

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

TUESDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 2015

[CORRECTED COPY]

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TUESDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 2015

The Parliament resumed at 9.35 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs and Sugar and the Honourable Ratu N.T. Lalabalavu.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 16th November, 2015 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

MADAM SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to the continuation of Budget debates.

Honourable Members, I invite you to sign a *Condolence Book* which is available at the French Embassy, 7th floor, BSP Life Centre from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. today and tomorrow. We keep the people of France in our thoughts and prayers, mindful that a tribute ceremony was held this morning at the French Ambassador's residence, beginning at 9 a.m., and I believe the honourable and learned Attorney-General is attending that on our behalf.

As I had indicated yesterday, the Budget process is an integral role of any Parliament, and so I especially welcome the students and teachers from Saint Thomas Primary School in Lautoka, as well as Saint Joseph's Secondary School here in Suva. On that note, I wish you well in your studies.

I also welcome members of the public joining us in the gallery and 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 APPROPRIATION BILL 2015

MADAM SPEAKER.- We will continue from where we left off last night. I wish to remind Honourable Members that for the 20 minute speeches, there will be a first warning bell at the 15 minute mark, the second warning bell at the 19 minute mark, and the final bell at 20 minutes. For the five minutes speeches, there will be a first warning bell at the three minute mark, and the final bell at five minutes. I trust this is clear.

I now call on the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise to make my contribution on the 2016 Budget debate, and as a former member of the previous government, I would like to place on the records of this august House that the reduction of approximately 50 per cent of our debate time on the nation's national budget is not, in my view, a step forward in our return to accountable democracy, it is a major step back.

We have a democracy on paper, but in practice, the dictatorship continues.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Madam Speaker, I would also like to send my personal condolences to the leaders and people of France, and hope that a comprehensive plan of action is developed by democratic nations to deal with ISIS, and every other terrorists groups so that we take offense in trying to eliminate them, and not continue to be reactive to their indiscriminate acts of barbarism.

Madam Speaker, in my brief contribution to the Budget debate, I will focus on my Shadow portfolio, which is Youth and Sports.

Madam Speaker, we often speak about our youths being our future. We refer to them as being future leaders of the nation, but what do we actually do for them? What measures do we have in place that will actually engage them today, so that they actually start engaging in the process of national leadership so that we transition out as they transition in?

The absence of any funding of the National Youth Council and the Provincial Youth Council of Fiji and the refusal of the Government to fund job creation incentives and subsidies is alarming, especially given what this FijiFirst Government is pumping into the RFMF and roads. It is ridiculous and lacks visionary leadership.

Madam Speaker, over the past decade, under the Military regime come FijiFirst Government, the youths of Fiji have been used as political pawns. I am hopeful that our youth can see for themselves, from the absence of any significant funding in the second FijiFirst Budget 2016, that the FijiFirst Government has a very low priority for their needs. Even our own Prime Minister, Honourable Bainimarama does not consider the Budget or our youths important enough to warrant his presence for the second year in a row.

Madam Speaker, our young people's access to development funds are also very tight. The funding allocation, even to staff at the Ministry is also limited, and dispersed now among

persons who you will call 'volunteers'. What has happened to the Youth Development officers who work in the rural parts of Fiji? This Budget does not cover them.

Will the National Youth Council of Fiji still be housed by the Ministry?

Our youths want a better and more aggressive approach to employment creation. We need to allocate more funds and resources to suicide prevention and anger management measures, instead of these important matters, this Budget, seeks to fund the security of the FijiFirst Government.

Madam Speaker, the youths of this nation have made their views clear on the Fiji Flag. They want the Fiji Flag to stay as it is, if not, give the people of Fiji a referendum on it. Since all the hype and anxiety of the proposed flag change that resulted in unprecedented objections from 20,000 citizens, and the Government backing down and deferring its plans till the end of the year, there has not been a single word said since.

What deceptive plan do you have in store? The young people of Fiji wants the Government of the day to solve issues on education, student loans and employment. There needs to be a bigger effort to place our youths front and centre of all our development plans moving forward and not just as "ornaments", but as active participants in the process.

Madam Speaker, allow me to touch briefly on some other issues.

Madam Speaker, I think it is time we get serious about sports in Fiji and our commitment to it. We speak often about being a healthy nation, yet we allocate "unhealthy sums of money" to fund programmes to deliver a healthy population. We talk about our youths as being our future leaders, yet offer no tangible solutions so that the dream we conceive becomes a reality that they can achieve.

Madam Speaker, while we may have different political views that seem too far apart at this time to converge, the one common thread where our thoughts and aspirations combined is in our own children. So, I challenge all Honourable Members to view my suggestions in this light, neither it is for us on this side nor is it for you on that side, it is for the children of Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I propose that this House directs and authorises the Minister of Finance to utilise savings from various allocations in the 2016 Budget to construct a suitable location between Lautoka and Sigatoka a 30,000 seat capacity state of the art National Unity Multipurpose Stadium.

Through a combined formulation of aid from our sporting neighbours and cash savings from various allocation, we can commit to such an undertaking today that will be ready by 2018.

Madam Speaker, inclusive of this Budget allocation, we have already spent and will spend the following:

- i) FBC: \$27 million propping up the insolvent FBC. We must stop paying out good money after bad. If the FBC cannot stand on its own feet after the \$27 million injection since 2010, then it is not going to make it because it is not a viable entity and should be one of the State assets to be sold.

