts Committee that is another matter but, Madam Chair, the Auditor-General's Office still has a huge backlog. I know when we are dealing with some of the reports and they were actually far behind and the scope of work that they should be doing for example, following the Government dollar everywhere it goes. Right now, many of the institutions where Government actually gives grant and some very big grants.

The Auditor-General's Office has no say, it does not have any kind of authority or resources to actually look at those as well. So I think the suggestion by Honourable Prem Singh is in good spirit I mean if we increase it by \$2 million you portion it with FPNP Allowances, relieving staff but what we are saying is the Auditor-General's Office by that allocation would obviously be strengthened and it would be good for Government and good for all of us in this Parliament to have a most important body strengthened not only in terms of its other physical activities but also in terms of human resources because human resources is the key. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do we have any other comments?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, can I ask Honourable Dr. Mahendra Reddy and not to be cheeky about his comments.

(Chorus of interjections)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, I stand in support of the motion. As we all know there is over 30 Ministries and Departments in the Government Department. So the increase should be welcomed to ensure that the Ministries and Departments are properly audited and rightly so the contract of auditing fees of \$280,000 that shows the capabilities and the capacity within the Auditor-General's Office. So I support the increase to ensure that the office is properly staffed to carry out its duty.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Are there any other comments? Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- We need that increase because if anyone needs to be audited it is you guys that need to be audited. Thank you

(Laughter)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- The auditing, Madam Chair, is done by the court. For those people who have come up with some corrupt practices in the past, thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do we have any other? Honourable Gavoka.

(Laughter)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, I am for all the strengthening of the Auditor-General's Office.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA. (Inaudible)

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Prime Minister not Frank.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- (Inaudible)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, I also have a good standing in Parliament.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, let us move on the debate. I now give the floor to the Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I am all for the strengthening of the Office of the Auditor-General,. I can just go back to my five years with the Fiji Visitors Bureau.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Listen, listen. They would come in every year and they would be in my office for three weeks. Madam Chair, they audited my office in Fiji and all my office overseas and we would begin with a very thick file on what they would pick up and then by the time they exist, you would have brought it down to about six pages at the most, with comments.

We used to love the process that they would point out issues that we needed to watch and my people were trained in this way because I came from the private sector I knew about the value of auditing as some of the people would say “why are they asking all these questions?” “and I would say to them “ you know this is public money, would you want to be answering to the auditor or you answering to the police”. That is how I trained my people and they began to realise the important of auditing.

I was quite shocked, Madam Chair, when we saw all the reports of the audits that came up six or seven years and there was no audit of the Tourism Fiji by the Auditor-General. I asked what happened? It is now contracted to a private firm and I just wonder, Madam Chair, if the same level of scrutiny that the Auditor-General used to give us is now being given to Tourism Fiji. They could get the same level for scrutiny but I would let the House know that my experience in business the Auditor-General's team would do a work that would truly frighten anyone who was trying to play games with their books.

This, Madam Chair, is important for us and I think the team at the Auditor-General's Office should be strengthened. They have some wonderful people, some came in as young and in three or four years they would have been very experienced and at the end of the day they would say "you know you guys know what you are doing" and means more to us than anything else because they used to say that because they audited a lot of Government agencies.

So I think it is good for us for Government to have the Auditor-General's team to audit the books. I do not believe the outside firms would do a job as good as the Auditor-General. I have tried both, Madam Chair, when I run a business I was audited by one of the big firms, it was not as thorough as what I got in FVB with the Auditor-General. So, I would strongly suggest, support the motion that we strengthen the Auditor-General's Office. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I have a few clarifications. Firstly, the firms that are contracted is not done by government, please understand that. The money is given to the Auditor-General, the \$80,000, they decide who they want to give it to. It has nothing to do with us. They are the ones who chose the firm they want to give it to, it is up to them.

Let me also clarify, they actually ask for an increase in SEG 1. They asked to increase it last year, we actually gave it to them. That is what they asked for, we have not stopped them for an increase. They also asked for an increase, so they could actually upgrade the salaries of 15 officers because they said a lot of people come into the Auditor-General's Office, gain some experience and then leave. So, if they are able to pay them at a higher rate, they will retain them. We have also approved that, so everything that they have asked for, we have actually given it to them.

They also obviously recognised the level of capacity that they have. You do not turn a wonderful auditor overnight. Honourable Prasad, Honourable Reddy, all the academics will tell you, just because someone has done an accounting degree does not make them an auditor overnight. So, it does take time, they do need to retain people, they do need to train people, they need to pay them a higher salary, which we have agreed to. By throwing money at something, when you do not have the people with the capacity or the volumes of people available, obviously would be good money being thrown away. That is the clarification.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There have been no other input, Honourable Prem Singh, would you like to speak in reply.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chair, I feel that the Office of the Auditor-General needs to be strengthened and that is in the best interest of the Government to know how the taxpayers money is being utilised. There were also alerted to sign, so efficiency that may exist. It also relates to corrupt activities, so in a sense, this office is a very important office, and I commend this motion to the House.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, the motion will now be voted upon. Does anyone oppose the motion? There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

<u>Vote Cast</u>		
Ayes	-	15
Noes	-	29
Not Voted	-	6

Motion defeated.

Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on the Head 9.

The question is, that the amount of Head 9 – Office of the Auditor-General be approved. Does any Member oppose the motion?

There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Vote Cast

Ayes	-	28
Noes	-	16
Not voted	-	6

Motion agreed to.

Head 9 agreed to.

Head 10 – Fijian Elections Office

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Head 10 is open for comments. Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, can the Honourable Minister please explain how the funds allocated to that Office will be utilised, as it is not mentioned in the 2016-2017 Budget?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, you will see that with all the independent offices, including Parliament, will have a one line item. This is how it is given, even with the Commissions. However, you see in the narration on Page 65, it sets out some of the activities of the Elections Office in the narration.

Let me also remind the Honourable Members of this House that Elections will be held in 2018. So, given the fact that the financial year will be from the next financial year in August 2017-2018, we cannot rely on all the preparation and all the equipment, et cetera, that will be bought for the Elections to be bought in that financial year. It is too close to the event. So, the Elections Office is also, for example, you would have seen in the newspapers and they have advertised on radio as well where they are going now and registering voters, those people who have turned 18, so you do not do it last minute. The Honourable Karavaki would know this that we should not do last minute activities in the Elections Office.

You will see the funding is increased to ensure, for example, they may go out and call for tenders. When you call for tenders for whether it is polling booths, computers, et cetera, we want to do that now, so they can stock up because this financial year will end in July. If we do not give them the money now, they will then have the money in August, so they might start calling for tenders and it takes two to three months. The Elections can be called at any time, I think from April of 2018, from memory. So, Elections cannot be held any sooner than three and half years, but no later than four years.

That clock starts ticking round about the end of the first quarter of 2018. This is why the Elections Office has been given that additional funding to prepare for it. That is what the increase is there for.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other comments. Honourable Semesa Karavaki.

HON. S. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chair, I am seeking clarification; I cannot see in the explanation on page 65 whether the Fiji Elections Office, has also been set up in other Divisions? The reason why I ask that because in the past, the FE Office used to work together with the Commissioners. I think it is imperative that it sets up its own offices in the Divisions so that the work can continue without being hindered because of the Commissioner's Offices are also tied down to their own work, so that preparation continues to roll on without being hindered. I am only seeking your clarification because I could not see it here whether they also have their offices set up in the Divisions..

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Karavaki, they are. In fact, I stand to be corrected, the office in Lautoka and Labasa may already, in fact, have not been opened but they are definitely doing that. You would have seen even in the last Elections. Previously, as you would know, there was a huge reliance on the Divisional Commissioners. In order to maintain a true independence of the Office, they did not use the Divisional Commissioners. Before they used to use the Divisional Commissioners Offices, et cetera, because there is fear of interference, politicisation, et cetera. They have been completely segregated from the Divisional Commissioners and the Civil Service, so they are completely independent.

As you would also know, previously once you had Elections, everyone is kind of taken away. Now, they have actually a standing office so that internal capacity is there, and will continue to grow as well. We would have seen I think in a couple of days ago that Fiji has now been made part of the only eight countries that are now part of that group that the Commonwealth Secretariat had in terms of the network of elections office. So, Fiji is a very proud member of that also. That goes to show the capacity has been built within the Elections Office.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, I was just looking at the Elections Office budget and I do not see any mention of the Election Commission. My understanding, Madam Chair, is that the Election Commission is an independent Commission and the Elections Office works under the direction, if I can say or the supervision of the Election Commission. May be, it is part of the independent Commission but I was just wondering whether it should be part of the Elections Office or it should be part of the independent Commission. I am not sure about that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I mean, Honourable Karavaki, would tell you that the traditional way of budgeting for the Elections Office, the Electoral Commission financing is also built in within that, so they have a separate line item. You are most welcome to go and look at the books, it is all available and they get it audited so you can have a look at that.

(Inaudible interjection)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is in that.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Do we have any other comments?

There being no other comments and no amendments. Therefore, Parliament will vote Head 10. The question is, that the amount of Head 10 – Fijian Elections Office be approved.

Does any Honourable Member oppose the Motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- (Inaudible)

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- You opposed? Sorry, you have to speak louder.

Parliament will now vote on the motion.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	15
Not Voted	:	6

Head 10 agreed to.

Head 11 – Judiciary

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Head No. 11 is now open for any comments? Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, just a clarification on Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 8, the total allocation has gone down from \$11 million to \$6.2 million. What I note with particular interest is the Renovation of Old Parliament Complex in Veiuto which is allocated \$500,000 under Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 8 which is all under “R”. Just seeking clarification whether that allocation is enough to complete the renovation of the Old Parliament Complex?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No way.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, yes, it is to start moving some of the Courts out from this Complex so we can get more space for Members of Parliament in this area, as you know we are a bit congested. So, the idea is also to ensure that we have the capacity for the Judiciary to move over too.

So, we had earlier on, when Parliament was brought back again to this Complex, the idea was to eventually move the Family Court out there because it is a lot of salubrious when you have Child Maintenance Orders. There is parks, the kids can run around, and also things like the Juvenile’s Court, and also to have the Appeals Courts moved there, so they do not need to use the complex here. We cannot do it all in one year, frankly. As you can see, it has got a fairly large programme.

We also need to be mindful because of the fact there is a huge construction works going around all over Fiji, we need to also note there is enough contractors available to do the job or not. So, \$500,000, we have discussed it with the Judiciary, we have discussed the ability, this obviously involves things like IT and all of that, so it is a progressive move away from this Complex. So, \$500,000 is enough for the time being.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other comments?

There being no comments, Parliament will now vote on Head 11. The question is that the amount of Head 11 – Judiciary be approved.

Does any Honourable Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”)

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	28
Noes	:	16
Not Voted	:	6

Head 11 agreed to.

Head 12 - Parliament

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments. Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, if you look at the explanation, it says “The Parliament’s Budget is reflected as a one line item and this will be administered by the Secretary-General to Parliament who is appointed pursuant to Section 79 of the Fijian Constitution.”

Madam Chair, you would know that we have had issues with respect to parliamentary resources and especially to political parties, and all of us on this side of the House have made our views known very, very strongly. We oppose the formula that was put forward by the Secretary-General, and that allocation has not been good enough. We, as Members of Parliament on the Opposition side, and especially smaller parties like the National Federation Party, we have not had the resources, nor do we have the office. In fact, we have an office with the generosity of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the SODELPA Party. My proposal, Madam Chair, is that we should increase the Budget for Parliament, the Secretary-General will have more leeway, and then she may consider our needs and our requests.

So, I propose to move that we increase Head 12 by \$2 million to give the Secretary-General a better flexibility to exercise her Constitutional role to ensure that Members of Parliament, including the Opposition have the appropriate level of resources. So, I want to move that motion, Madam Chair.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Do we have any other comment? There being no other comments, can we have that proposed amendment, please, Honourable Prasad?

We have an amendment proposed by the Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad that Head 12 be increased by \$2 million in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6. Do we have a seconder?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- I beg to second the motion.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad, would you like to speak on your motion?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, I think I have already said what I had to say with respect to the allocation. I want to repeat, as a Constitution mandated officer, the Secretary-General in my view may have been constrained as a result of the budgetary allocation, and this motion, Madam Chair to increase the allocation by \$2 million would give the Secretary-General the flexibility to ensure that Members of Parliament and especially, Members of the Opposition are allocated the appropriate resources and amounts so that we can do our job effectively. Thank you, Madam.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do we have other input to this motion? Honourable Salote Radrodoro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to make a contribution to that motion in view of the House Committee's perspective that we had tabled our request in the House Committee. I understand that there was budgetary constraints for the Parliament, so our requests were put on hold, that is why, Madam Chair, I rise to support the motion that Parliament Budget provision be increased so that issues as tabled in the last House Committee could be relooked into. Thank you, Madam Chair.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Do we have any other input? Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, we are high profile people. I mean, right now everyone is watching us and we get phone calls almost every day to go to attend to things. I know that we are getting our support in the Secretariat here in Parliament, but I believe we need a constituency allowance. It was part of all Parliaments in the past to support our work outside of Parliaments, and I believe that it should come back. And I think if you canvass everyone in this room, Madam Chair, everyone is crying out for an allowance for their constituency.

We visit, we get calls and we need to be there with our people, and if people in the past were given the allowance, I think it is only fair that we also get that allowance.

Madam Chair, as you know, we were there last week in Nadi with the MSG, Melanesian people and they spoke about how they do it in Papua New Guinea, in the Solomons and Vanuatu,...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Papua New Guinea?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- The way we do our work we must be the most poorly resourced parliamentarians in this part of the world and it is not to line our pocket, it is to do our work properly. Whatever is reasonable, we must be given that to help us go out and meet our people, and it is difficult now because you now represent the whole of Fiji. I get calls from Tavua, from all parts of Fiji and I leave from Sigatoka to go and see them.

Madam Chair, we need your support and I think if everyone here is honest, they would stand up and speak. I know it aches, I know it takes a special courage to stand up and say this, because everyone will be saying, "he wants more money for himself." It is not that, it is to do our work properly and it has been done in the past and there is no reason why it should not be provided today for us to look after our people better. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to support the increase as proposed by the mover of the motion, Honourable Prasad. Madam Chair, I think it is all clear to the Office of the Secretary-General that we have Committees and we move around. We have only one bus and this bus will carry two Committees next week to Levuka. Other experiences from other Committees, when we go into areas like Rakiraki, Korovou, most of these Committee Members they share rooms even in Savusavu. That is not good for the Honourable Members to come and share rooms. They have to have the privilege to at least have one room each. I am talking reality Madam Chair.

Even allowance of \$150 a day on the field and the cost of hotel is about \$120. I think there has been a proposal to the Office to increase that by \$300, and we still await that.

The importance of Committees moving around and meeting that deadline to bring back reports into the House. These are housekeeping matters but I think I speak for the rest of the Members of Parliament who are not able to speak from both sides. All do support but when it comes to vote, it comes to party line, and if they are given to vote using their conscience, I think they will vote today. But that will not be the case. I urge everyone as Honourable Members, I think Honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers will be different because they are not given allowances because of their salary scale. Assistant Ministers should be given allowance too because they do not have vehicles like the Honourable Ministers. I hope that everyone supports this motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Leader of Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- I rise to support this motion. I really feel for the backbenchers in this House not only from our side, but also from Government, We are thankful to you, Madam Chair for sending us to other Parliaments in other Commonwealth countries and we are grateful for that, and whilst being grateful we see also how well-resourced they are, are well looked after, they have been in their own Parliament. I was in Wellington last week.

The Parliamentarians there, Madam Chair, fly anywhere in New Zealand, paid for by their Parliament, they stay in hotels, they are given mileage and they have their own offices. That is not what we are asking for, Madam Chair, because we know that we do not have that type of resources. But at least give them a constituency allowance. In 2006, we all given \$7,000 each for constituency allowance, so maybe that can be considered to be made available for the Parliamentarians, especially the backbenchers. The Ministers are alright, they are very well paid. The Honourable Prime Minister gets over \$300,000 a year, the Ministers are provided with over \$200,000 and they have their own vehicles, they are given accommodation wherever they stay and vehicles, they are very well looked after, Madam Chair. This is for the backbenchers on both side of the House.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- I just appreciate that the Honourable Attorney-General would allow us to speak first because he can reply to all what we have said.

I rise, Madam Chair, to support the increase. I cannot avoid looking at the Budget in Head 8, Foreign Affairs. They have the medical expenses and insurance for the staff, probably it is for the ambassadors. I am not sure whether the ambassadors or only the staff in the office. But, I would like if you suggest, Madam Chair, that would also be considered for the Honourable Members of Parliament. I appreciate the fact that we are sitting up tonight, no one is getting sick, they are all healthy but the time will come that they will wear out.

Tonight we are sitting up late, there will be other times that they will be going with the Committees attending to hearings in any other parts of Fiji. This is the work that they do. They need to be healthy to be looked after, and that is the reason why I raised whether a piece of that \$1 million could be able to accommodate that. If it is not, maybe we can consider another \$550,000 on top of that because I see over here that medical expenses and insurance for the Foreign Affairs is \$531,000. I think it will probably be along that if we can consider that, and that is the reason why I rise to support, Madam Chair, the demotion to increase the allocation for Parliament. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the Honourable Member who have spoken was speaking about two different things. There are two things, one is the allocation for Parliament itself which is the one line item and you know I do not want start involving the Secretary-General into it and how they made submissions and their submission was actually over in 30 seconds. They simply came and they said they want these much as you can see it is an increase and we approved it, but what the Honourable Members have deviated from in respect of Head 12 is the actual remuneration to be paid to the individual members of Parliament. That is governed by the Parliamentary Remuneration Decree.

If you look at Section 18 of the Constitution that actually tells you how you can actually review it and the Honourable Members may actually remember, there was actually a Committee that was setup. I understand that the Committee they quote expression of interest. I forgot the members of the Committee but they are the ones who can deal with that matter. They have a life of their own and I think that is not the issue.

Most of the members have spoken about constituency allowance, increase in the hotel rates, meals, et cetera, they are all the benefits that the individual members get and that is set out in the Decree. There is a Committee that can actually make recommendation to this House and, in fact, we have had discussions. We have said that there needs to be taken account of those Members of Parliament who come out of Suva and may be there needs to be some realistic factoring around that in particular for accommodation, et cetera. No one has closed the door on that, but all I want to tell this Parliament, that is a different matter to Head 12. A completely different matter to Head 12. Whatever increment that the Parliament had asked for, even the fact that it is an independent body. It is a body notwithstanding the fact that it is independent, it is also subject to audit. It is not a free for all money spin. So, they need to be also mindful of the way that money is spent, but whatever increment that they have asked for, we have given it to them.

Regarding remuneration, I would urge the Committee that is looking at it to do their work expeditiously. All I remember last was that, Honourable Sanjeet Patel, was part of that Committee and they said that they have actually put out an advertisement in the papers, and that they were calling

for expressions of interests. That is all I can remember. So they can do that work and that is a separate matter to this.

The other issue pertaining to the respective Parties getting their amounts, then of course it is a separate matter altogether also. Now, we have previously acknowledged the fact in this House that the amount that you can get paid as an individual Member of a Committee is limited under the Decree. Given the fact that we put a number of Bills before Parliament and they may be increased, what we have also said that, that could also be looked at and perhaps, if you sit for more Committee meetings, that could be looked at in terms of your payments or your allowances. So doors are closed but please let us not haphazard the issue. That is a separate path to what we are talking about in Head 12.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Madam Chair, whilst the Honourable Ministers are sitting here, then after this they will be going out and their drivers will be waiting for them. They are the people waiting out there. I support this motion because the drivers come under SG and in terms of their allowances. They are sitting there under the tent, which is why I support this motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, can I make a clarification, the Ministers actually have a full time job. Most of them work seven days a week.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Well, they have no place to sit.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The reality is with the other Members of the Parliament, some of them have other jobs or other businesses which they can run. They come to Parliament six or seven weeks, some of them have Committees.

In respect of the sitting places you are referring to, obviously there is a shortage of space. We are trying to move the courts out of here. We cannot create it overnight, so the point is that; we have the same office space as the Opposition but there are 32 of us. See how we sit, but we are not winching about it, we accept the realities. We do not even have rooms sometimes to stand because we have such narrow corridors. Our caucus meeting people are spilling out of the doors, but we accept the fact that there are limitations and we are trying to work within the limitations that we have. That is the reality.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Right of reply, Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you Madam Chair. In fact, I agree with the Attorney-General. The intention of my motion was really not to deal with the issues of allowances and remunerations. That is part of the Decree, I understand that.

The reason why we moved MP's allocation was simply to resource the Members of Parliament not in terms of money that they are going to take into their pockets but in terms of staff, research support and office. Those are the kind of resources we are talking about. In fact the issues we had right from the beginning, Madam Chair, was not about our salaries or our allowances or what we get. I mean that is for the Committee and that is for the Parliament to decide but this motion essentially is to give the Secretary-General more flexibility.

I know according to Attorney-General the office only asked for so much. We believe we need some more so that as Members of Parliament, backbenchers and other who need the support. I mean you go to Parliaments around the country, we have seen how Members of Parliament operate. I mean

they need the support, I mean as a Leader of the Party, I do not have any staff. We are managing within that \$45,000.

To make the work of Parliament effective and provide the tools and the resources through which the Members of Parliament from both side can be effective is very very essential and so the idea of motion is to give the Secretary-General another \$2 million to ensure that these sorts of resources and demand from Members of Parliament are well catered for, was the motive behind my motion. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. The Parliament will now vote on the motion. Does anyone oppose the motion? There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	-	11
Noes	-	31
Not voted	-	8

Motion is defeated.

Head 12, question is that the amount of Head 12, Parliament be approved. Does any Member oppose the motion? There being opposition, Parliament will vote.

Question put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	-	26
Noes	-	13
Not voted	-	11

The Motion is agreed to.

Head 13 - Independent Commissions

The floor is now open for any comments on Head 13..

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, can I just ask a question to the Attorney-General.

He suggested that the Elections Office actually had the allocation for the Election Commission. I am just wondering why the Election Commission which is an independent commission as well is not included in this Head. Maybe it is a better idea to have the Election Commission as part of this rather than not even being mentioned in the Elections Office budget.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We can include it in the Fijian Elections narration next year.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- The allocation of funds for the utilisation of freedom of information, how is that utilised? Where does that organisation operate from?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The Honourable Member would know that we presented a Bill in Parliament which is before the Committee that the freedom of information that was called the Information Bill will be administered by the Transparency Commission.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, can the Honourable Minister explain the allocation to the Public Service Commission which is \$5.5 million under Programme 1, SEG 6.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We answered the same question last year, Honourable Radrodro. I remember you asking me that and that includes the salaries of the Permanent Secretaries including the Secretariat of the Public Service Commission which is an independent body because the employers of the Permanent Secretaries is the PSC.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There being no further comments and no amendment. The Parliament will vote on Head No. 13. Question is that the amount of Head No. 13 - Independent Commission be approved. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”)

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	12
Not voted	:	9

Head 13 agreed to.

Head No.14 – Office of the Director of the Public Prosecutions

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Head No. 14 is now open for any comments.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, on Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5 there is a Consultancy fee of \$500,000 has been allocated under SEG 5. Can the Minister give us a description of this consultation fee?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Honourable Member for the question. Actually that allocation has in fact decreased from last year. It was \$750,000 and it has now gone to \$500,000 and the DPP’s Office does at times involve maybe QCs or other experts to come in to fight their cases but it has been decreased by \$250,000. Thanks.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Any further comments? There being no further comments and no amendments presented. Parliament will vote on Head No. 14 and the question is that the amount of Head No. 14 Office of the Director of Public Prosecution be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”)

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	27
Noes	:	12
Not voted	:	11

Head 14 agreed to.

Head No. 15 – Ministry of Justice

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Head 15 is now open for comments.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, on Head No. 15, Programme 1, Activity1, SEG 7. I see there is a huge increase there, can the Minister enlighten this House why the huge increase?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Honourable Member. It is because of the Digitisation Programme.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- And what is this?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- SEG 7?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is the Digitisation Programme which is, as you know, the practicing lawyers from the other side would tell you that all the titles in Fiji are actually physically kept. Some of the titles are actually falling apart. So they used to be in Suvavou House, they are no longer there because the weight of the paper was so heavy, that second floor started sinking. So the office was actually moved to the ground floor of Civic Towers.

Now what we are doing is, we are actually digitising all of the physical records. So the idea is eventually you will be able to, for example, do online searches, online registration, do online applications for caveats, et cetera. Now instead of people coming and lining up as Honourable Bulitavu who is probably more of a practising lawyer than some of the others, would tell you that you actually have to queue up or send your clerks over. So you could sit in the comfort of your office in Labasa and do an online search. But all of this needs to be digitised. This is to pay, where a lot of university students are being hired, they physically have to go and some of them are in A3 folios. When you unravel then they start crumbling those actual titles which is actually being digitised so it is put in through a software, so then you can carry out, for example, registrations on it. So that is there to pay for the digitisation programme,

As you may recall in last year's budget we had an allocation which is longer available as the Honourable Prime Minister highlighted for the VKB. So that has been done. We had a group people and in fact at the moment they are working two shifts, we want them to do it on three shifts, so we can do this very very quickly because for ease of doing business it makes it a lot easier, so that is the increase.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any further comments? There being no further comments and no amendments, Parliament will now vote on Head No. 15.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, just on SEG 8 – Decentralisation of BDM Services, where is this decentralisation processed?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- As I mentioned in my Budget Address and earlier today, Sigatoka, Korovou and Navua.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Under the Ministry of Justice we also have the Fiji Corrections Service, if we can have a look at that as well and see if there are any comments.

There being no comments, Parliament will vote on Head No. 15. The question is that the amount on Head No. 15 - Ministry of Justice be approved.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, just a clarification sought for Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 8, there is a huge increase in terms of the allocation, in fact it is nearly double. Can the Honourable Minister enlighten us on this huge allocation under SEG 8.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, this is SEG 8? If you see there is major construction works taking place in SEG 8 – Upgrade and Maintenance of Staff Quarters, Construction of K9 Dog Unit, Upgrade - Telecommunication and CCTV Camera Network, Upgrade and Maintenance of Institutional Buildings, Construction of Lautoka Remand Centre (because as we know in Lautoka we had a problem where remand prisoners were kept together with convicted prisoners), Construction of New Women's Correction Facility - this is to complete it. Now these women facility, as you know, as you know we only have one women's prison in Fiji and that is up here in Suva. So we have women who are removed from their families and their homes, obviously we like to have one eventually in the North. Sometimes we have mothers who are breastfeeding. It is a huge social dislocation and psychological dislocation so this is why all of these facilities are being built. Repair and Maintenance of Institutional Infrastructure, Electrical Upgrade Works, Institutional Boundary Fence, Construction of Transport Shed, Civil Works, Cyclone Rehabilitation - Ba Correction Centre. Obviously if we did not have the cyclone, the \$791,000 would not be there.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Programme 2, Activity 2, SEG 7. I need a clarification and an explanation on the Rehabilitation Programme, the Yellow Ribbon Project and the Poverty Alleviation programme? With the explanation on what are the provisions and the programmes for these three allocations.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Chair. The rate of recidivism in Fiji was almost 50 percent. In other words 50 percent of the people who went into prison first time, they went back in again. So this is why under the Bainimarama-led Government we started the Yellow Ribbon Project, we started the Rehabilitation Programme and provided a huge focus on it. You may recall

some of you that used to have shows out in Sukuna Park, et cetera, where a lot of these inmates were actually very good artisans, you will go opposite Korovou you will find an Art Gallery. Recently, one of the paintings was bought by a tourist for about \$4,000m done by one single convicted prisoner.

Now we are bringing in artist, Mrs Jane Ricketts she is a well-known teacher and also an artist has worked tirelessly with them, picking out the skills sets of these people, the individuals, we want to tell them that they are very valuable member of society. We want to ensure that there is also a lot of hand holding that takes place even after their release. That is where you find when sometimes people get locked away for about five years when they come outside there is not enough family support. Sometimes they are shunned or you find that potential employers will not employ them.

So part of the Yellow Ribbon Project, the Rehabilitation Programme is also to ensure that we identify the skill sets, we also liaise with the community. There is a lot of PR work that also goes on. In fact, the Fiji Correction Services has been going out to even villages and rural areas, telling people that it is okay to accept people back into society. If they have paid for their misdeeds, they have been convicted, it does not mean that they are worthless member of our society. So all of that together, Honourable Kiliraki, is part of the specific programmes that relate to this specific objective of reducing the rate of recidivism in Fiji and there is specific programmes that relate to all of these.

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Are there any other comments? Thank you, there have been no other comments and no amendments proposed, Parliament will now vote on Head 15. The question is that, the amount for Head 15 –Ministry of Justice be approved, does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	-	28
Noes	-	10
Not voted	-	12

There being 28 Ayes, 10 Noes, 12 not Voted, Motion is agreed to. Thank you Honourable Members.

Head 15 agreed to.

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Members.

Head No. 16 – Ministry of Communication

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Head 16, is now open for any comments. Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair. Head 16, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5 – Can there be some clarification on these Advertising Expenses? Maybe I just read them all at once, Madam Chair, I have three items that I would like some clarification on that Head.

There is \$250,000 for Expenses of Filming and Video Materials, Special Production (\$150,000) and Advertising Expenses ((\$100,000). Those three items in Head 16-1-1-5. Can we have some clarification on those items, Madam Chair?

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I am sure many of us in fact have been enjoying the archives show that the Ministry of Information does put out, going all the way back to the independent days, we see this black and white footage. So that is the programme that has been with the Ministry of Information and now it is the Department of Information under the Ministry of Communication for a long period of time. So these relate to that.

Obviously, for example as the Honourable Minister for Defence talked about the Fiji Day celebrations. This year of course, we will celebrate the Constitution Day for the first time in a Public Holiday. We have other national events, the Department of Information goes out and film all these news. For archives purposes any country to have history of its narration, the narrative must be there and the narrative is kept or captured also in pictures and that is what we do. So we could sometimes even have a very major event overseas that they would go and attend to. So you need obviously material for this. You need sometimes this special production were mainly link to outsource the editing of it. All of these is part and puzzle of what the Department of Information does. Those costs relate to that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, another one from me. Head 16-3-1-7 you have this Implementation of Analogue to Digital Roadmap. This has been appearing for a quite a while. Can you have some update on this and clarification on this, please.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, in fact I did provide the update to Parliament in trial runs have been done. Some of the matters pertaining to the implementation did get slowdown in *Winston*. There is an upgrade in terms of the towers have been put up.

In the Suva, Nausori corridor including Lami should be getting the signals going out to the public by the end of this year. We also hope to get the Western Division up in running in the earlier part of next year. So work is really going ahead with that.

We also have an allocation of \$2 million and that is those shatter boxes that needs to be given out as you know when we were first made this announcement we said that we will help in particular those people with low income to switch from analogue to digital. So it will not be expense to them. The other wonderful thing about going to digital is also those *free-to-air television* stations at the moment will be able to get another channel so *Fiji TV, FBC and Mai TV*,, of course open to them so that they can show more channels, we can have more education programs and et cetera. It has been slow but we hope to complete that very soon.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Another one from me, Madam Chair, Head 16- 4 -1- 7 – there is \$2 million on Consultancy Payments. I think we need to have clarification on that, Madam Chair?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This is part of the contract and of course the Auditor-General has looked at this also. We have a software development that takes place. The software development that is taking place, we are not paying for the software upfront. Most of the cases what you actually

do is you going and buy the software of the shelves and then you have an AMC (Annual Maintenance Contract) that is built into it like the FMIS, so you pay AMC.

This is part and parcel of the development of the software. So for an examples you have the industry Fiji now, where you can go online, you can register if you are foreign investor and get the approval on a signal page window application from the five tier agencies. So similarly we have the VKB, so in terms of development of the software, there are various consultancy fees that need to be paid for that. Now but in terms of the AMC there is no AMC because what they do is once it is all up and running we have this way of sharing the profits from that when people are actually pay the fees, so we are sharing for that.

Now that consultancy fee invariably does never get utilised the maximum amount. It depends on the pace of the development of the software and that is what the fees for, it is a contractual obligation to show consultancy fees as built in the contract. We have also got for the information of Parliament, we also got World Bank to carry out an independent assessment of how the progress of this is currently taking place. Because in some of the areas we were unnecessarily happy with the speed and which the software was being developed. So you got independent third party, they got the technical assistance it carry out in assessment of how well it has been done.

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Are there any other comments? Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Yes, Madam Chair, just the clarification on the National Switch I checked again I think last year it was about \$30 million. This year there is \$6 million allocation for that SEG 10. What works that are ongoing?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There are \$600,000. So there is a decrease.

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- There being no other comments.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Last year, it was about \$300,000, this year it is about \$600,000.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, as you know that the National Switch can only be implemented once this Parliament approves the Bill. The Bill is before this Parliament, so we are anticipating that in the new sitting of Parliament that we will approve the Bill. You would have also seen there is \$400,000 for Fiji Pay. That comes into play as soon as we get the National Switch into place. Fiji Pay, Honourable Bulitavu, is about ability to issue cards under the National Switch Programme.

At the moment, we have the Social Welfare recipients receiving their money at their bank accounts through WESTPAC. We pay WESTPAC a fee for that. Once we have a National Switch and they get their Fiji pay card, we do not pay anyone any fees. So, it is just cost saving to Government. So, they simply get the card, the individual Social Welfare recipients or any other recipient of any other benefits from Government or it could be extended to any other people who want to go on the Fiji pay system. They have their cards, the money is simply gets loaded electronically on to their cards and they can use it at any ATM machine without even having to open a bank account, but they get captured under the electronic banking system.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Aseri Radrodoro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, Programme 4, Activity 1, Item 9, there is an item on digitisation BDM, Companies and Titles Office. This is the same description as in digitisation programme

on page 85 on Justice. Can the Honourable Minister enlighten us what is the difference and why it is shown on different administration?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That cost that is there in Justice, as I have highlighted, is to pay for the cost of the people who are carrying out physical works. Let us say, it is a project. Like in the VKB, we had hired project officers to do the work. This is a much bigger exercise, so they are doing it in a short period of time. Hopefully, we have three shifts in no time soon once the budget gets approved. This is the actual software developer, it is not just a Titles Office, it is also the BDM and Companies Office.

At the moment, with the BDM, there are certain restrictions with the software that we have. Similarly now, we have a new Companies Act, we should be able to do company searches online. We should be able to pay our company fees or annual return fees on line also, so all of these work are being done to ensure that we are able to fast track e-governance. That is part of that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Just a clarification, Madam Chair; Programme 4, Activity 1, SEG 5 – Licence Renewals (\$4 million). Can this be clarified, Madam Chair?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This is to do with the various software that government holds. For example, our secretaries have Microsoft, we have to pay an annual fees for that. There may be other programmes that exist in different Ministries, all of these license renewals is paid through the Department of ITC Services because what we are doing is decentralising.

Just to also let you know, before you would see that all the individual Ministries used to go out and buy their own computers. One of the things that we found was that, you have some junior officers from Ministry X going and negotiating with a computer company. They might sell them an end of life product. You know the laptop is about to go out of production, they sell it to them. The warranty period is for six months. What we have done is that, we have centralised it so the specifications of the laptops, the computers, the servers, et cetera, are now being standardised and these people have the ability to be able to negotiate on our behalf. I think in the first year, we save over \$2 million, just simply by getting newer products, getting warranties that were for three years, as opposed to six months. A lot of people in the private sector used to take government for a ride. So, this is the centralisation of that and what we have also done, before the different Ministries would go off and buy different software. Now, they have to get the approval from the Department of ITC.

We are trying to also centralise all the licence payments so that we know they are all done on time and we do not get any outdated licensing or we have bugs creeping in, the viruses, et cetera. That is where those licences are for.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments? Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Does it mean now that any Government Department with a computerised system would not be paying for its licence separately, it is all paid centrally? Is that how we understand it?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is definitely what we are working towards. There is still some stuff that is defined that someone got some licence sometimes back but we are all centralising it, we are trying to centralise it and rationalise it. Of course, the State-Owned Enterprises do their own thing. This is all to do with the different Ministries. We try and encourage them to get an opinion from this Department that is developing that expertise.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, Programme 4, Activity 1, SEG 4. There is a computer rental and maintenance of \$1.1 million. Can the Honourable Minister enlighten us whether this is the computer rental for all Ministries and Departments or is it just for one particular department and why the rental agreement?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is for the Whole of Government, it has been centralised and there are certain instances where it does need to be done. Sometimes, it is more of a maintenance cost than anything else. Sometimes, for example, standard repairs and tear or people drop laptops or they drop the PCs or whatever the case maybe and that is where it comes through.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no other comments, Parliament will now vote on Head 16.

The question is, that the amount of Head 16 - Ministry of Communications to be approved. Does any Member opposes the motion?

There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	-	28
Noes	-	13
Not voted		9

Motion agreed to.

Head 16 agreed to.

Head 17 – Ministry of Civil Service

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments. Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, there is reference to Articles 125 and 126 in the narrative under the Ministry of Civil Service and I note that there will three main divisions. Just before that, if you look at the Constitution itself, Section 123, 124, 125, 126 and 127, it is about the Civil Service, about the Public Service Commission. It is about its composition and function and then 127 is about the role of the Permanent Secretaries. This particular Ministry, Madam Chair, is not really a constitutional office. I mean, it is a Ministry created by the Government to manage the Civil Service.

My question to the Government would be, while Section 123 lays down all the principles and they are all very good in terms of what the civil servants are required to do and also under recruitment and promotion, it talks about merits, objectivity and impartiality and all the rest of it. these are all very fine, Madam Chair. However, I want to ask the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister responsible for the Civil Service is how is he going to ensure that the Civil Service remains an independent entity while at the same meeting the objectives and the values under Section 123 in terms of providing support to the

Government? I would seek his clarification on this before I want to move an amendment to the allocation so that not only we have three divisions, we should have may be four or five divisions. I am looking at an independent body within the Ministry of Public Service which can ensure and deal with, I do not see any provision in the Constitution under Public Service with respect to dispute settlement and grievances. So, perhaps the Ministry of Public Service itself could include a role which will ensure that we achieve that in the Public Service as well.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Honourable Prasad. I really do not understand your question *vis-à-vis* Section 123 about the services, et cetera being provided, which are Sections 124 and 125 of the Constitution. . Can you please clarify because I am trying to grasp what you are saying?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- All I was saying is, how do you ensure that the Public Service remains an independent institution, because right under Section 127 of the Constitution, as I said before, the Permanent Secretary, while they have the powers, they have to do everything in consultation with the Minister, and there is all the scope. I mean, Ministers today might be alright, they might not be interfering, but there are examples of some of them who do interfere. But, tomorrow if you have Ministers who want to interfere in the appointment or promotion, then the Public Service is going to be thoroughly politicised and all the values that are listed there, I mean constitutional issues or constitutional mandated requirements are not necessarily going to be delivered, if we do not have the backup institutions, if we do not have the processes and the mechanisms to ensure that civil servants behave like that, because you will have direct interference in the appointment process and promotion process by Ministers. And, so what I am saying is, whether the Attorney-General is thinking because he is going to be Minister responsible for the Civil Service, whether there would be something within the Ministry of Civil Service because the Public Service Commission cannot do anything because it can only appoint the Permanent Secretaries. The Permanent Secretaries, once they are appointed, they deal with the appointments within the Ministry in consultation with the Minister responsible. That is very clear under Section 127.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I will explain it.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So, you need some mechanism within the Ministry of Public Service, which is going to be the centralised body, which is going to deal with the Civil Service as a whole.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The greatest safeguard obviously is the Constitution. The Constitution sets out the values, which are also, as you know in law enforceable.

And, the other safeguard, of course, is the fact that the Permanent Secretaries therefore are employed by the PSC. The Ministers are not the employers of the Permanent Secretaries.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- (Inaudible)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, no. There is also as I have said, the merit-based appointments that has already been rolled out. I can give you a copy of that, and that will actually set out the clear guidelines as to how a civil servant must be appointed.

The other safeguard, of course, is Honourable Prasad, you said that there is nothing in the Constitution regarding the other safeguards. Section 120, there is a Public Service Disciplinary Tribunal that is actually appointed by the Judicial Services Commission, and that is headed, of course, by the Honourable Chief Justice. So, they are in the process of setting up the Tribunal, and that is an independent body where the Judicial Services Commission appoints them, and then they can then have employer/employee grievances before the Public Service Disciplinary Tribunal; it is an independent body.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- (Inaudible)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, no, they are appointing it. The JSC actually appoints. . We have nothing to do with that. So, they set up the members, and if you look at Section 120, it tells you exactly how the Tribunal is set up.

“(4) The members of the Tribunal are appointed for a term of 3 years....

(5) The President may, on the recommendation of the Judicial Services Commission following consultation by it with the Attorney-General, appoint a person to act as a member of the Tribunal...

(6) The members of the Tribunal may be removed from office for inability....”,

but only if they go through a particular independent process. So, the entire process and the membership is very, very independent. This is where individual civil servants can also take their grievances, should they feel aggrieved by the process. So, that Tribunal is already there. It says on a number of occasions about how independent it is.

Now, the other point also is that the law that is before this Parliament is the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct also guides the code of conduct of us; Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Civil Servants, Members of Parliament and everyone else. So, there are the safeguards that are built in, and we know, as I mentioned earlier on today, we are quite happy to share with you all the roll outs that are being done. People are being trained, and I can tell you there are some civil servants who are actually opposed to merit-based appointments. There are some people in the middle management who do not like the fact that there will be merit-based appointments because there has been a culture over the years, from a very long period time, in particular after 1987, to appoint people at their whim or who you knew, et cetera, without necessarily the right qualifications. So, there is all that work that is currently going on and they are the safeguards that are built in.

So, if you look at the Ministry of Civil Service, Honourable Prasad, the three Divisional Offices - Policy Division. So one of the issues is to do with remuneration. As we have set out, if you look at jurisdictions like Australia and New Zealand, what used to happen and they have gone to the other extreme where they would give a lump sum of money and the Permanent Secretaries were entirely responsible for that, and what they found was, some people were paid exorbitant amounts of money. In particular in Australia this is a big problem where people at the middle to upper echelons were paid exorbitant amounts and the lower ends were not.

So, this is why we have carried out a consultancy independent body from Australia that has reviewed the salary conditions of over 136 positions in Government. So, we have seen the draft, they have gone to fine-tune it, and they have also done a statistical analysis in measuring the salaries and comparing it to the private sector, and seeing how we are being paid. As I have highlighted earlier on

in this Parliament, we found that the graduate intake in some Ministries were very high compared to the private sector. But, as the years went by, in middle management we found it went lower to the private sector. So, we need to be able to ensure that the system that we have appoints people on merit basis.

The other issue that they found was, the Civil Service was too obsessed with titles, as we highlighted. They were Administrative Officers, Senior Administrative Officers, Principal Administrative Officers, and it all went up. So, people have wanted to act on different positions, as opposed to relying on Job Descriptions (JD), and knowing what the JDs for the individual and then assessing them on merit. So, you could have a cadre of administrative officers, not necessarily you know that pecking order. So, these are the kind of issues, and it is also cost to Government.

As you know, when you are doing the salaries and we have so many actors within the Civil Service, SEG 1 sees half the people who were acting. So, the reality is that we are trying to fine-tune that. If you look at the Divisions, we have “responsible for the assessment of Human Resource Policies ...”, so that would include remuneration. What we want to be able to say, for example, the economists. So you may have an economist that may be hired by the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Minister for Agriculture may take an Agricultural Economist. So, what do we pay them? We could set a range, and then it depends on the Permanent Secretary, given his or her allocation to actually peg the salary at that level. But we do not want it going completely out of kilter. So, this Ministry will set that in place.

Then the Central Training Division, that is important because all the Ministries invariably, for example, if they want to train people on how to use “Word”. We found for example, many of the PAs, whilst they had Microsoft, half of them did not even know how to use the full extent of what was available in the software. So, that would be a training for everyone. We could do it in one training for all the Ministries.

But, then again, there may be trainings specific, for example, to Foreign Affairs in Diplomacy. Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Economy do not need that training, that is specific to them, they can have this specific training. But, there is a cross-section of training that is available to all the Ministries, so this Ministry will coordinate that.

Now, the other one, of course, is the up-skilling, and the Corporate Services Division, obviously the day to day activities of the Ministry. One of the other things, for example, we asked them to do was that, the Government now is being asked more and more to host regional and international meetings. So, we have our policies through Cabinet to ensure that we use more of the private sector.

Let me give you an example. In 2008, 2009 when the Ministry of Communications was asked to host this Commonwealth Telecommunication Organisations Conference, the civil servants said that we need to have over \$1 million to host this Conference. We managed to host the Conference at \$220,000. So, the old way of doing things was, you commandeer all the vehicles. You take all the drivers and the vehicles from Suva to Nadi. You give them accommodation, you pay them per diems, meals, and all of that.

What we did was, we outsourced it. Rosy Tours and ATS Pacific did all that for all for us. They met people at the airport, with all these wonderful women who greeted these people, they provided the transport service, and we did not have to take anyone from Suva.

Even the traditional ceremony of welcome that we had, we actually got the people from Narewa Village to do it, as opposed to taking a busload of people from the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs. So, in that way, when we had this traditional ceremonies, we were able to get the local community to participate and they did it at nearly a fifth of the cost.

So, what we have asked the Ministry of Civil Service to do is to coordinate now all the major conferences so we can save on costs. We also need to take advantage, we need a coordinating agency, so for example, liaise with Tourism Fiji to make sure when our overseas visitors come, the gift packs are ready for them, they take the videos, et cetera, promoting Fiji to them.

So, these are some of, what we call ‘holistic approach’ to running the Civil Service and these are some of the things they are also doing through the Corporate Services.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no other comments, Parliament will vote on Head 17. The question is, that the amount of Head 17 – Ministry of Civil Service be approved? Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	15
Not Voted	:	6

There being 29 Ayes, 15 Noes, 6 Not Voted, the Motion is agreed to.

Head 17 agreed to.

Head 18 – Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management

MADAM CHARPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments on Head 18.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7, I need a clarification in relation to the sum of \$100,000 – Consultations and Promotions and Government Roadshow – Remove Rural Locations (\$200,000)? Could I have an explanation as what those items relate to?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Chair. The two allocations are closely linked. Government Roadshows, again this is an initiative of Government just to take services to the local communities, particularly considering the difficulties that they face. Honourable Members raised, during the discussions today about people without Birth Certificates, Marriages and all these functions of Government, including entry into the VKB. So, for Government Roadshows, this started in 2013, we started off in Keiyasi, and it has been held in most parts of Fiji, thus this allocation of \$200,000.

On the Consultations and Promotions, we have a lot of programmes, Madam Chair, and one things we found out in the rural areas, most of the rural communities are not aware of Government

providing assistances that is available for them, and this is why this allocation for the printing of materials, for the meetings with the relevant stakeholders. So, as I have stated that these two are closely linked, just to improve the services of the Ministry.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 10, Capital Grants and Transfers, there is an allocation of \$7,791.9 million. Does this include the rent subsidy under the CBUL Programme?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Yes, this includes the subsidy. The subsidy is actually 4 percent, added to the 6 percent. So, this is included, and of course, Madam Chair, let me also mention to the Honourable Members that this figure is actually decided by iTLTB, based on the number of leases that is in the system.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, still on SEG 10 on the CBUL, will any review be conducted in regards to the formula with iTLTB? Is a review being carried out?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chair, I have mentioned in one of the earlier sessions that CBUL is due for review this year. For the information of this honourable House, the Cabinet Paper has already been prepared and once we endorse as the Ministry responsible, then it will be taken to Cabinet.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, I need to move a motion about CBUL, Madam Chair, that there be an increase to \$9 million.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Clarification, Madam Chair. Programme 3, Activity 1, SEG 7 – Emergency Water Supplies. Could the Honourable Minister clarify that, as opposed to the Water Authority of Fiji; what does this \$500,000 relate to?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Chair. First, let me acknowledge the Honourable Minister for Economy for this increase.

Madam Chair, the Ministry for Rural Development and Disaster Management is responsible for water in the non-reticulated areas, and that is why this allocation. We have had prolonged dry spells, that includes cartage to the maritime islands, and this is why this allocation is there, and we are thankful indeed that there has been an increase, if I remember correctly, from \$200,000 to \$500,000.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Chair, Programme 2, Activity 4, SEG 5, Cartage of Personnel Effects and Repatriation Funds. I seek some clarification from the Honourable Minister if these two items are related, in terms of the SEG that is written there?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chair, the Eastern Division, because of the maritime disposition, particularly for the movement of staff, and usually we also have rural housing carpenters in the rural areas they go with their toolboxes and this is why the cartage funding is allocated in here.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- May I just seek some clarification from the Honourable Minister regarding the repatriation of funds, does that include if someone dies from out station and to be brought to his/her village or to Suva?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chair, the Ministry is responsible for a lot of services for the Government. When there is no BDM Office in Labasa, Lakeba and Rotuma, we do it for them.

Liquor Tribunal is administered under them, so we do a lot of services for Government and we were not allocated funds previously to facilitate these services, particularly in the repatriation of the funds. This is why we have the allocation, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, on Programme 1, activity 1, SEG 10; I just want to have more clarification on this CBUL. This renewal of leases, does this Unit deal with all the expired leases in State Land and *iTaukei* Land or just *iTaukei* Land?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chair, this is just for *iTaukei* land leases. The Lands Ministry is responsible for all *iTaukei* land that are leased by Government. This is only for the *iTaukei* land under the agriculture programmes.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, I find this as a duplication of process because the renewal of leases is a matter between the lessee and the landlord. If a State lessee can organise their own renewal of leases with the Director of Lands, the same could be said with people who lease land from *iTaukei*. So what is happening here, you are paying another Unit and allocating \$7 million for the Government to go and facilitate the renewal of the leases of the *iTaukei* land when that is the responsibility of the lessee. On top of that, they are using the Government to go and renew their leases which should be an arrangement between them and the landowners and from that exercise, the Government will have to pay another 4 per cent more than what is allowable under the Act.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chair, the difference is the subsidy. With the other leases, particularly with State Leases there is no rental subsidy, the additional 4 per cent. In comparison between the two, this is the incentive behind this initiative of Government.

Madam Chair, we all know the implication on the sugar industry particularly, when the land leases were not renewed and the landowning units were hesitant to renew their leases. As already raised by the Honourable Bulitavu, this is subject to review as it is going to be submitted to Cabinet and probably will come before this House and the Committee, but the biggest beneficiary out of this are the *iTaukei* landowners and the *iTaukei* Land Trust Board.

The iTaukei Land Trust Board, Madam Chair, if you look at their income, say starting from late 1999 onwards was sloped because of the non-renewal of leases. They are very supportive of this programme because for them this is income as well.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, can we just have the same on the utilisation of land? For those land that have been administered, what percentage of the land has been fully used now and planted with sugarcane? I said that because the amount that we have this year should reflect on the improvement that we have when we start getting the land and whether it is developed or not, what percentage?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- This is for the number of leases. The utilisation for each of the particular lease, Madam Chair, that will be available with the Fiji Sugar Corporation because they have the GIS and the database for the utilisation by each of the farmers on their lease. However, this figure is worked out according to the number of leases that have been renewed under this scheme.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, a clarification on Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 10; Programme 2, Activity 2, SEG 10; and Programme 2, Activity 3, SEG 10, on the divisional Capital Grants and Transfers. Can there be a clarification on the different allocations and the explanation on the prioritisation of all these projects on each division?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chair, SEG 10, of the respective programmes is about Divisional Development Projects. Divisional Development Projects are raised based on the request from the communities, first through the Provincial Development Board and then the Divisional Development Board. This is the bottom up approach in the process of identifying capital projects for Government. All Honourable Members of the House would know that concurrently, there is sectoral plan, that is a top down approach and at the same time, based on the needs in the areas, this is the bottom-up approach from the communities. For example, most of these projects are health related.

Health through the sectoral programmes, they are dealing with Valelevu Health Centre and so forth but the communities they also request but that does not mean that this automatically qualifies. It is the work of the Divisional Development Board and, of course, the Provincial Development Board as well before they recommend this to the National Steering Committee to make sure that it all meets the conditions, in terms of accessibility, the number of population, for example, for a health station. Likewise, the request for Government stations.

The Commissioners have the priorities, Madam Chair, and this is how these projects are brought up through the planning process of Government and that is how it is reflected based on the needs from the respective divisions through the Divisional Development Boards and thus, the allocations respectively.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Before I seek clarification, let me just say that I will be moving a motion on Programmes 2, Activity 3, for increase in the sum of \$200,000.

The clarification that I seek is in relation to Programmes 2, Activity 3, SEG 10 – in particular Tawake Nursing Station and Nabouwalu Hospital. We followed this up last year, nothing was done and they said it will be constructed that year. Could the Honourable Minister explain why the items are here again?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIIRATU.- Madam Chair, the projects are reappearing because of the allocation as a result of the *TC Winston*. It was in the last year's programme but it was not implemented. It is just carried over to the new financial year and that is why they are appearing in the Budget provision again for this year.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Just two quick questions Minister, one a more general one. I noticed that under the Divisional Development Projects, you have health centres and health quarters. I was just wondering whether it really should be under the Ministry of Health. The other question I have is on Rural Infrastructure Programme 3, Activity 1, SEG 10 – Grant to Self-Help Projects \$2.5 million under Requisition, is that for the whole country and do you think it is a sufficient amount?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I have already explained the reasons why these projects are appearing here. Most of our Divisional Development Projects are not really rural development specific, particularly in terms of our primary activities. You will see the extension of FEA grids, you will see health and you will even see education related projects under this. As I have stated, sectoral planning and the needs of the people through the Divisional and Provincial Development Boards and of course we have the District Development Committees as well.

On the issue of Self-Help projects, Madam Chair, again I thank Government for the increase in allocation. Previously when we had the two Ministries separately (Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Ministry for Rural Development) they have a \$1 million allocation. But in the past years, Madam Chair, after the split that was not factored. We only had \$1 million allocation for self-help and this year we requested if the allocation that used to be given to Multi-Ethnic Affairs can also be brought in. We have discussed about the Prime Minister's Small Grants, Communities, this is where they cover the gaps, Madam Chair.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Head 18-2-2 SEG 8. Would the Minister explain the re-appearing in the allocation of the relocation of Nacula Health Centre – Yasawa in the 2016 Budget Estimate as it appeared under SEG 10 in 2015 Budget Estimates.

Second, still on SEG 8, would the Minister justify the \$750,000 increase in allocation of the relocation of the Nacula Health Centre in considering of its reappearance in next year's Budget Estimates.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Again reappearing because of the reallocation of funds or the redeployment of funds, should I say, as a result of *Winston*. Madam Chair, you would note that, for example, under Head 18-2-2 SEG10 they have allocation there for Project Preparatory Work.

The practice in the past, there was just a rough figure estimation on how much the project would cost. But that resulted in a lot of projects being carried over because when the funding came it was insufficient and that is why the Ministry requested that this allocation of Project Preparatory Work,

requesting for projects to be funded from Government, they do all the preparatory work. If there are increases in the cost, it is simply because the detail scoping work has already been carried out. Because initially it was just a rough estimation, when it comes to the Divisional Boards and the Commissioner will refer it back to the Members of the Board so that all the technical work can be completed and usually that is where you will see either plus or minus in the allocation. But usually it is always above the initial estimation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Of the same SEG 10. Can the Minister explain why there is a new allocation of projects preparatory work with a Budget of \$500,000 and to explain the types of work that will carry out under this allocation. Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIIRATU.- Madam Chair, I think I have already answered this, say for example, under the same SEG for the Nadi Health Centre. That \$500,000 is the cost of the building, that does not include the grid line, that does not include the survey, that does not include the water. That is why this preparatory work allocations is separate from the project cost for the actual project itself, Madam Chair.

As I have stated, when the planning process was first established through Pillar 7 of the Charter, and this brings efficiency into work as a result, projects are implemented on time rather than being carried forward because of lack of funds.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Honourable Chair, Programme 4, Activity 1, SEG 10. In my Budget Address, I said that I was confused of how the National Housing Policy was being managed. I can understand that the housing assistance requirement or assistance for us who are employed are being looked after by the Ministry of Housing, as well as the squatters. But the other one that I am not clear of is the housing assistance for rural and villages. And I see that there is a Rural Housing Assistance here with a sum of \$500,000. Could a clarification be given on that, please?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Rural Housing Assistance, this is for people in the rural communities. Again, housing is a basic need and Government does assist under this programme, Madam Chair. The applicant pays a third which is about \$6,000 considering today's cost and then the Government provides the rest (two-thirds) and of course carts the materials to the destination depending on where the applicant resides.

On standards, Madam Chair, with rural housing assistance, let me assure all the Members of the House that these houses are built to standards because they are given the plan that the Ministry of Rural Development has and of course the Ministry also comes to check. So these housing assistance scheme is built to standards. If you go around Fiji, post *TC Winston*, most of the rural housing houses stood the Category 5 Cyclone.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- There being no other comments, we have a few amendments.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, just a clarification on Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 7- Community Capacity Building that is applied to all the Commissioners. Community Capacity Building of \$30,000 and Administrative Expenses of \$30,000 and also SEG 9 – Institutional Strengthening for Divisional and Provincial Offices for Commissioner Central, Commissioner Western, Commissioner Northern and Commissioner Eastern. Can we get clarification from the Minister on what are these expenses relating to?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIIRATU.- Madam Chair, in responding to Honourable Dulakiverata's question, in the last session about long-term plans for development, my answer was

cultivate the people. SEG 7 – Community Capacity Building is about providing capacity development training for the people because development is working in partnership. We need to highlight to the community leaders, we have talked about the *turaga ni koro* and *mata ni tikina* on the responsibility.

The chains of command and how they can access Government services and most importantly how to probably do the preliminary preparatory work for projects scoping. It is not only rural development related. In community capacity building, Madam Chair, this programme was initially with the Ministry for Health about five years ago, but then it was decided by Government to be transferred because when it was with the Ministry of Health they were just concentrating on wellness programmes. This programme was designed for particularly training of the trainers particularly for the community leaders.

On institutional strengthening, Madam Chair, we need to improve the image of Government particularly in the rural areas. We talked about professionalism and we talked about efficiency in services it is very disappointing when you go to Government offices in rural areas they collect all the left over furniture from everywhere. That is the first image of Government, you walk into the DO's Office into a Commission's Office first impression is the one that lasts.

So we need to equipped them with generators because when they go to rural communities where there are no electricity they need to takes generators with them so that they can have power point slides. We need to raise the level of services to our people because our people deserve it, Madam Chair, and that is why you have that allocation.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, Head 18, Programme 8, Activity 1, SEG 10. I would like to move a motion that we should increase this allocation on Rural Housing Assistance.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. We have a number of amendments to attend to. First one is from the Honourable Gavoka who has moved that Head 18 – Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development be increased by \$2 million in respect of Programme CBUL, Activity 1-SEG 10. Does anyone second the motion?

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair, I second the motion.

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Gavoka, would you like to speak on your motion?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. CBUL or the Committee on the Better Utilisation of Land was pulled right out of the SODELPA manifesto. We are grateful that FijiFirst has taken that from our manifesto for the betterment of this country. We salute that, no big deal, Madam Chair, the idea was ours we are going to do a better job of it but they are using it, better for Fiji, thank you.

Our manifesto, Madam Chair, we looked at this, we saw the way the leases needed to be renewed and we undertook as a party to meet half of the UCV at 6 percent right not but we say “ you take the other half”. This is very, very important, we believe it should go to 12, 6 percent by the farmer and 6 percent by Government because we want more people to go to farming especially cane farming.

As I indicated in my Budget Address, farmers are now aging and can no longer continue with farming. It is time to encourage a new breed of farmers, the young ones. But an issue that is limiting this is the issue of land tenure, the security of the tenure and some of them the farmers are saying that they want ALTA to go to 50 years and I believe there is a room for dialogue on this but we have to go to the landowners and say “look we will double the lease you are making today” 6 percent on the UCV by the farmer and 6 percent to be topped up by Government. That is why, Madam Chair, we should increase this and it will come a time when it will be much more than this. But, Madam Speaker, the payback the way it multiplies in the economy in the betterment of this country will far exceed whatever we put in as a Government to subsidise this and make sure that the landowner is well rewarded for allowing his land to be leased for a longer period. This is the cornerstone, Madam Chair, of the Reform Sugar on Bill Nos. 19 and 20 if you do not address this, that Bill will not succeed. The farmers need to be assured of security of land and there is one way of doing it to go the landowner and say “we will double your lease for you” and that is CBUL, a SODELPA initiative ...

(Chorus interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- only the branding has changed, the principle and the idea about it has come from SODELPA . Madam Chair, I would ask everyone to support this to increase the allocation we have here and this as I said is the first step. There has be more down the line but we should not be hesitant to provide their support because the future of the industry, especially sugar hangs on those land issue. Thank you , Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There being no other input on that motion, we will vote on the motion, t the motion that I have read that the Head 18 – Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development being increased by \$2 million in respect of Programmes CBUL, Activity 1-SEG 10. Does anyone oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

Question put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	-	13
Noes	-	28
Not voted	-	9

There being 13 Ayes, 28 Noes and 9 Not Voted, the motion is defeated.

The next amendment has been by the Honourable Nawaikula, he has moved that Head 18 be increased by \$2 million in respect of Programme 3, Activity 1, SEG 8. Does anyone second the motion?

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair, I beg to second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Nawaikula, would you like to speak on your motion?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Chair, Programme 3, Activity 1, SEG 8 that is in relation to the Non Cane Access Road. Madam Chair, I go back again to my Budget Address in which I seriously asked that we should give due regard to the people who farm in the rural areas and who

contribute to the *dalo* industry as well as the *yaqona* industry. I also explain the plight of this people and some of them they walk for five kilometres a day, carrying their stuff on their back and we obliged to look into that. Understanding of course that we have in the past made a similar kind of assistance to the cane access roads and this year there is \$3 million to upgrade and maintain them. This amount is to assist those who live in the rural areas to access their farms, to allow them to bring their produce down to where communication is. That basically is the request that this motion is there for.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Is there anyone else who would like to speak on the motion?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chair, this motion is unnecessary. There is enough for rural roads. If I may refer the Honourable Member, Madam Chair, to Head 30 – Ministry of Agriculture, Programme 5, Activity 1, SEG 8 on page 207, we have a \$2 million allocation there for farm roads access.

Additionally, Madam Chair, Head 43, page 289 on roads; it is stated that \$9.1 million is allocated for ongoing and new rural roads and that includes access to remote rural communities and secondly, agriculture development areas. So, we have sufficient funding already under the different agencies and there are reasons why allocations are as such, Madam Chair. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone else wants to speak on that motion? There being no other input, we will vote on this motion.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Right of reply.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I apologise, your right of reply.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Chair, in reply, I beg to differ entirely in relation to that. On this visit, I came to Koroivolu and the complaint that they want to bring up is that, in relation to the access roads, it had been surveyed and they have been waiting, waiting and waiting. It is over one year now. So, I am surprised to hear from the Honourable Minister that the amount is enough.

Last year, we went through Vanua Levu and we saw a similar situation in one of the access road in Nabouwalu – non maintained and it is grown over. So, we do not only need to build these roads but to also maintain them. So, this is critical and I beg everyone here to support it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, we will now vote on that motion. That Head 18 be increased by \$2 million in respect of Programme 3, Activity 1, SEG 8. Does anyone oppose the motion? There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	-	14
Noes	-	29
Not voted	-	7

Motion is defeated.

We will now move on to the next motion for an amendment by the Honourable Nawaikula. He has moved that Head 18 be increased by \$2 million in respect of Programme 5, Activity 1, SEG 10. Does anyone second the motion.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Nawaikula, would you like to speak on your motion.

HON.N. NAWAIKULA.- This refers to the Disaster Management Service and Disaster Risk and Climate Change Adaptation. The reason for this motion are twofold; firstly, I had explained in my Budget speech what was happening in Karoko and Kanakana. I appreciate very much the reply that was made by the Honourable Minister but nonetheless, we need proper supervision and we need proper monitoring.

Also, this sum is also to look after what is vitally needed in rural areas, namely the evacuation centres. We need properly built strong evacuation centres for each village as a measure for climate adaptation and climate mitigation because that is the whole basis of this motion. I think it is very important, it is vital that this amount should be increased.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone else wants to speak on that motion? Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Chair, a lot of villages around the country are being eaten away by the sea and also the rivers that when it is flooded, the villagers feel the effects of the flood and the banks when they are taken away, they cut into the villages. I wonder if we could assist these villages, especially and a good example is Vunibau in Serua which is also being eaten away by the river because of climate change. I think the Honourable Minister knows and they have probably paid a visit to the site. That is why I am supporting this motion, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I support this motion, Madam Chair, specifically to seek support from the Government in terms of their views on building community halls because it is for such disaster.

For the rehabilitation funding of houses of \$7,000, will certainly require a strong community hall so that if this cyclone strikes again, at least, the members of the village would be assured safety in a strong community hall. That is why I support the motion and wonder if it could be increased to the figure that has been said. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other input? There have been no other input, we will now vote on this motion.

Question put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	-	15
Noes	-	28
Not voted	-	7

Motion defeated.

The next amendment motion is by the Honourable Dulakiverata who has moved that Head 18 be increased by \$500,000 in respect of Programme 4, Activity 1, SEG 10. Does anyone second the motion.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Dulakiverata, you may speak on the motion.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, I think this amendment is very much needed because this will help people in the rural areas to build their own homes and also because of the improvement of our roading system, it will be desirable for most of the people that live in the squatter areas to move back to their own districts or provinces and build their own homes rather than leaving in the squatter settlement which do not have all these facilities. Also, Madam Chair, it will reduce a number of people who come to the city and come and squat which allow them to build their own homes. We will now also increase the number of people that are affected by *Cyclone Winston* to assist them in rebuilding their homes, and this will be an extension of the assistance given by Government and more people will be able to have better home.

You will realise, Madam Chair, that most of the people, you will be surprised that live in squatter areas in the Suva area are from Tailevu and Naitasiri ,and probably Namosi. Now, with the good roads going to Naitasiri and the roads in Tailevu and the very good transportation system, it will be good for these people to move back to their own area and build their own homes on their own land rather than squatting. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone else wants to speak on the motion. The Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. On the same token, it is important that the movement of our people who are already living and existing in the squatter areas, because there is no other space to fish or plant, they engage themselves in criminal activities. But if those houses are provided for them to go build in their own areas where roads are made available, there are spaces for them to supplement the meagre earning that they are having. So, I support the motion. Thank you.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Chair, in my Budget Address, I said that I will support a motion in this regard.

The National Housing Policy, as I said, has three components. The first component looks after us here, the others looks after the squatters, and the third component looks after the rural. But the figures just do not add up.

The first component, the allocation is \$241 million. For the second component who are the squatters, the Government is allocating \$24 million, and for the rural dwellers and villagers who cover 50 percent of the population, and who occupy 30 percent of our housing units is \$500,000. It just does not add up. No wonder our villages are empty. They are all coming here, because their housing needs are looked after well here. That is the reason why we should all support this.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, I support the motion to increase that particular allocation on Rural Housing.

Madam Chair, coming from these areas, most of the responses that come from the Commissioner's Office and Provincial Administrator's Office, given to *Turaga ni Koro* and *Mata ni Tikina* when they enquire, they are the ones who bring in these applications to these offices. Some of the reasons given by the Government officials that there is not enough funds, or funds have been redeployed because of natural disaster, and there are pending applications. They have already given their one-third contribution, but to ask for the other two-thirds, and sometimes the late applications, most of the sawn timber that they have already prepared are wasted. And, even some have even gone into, from the floor they have purchased some roofing iron, but the assistance from Government is still not coming because the allocation is insufficient.

These are the things that we face, the people face at divisional level, and the numerous letters written to the Commissioner's Office and the other Government officials, but they are saying, "we are still waiting for funds." There are people in villages, for example, newly married couples need housing, even those who have *yaqona* or *dalo* plantation have decided to build a house first before they get married. Those are activities that are happening at the villages, where human development is a concern.

The space is there, because they have native reserve to build their land or their farm land at their own settlement, but the problem is for them to be assisted with proper housing, and this kind of scheme would assist them to own a house.

I would like to reiterate that this has to increase given the amount of applications that are there at the various Divisional Commissioner's Offices.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chair, can I just clarify further. There is also additional Housing allocation under Head 50, Activity 1, Programme 1, SEG 10 of \$20 million being allocated there for all the three categories that has been highlighted by the Honourable Nawaikula.

Three reasons, Madam Chair. This was increased from \$700,000 to \$1.4 million, and for this year, the reduction to \$500,000 for three simple reasons.

First, we considered the ability of the rural people to pay for their one-third. Look at the path of *TC Winston*, it affected all the four Divisions in Fiji, and we have to be reasonable. That is why the reduction in the allocation. The ability of the people to provide their one-third contribution.

Secondly, Madam Chair, is about availability of materials because the Help for Homes Initiative, the preference will be for those that are doing bulk buying because zones will be identified, number of homes, contractors, et cetera. It is about the availability of materials in these areas.

Lastly, Madam Chair, as I have stated, they have talked about people in squatter settlements, but there is also a programme under the Ministry of Housing where squatters are identified and taken back to the rural areas, and they also have their own allocation to provide housing for those people.

In Sector 5, I think, in Lomaivuna, we have a few houses there, and there are other programmes by the Ministry for Housing that deals with people living in squatter areas who want to resettle in the rural areas.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Any other input? Honourable Dulakiverata, you may speak in reply.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think we have avoided on the reason why we think these allocations should be increased.

The Squatter Programme is a different programme whereby they have to be taken to a place where they are foreign in. The idea, Madam Speaker, is to take people to their own area; have their own land, they can plant in as many areas as they can and have their own homes, rather than taking them somewhere else.

I think that Rehabilitation Programme is a failure because a lot of people do not want to go there. That is why we still have the squatters sitting around here in Suva. Thank you, Madam Chair.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Parliament will vote on this motion, and the question is that Head 18 be increased by \$500,000 in respect to Programme 4, Activity 1, SEG 10. Does anyone oppose the Motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”)

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	28
Not Voted	:	7

Proposed amendment defeated.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. We will go onto our last proposed amendment, and the amendment is being proposed by Honourable Nawaikula who moved that Head 18 be increased by \$200,000 in respect of Programme 2, Activity 3, SEG 3. Does anyone second the motion?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Chair, I beg to second the motion.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Nawaikula, would you like to speak on your motion?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The reason for this motion is my visit to the DO's Office in Tukavesi, so this to allow the purchase of vehicles.

Before I move on, Madam Chair, let me just note that comments came from the other side yesterday that I should be talking on the national level. Well at the macro level, it looks rosy from here, but it is really at the micro level where you make the real assessment...

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- ... and that is the point I wish to make here.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- (Inaudible)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is the point I wish to make here, Madam Chair.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- (Inaudible)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And that is the experience. That is why and from there, that is where I saw people in the villages who were complaining about the delay in their water supply. People were complaining about this and that. So, at Tukavesi the staff of the DO's Office were sitting down under a mango tree, because they did not have a vehicle. So, we helped them and took them to where they should be. They did not have a vehicle. I asked, "where are your vehicles?" This is the most critical institution in rural areas. This is from where service to rural areas comes from, to all the villages there. Their vehicle was removed some 10 years ago.

The last one that was there was in 2005 or something, and they shared that with the DO's Office in Saqani. There is nothing there, so how do you expect them to serve about 20 or 30 villages? The only way that was available for them is to catch the bus. There is only one service that goes in the morning, comes back in the afternoon, that is it. So they need proper equipment to do what they required to do. That is the reason for this. With that they can buy their necessary tools. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Does anyone would like to speak in support of the motion? Then we will vote on the motion.

HON. OPP. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- And the motion is that Head 18 being increased by \$200,000 in respect of Programme 2, Activity 3, SEG 3. Does anyone oppose the motion?

HON. GOVT. & OPP. MEMBERS.- "ayes" and "noes"

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being Opposition. Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	-	14
Noes	-	29
Not voted	-	7

The motion is defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Members. Parliament will now vote on Head 18. The question is that the amount of Head 18 – Ministry of Rura, Maritime Development and National Disaster Management be approved, does any Member oppose the motion?

Question put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	-	29
Noes	-	14
Not voted	-	7

Head 18 agreed to.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Members, there has been a request made that the next two Heads are huge. They are the Republic of Fiji Military Forces and Fiji Police Force, and we are also getting texts from Members of Parliament wanting to have dinner. Can we then have the two Heads tomorrow so that MPs look at them when they are fresh. Would you like to break for dinner and come back or shall we finish? We will do it now, therefore.

Head No. 19 – Republic of Fiji Military Forces

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments on any Head 19.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, I request clarifications from the respective Honourable Minister in terms of Head19-1-1-SEG 3 this is in regards to training. There is three different trainings listed under Programme 1, Activity 1, on SEG 3 – Overseas Training – Officers and Cadet (\$400,000), SEG 5 – Overseas Training – Disciplined Services (\$16,800) and SEG 7 – Training (\$290,000). Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. For Overseas Training – Officers and Cadet these are the allowances for the Officer Cadet attend training in overseas. That is special for the Officer Cadet and Overseas Training Discipline Services this is to cater for the Military Officers that gone to staff college and which one is the third one?

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- SEG 5 and SEG 7.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- SEG 7 is the normal training conducted in Fiji.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- And SEG 5.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- This is for training.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Are there any other comments, Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I have some general question, Madam Chair. I wonder if that could be clarified before I raise some other questions? Why is the RFMF Peacekeeping Missions from 2014 Budget until 2016 now under a new Head 49. Whereas previously the different peacekeeping missions should all contain in Head 19 under separate Activities according to the location of the Peacekeeping Missions.

Following that another general question. Why does the Budget Address refer to the Peacekeeping Activities under the frame National Security. When Peacekeeping Operations have no direct link to National Security. General question, three given that we are debating the Budget

Estimates, Madam Chair, and the part of a good Budget cycle is to ensure we can measure and managed. Can the Honourable Minister advice when this Department will tabled all the Ministry of Defence delayed Annual Reports only 2011 Annual Report available on website and also advice whether the RFMF intends to table an Annual Report given their massive Budget ...for the past years and importantly because the RFMF is a Constitutional mandated discipline force. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Member, can we deal with those questions one at time? Can we first have the first question? On which Budget we are referring to?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes, some of this questions on Budget need that clarification to be answered.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- The Budget is associated to that.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- as simple as that. If you cannot clarify that then we will come to the Budget.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- No! No.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- So there for you, you do not have any clarifications do. No clarification, thank you for your innocence.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No clarification on the Budget?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, they are not answering so I will go for the questions but later on.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Are there any other comments on the Budget? Honourable Bilitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- On the Budget, Madam Chair, it is Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 – just a clarification on that Special Joint Operations (\$20,000).

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Clarification, Honourable Minister. \$20,000.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- This allocation is assigned for our military forces when they have combine operations with other forces. Like when visiting forces come and train this allocation is separate.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 8 – Black Rock Integrated Peacekeeping Centre (\$500,000). How much have we already spent on that building?

My second question in regards to the same, this \$500,000 would that be enough to complete the remaining building for this year?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- I will answer the second part, the \$500,000 will not be enough to cater for all the buildings. Last year, \$1 million was allocated but it was not used. I do not have the figures with me, but the buildings that was constructed before last year.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other comments? Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Chair, in regards to SEG 7, the basic recruit training course is pegged \$460,000. Can you give clarification on that? How many recruits are we going to have in 2016/2017?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- That is only to cater for two basic recruitment courses.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other questions? Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A. M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 8 – the upgrade of Tuvasu Hall (\$300,000), can the Honourable Minister enlighten us on that?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Tuvasu Hall is the hall next to the ground, the top one. \$300,000 is used to do that because all the structures of the roof are gone, they are all rusted.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other clarifications? Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Chair, just a clarification; Head 19 - Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 1, can the Honourable Minister explain why the Acting Allowance of \$310,000 is huge and why it has been continuing in SEG 1 all the way back from the 2013 Budget?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Can you please repeat and speak slowly.

HON. M. LEAWERE.- Acting allowance is of \$310,000 has been continuing feature in SEG 1 all the way back from 2013 Budget.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- The acting allowance is for soldiers who are promoted and held against vacant positions whilst the post holders are posted overseas. For example, when a Sergeant is posted overseas and there is a Corporal to act on his behalf, he is given acting allowance which is similar to the civil servants.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I seek clarification, Madam Chair. Head 19, Programme 1, Activity 5, SEG 8 – Kiro Patrol Boat Life Extension Programme (\$2.9 million). Could a clarification be made on that as to what that will involve?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- This is for the whole life refit for the Kiro. The Australians mentioned that they can only do two because Kiro has an extensive damage to the engine part, et cetera, which is so excessive and they are not doing it, so Fiji is doing it and that is why the allocation. We would like to have, at least, those three patrol boats on a whole life refit to be taken to Australia and one will be done in Fiji. The new patrol board assigned for us will be a training one, so we need repair works on the Kiro.

HON. A. M. RADRODRO.- Programme 1, Activity 5, SEG 8 on the relocation of the naval base to Togalevu, it is only allocated \$139,500. I think this exercise will cost more. Can the Honourable Minister enlighten us what is involved in relocation of naval base to Togalevu at this cost?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- This is for the survey and also the geo-tech survey will be done by the Ministry of Lands. This is the survey of the whole naval base, so the base should be shifted from Walu Bay to the new Naval Base in five years' time and depends on how we can programme that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A. M. RADRODRO.- Programme 1, Activity 3, SEG 8 – there is a new allocation of \$200,000 for the upgrade of RFMF. Can the Honourable Minister advise us whether, in any way, the RFMF Engineers are also involved in this upgrade of the RFMF Lautoka Camp?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- At this time, it is not confirmed but with the deployment of engineers at the moment but normally, the work within the RFMF is conducted by the engineers. It can be contracted out as well.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Programme 1, Activity 4, SEG 1 – on Explosive Allowance (\$145,200). Can I have some clarification from the Honourable Minister? .

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- The allowance is for the specialists in Engineers. When they do explosive work, this is the allocation of allowance given to them, just like the PWD.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 7, SEG 8 – the upgrade of FTG Infrastructure (\$350,000), Madam Chair, can I have the clarification on this because the understanding is that, training is progressively being moved to Black Rock in Nadi. Why do we continue to upgrade this and within our circle with our party, this area is where we would like to see a major hospital, given the land area and given the space that could allow for a major hospital – the grounds and landscaping? Can you be clear on this, are we going to maintain this or are you going to move training to Black Rock?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- The RFMF will maintain the Force Training Group. The peacekeeping operations is being transferred to Black Rock, only peacekeeping operations training. FTG conducts training for Section Commanders Course, Platoon Commanders Course and other short courses.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There being no other clarifications, I go back to my question on the vote on Head 19. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”)

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	12
Not voted	:	9

Head 19 agreed to.

Head No. 20 – Fiji Police Force

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments on Head No. 20.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, on Head 20, Programme 1, Activity 1, there is a huge increase in terms of allocation to SEG 1. Does this increase also include the outstanding payments that are due to police officers?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- These are salaries for 743 established positions and entitled under the Police Act that falls under this Activity.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Still on SEG 1, Madam Chair. There is a Re-engagement Bonus of \$57,515, can the Minister please provide us with an explanation and enlighten us on what is this bonus is all about?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- The Re-engagement Bonus is after the five years when they have completed a term, they are provided with re-engagement benefits, this is also same in the Military.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, a general one. Can the Minister assure the House that all outstanding payouts due to police officers had been sorted out and paid in full?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Yes.

HON. P. SINGH.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 8 - Capital Construction. I see that Renovations, Extensions and Upgrade of Posts and Stations \$900,000 and then there is Upgrade/ Replacement of Living Quarters \$1 million. The clarification I seek is that the Police Constables, Corporals and up to the rank of Sergeant are being asked to get their own accommodation. So, not all police officers are being provided with living quarters.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- This is for the renovation of the quarters for the Other Ranks at Nasova which includes the band quarters, most of them are in the Other Ranks category.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 1 regarding Acting Allowance of \$134,000. Can the Honourable Minister advise us as to how many officers are entitled for this acting allowance?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Chair, I do not have the figures with me.

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments? There being no other comments and propose of amendment. We will go on to Parliamentary vote on Head No. 20 and the question is that the amount of Head No. 20 - Fiji Police Force be approved. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”)

HON. CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	13
Not voted	:	8

Head 20 agreed to.

Thank you Honourable Members.

We have now concluded voting on Heads 1 to 20 as set out in the timetable agreed to by the Whips, we will now adjourn the Committee of Supply until tomorrow. Honourable Members, I will resume the Speaker’s Chair in order to adjourn the House.

(Hon. Speaker resumes her seat)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, thank you very much for the debate, for your patience and your input. We have had a very interesting debate and completed on good time. Therefore we will now adjourn until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m. Meanwhile there is a big dinner waiting out there to be used up. Thank you Honourable Members.

The Parliament adjourned at 9.57 p.m.