- ii) Fiji International Golf: After a \$24.6 million injection from the taxpayers, if the organisers cannot operate it without the \$9 million a year average cash from Government, then it too needs to have the plug pulled.
- iii) International Rugby Match: \$2.6 million is a lot of money for our small island nation to fork out for one afternoon match. Whoever it is the Government wants to impress, so we give up, admit we cannot at this time host international matches because of our inadequate facilities to put the \$2.6 million towards the Fiji Sevens Team preparations for Rio.
- iv) Qorvis: \$5.5 million over four years. If Qorvis has not trained the local spin doctors in the Ministry of Information after receiving \$1 million a year, then they should be terminated and sent back home and the money saved.
- v) Vehicles leasing - \$64.3 million since 2009: The promise that leasing vehicles for Government would save has failed. It has cost the taxpayers \$64 million so far. In the next three years, another \$48 million will be paid for all the flash vehicles Government leases. Someone is making money and you can bet it is not the people or our youths.
- vi) Fiji Airways - \$18 million. I do not know how an airline that has recorded the best ever profit of \$52.9 million in 2014 needs to have an injection of \$18 million to promote a new route to help it improve its profits. Qantas and other countries own shares, so what is their contribution to the promotion of the new Singapore route?

Madam Speaker, together, these entities have cost the taxpayers of Fiji \$84.1 million up to and including their 2016 allocation. Over the next three years alone, the FBC, the Golf Tournament, Qorvis and vehicles hire will cost taxpayers another \$88.8 million. That is a total of \$172.9 million.

I propose we authorise the Honourable Minister to cut this by 30 per cent, which will save \$52 million and use \$6 million to start construction on the proposed \$30,000 seat stadium and supplement total cost with aid. The balance of \$15.6 million to be used specifically to fund and improve rugby, soccer, netball, hockey and other teams and individual sports.

I would like our teams and sports missions abroad to concentrate on their training and not spending time running around raising funds for their trip, This funding allocation should take of all travel and uniform costs of teams so that the economic status of any sportsperson does not determine whether they participate or not.

Madam Speaker, I am not speaking about new funding, we are already spending and have spent these funds. I am suggesting we redirect some of it off the entities listed and for the reasons I have stated.

I have proposed that the stadium be built in the West because the weather there is better. It has the largest concentration of hotel rooms to support international travellers coming in to watch the matches and it is also close to our international airport.

If we do this now, Madam Speaker, we have three years to negotiate, to be included in the IRB Sevens Tournament from 2019. We can negotiate hosting Super 15 games and many more international events will follow. We can host pop concerts, Bollywood shows, the opportunities are endless.

Madam Speaker, the Unity Stadium will become an income-generating venue, able to stand on its two feet and provide Fiji with an international standard sporting venue which will help give our young sports people real hope in their future and put Fiji firmly on the map as the Sports Tourism leader of the South Pacific.

Madam Speaker, in every vote since Parliament commenced in October 2014, the numbers have been the same - 32 for and 18 against, and not a single matter brought before this House in our 12 months can be attributed to our working together as representatives of the people.

Madam Speaker, pick any sporting team you like and before they face their opponent on the field, tell 64 per cent of them to ignore the other 36 per cent of the players in the team, tell the 64 per cent that the 36 per cent of the team do not count, then send them to the field of play and see what happens. The team will most certainly lose because it takes the coordinated effort of the whole team to overcome the opponent.

None of us in this Chamber are opponents of Fiji, we are political opponents for sure, but we are all sons and daughters of Fiji. We differ on how we ascend to power, but we are still sons and daughters of Fiji. Our real opponents are: poverty, unemployment, oppression, human rights abuse, injustice and other things that divide our people. These are our opponents, not each other.

It is a sad reflection on each of us, if after 12 months of parliamentary interaction we are still divided even on the most basic things. Only a united Fiji will be able to realise its dreams and aspirations moving forward, but regrettably over the past 12 months, we have failed to show a united front in dealing with the challenges our people face. Unless we, as elected leaders, unite and face the future together, the trickle-down effect on our people will be to divide and exclude. Is this the kind of leaders we want to pass on to our children? We each have the power to make a difference, all we need is the political will to make it happen.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition, may I pause to honour and pay heartfelt tribute to one Sitiveni Moce, the *Fiji Times* photographer who passed away yesterday. Madam Speaker, he was a photographer who was assaulted and detained by the Military whilst outside the Methodist Church on assignment in 2007 and from this, he never fully recovered.

Madam Speaker, this is why this side of the House will be relentless in advocating for total media freedom, especially when they come under atrocious human rights violation from the very institution that the people in this country break their backs to pay for it.

Madam Speaker, I would like to wish every Member in this Honourable House a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua for his input. I now invite the Honourable Ruveni Nadalo to have the floor.

HON. R.N. NADALO.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Acting Prime Minister, the Honourable Cabinet Ministers, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and my fellow Members of Parliament, I rise to also contribute to the Budget Address, tabled by the Honourable Minister of Finance last Monday, 6th November, 2015.

First and foremost, I applaud the Honourable Minister of Finance for always looking beyond the horizon in regards to the basic needs of all the individuals who call Fiji their home.

Madam Speaker, I will be drawing the attention of this House to the water problems that are being faced in the West, such as the drying up of local water catchment and the measures that the Government will undertake to address this concern.

Madam Speaker, the provinces of Nadroga and Navosa is a very good example, where almost all the villages, schools and settlements' water catchments have dried up. There have been initiatives made to supply water to many of these areas but for the long-term, a more realistic strategy is being developed. Currently, the salad bowl villages and settlements from the East bank of the Sigatoka River and all villages of the upper reaches of the Sigatoka Valley are resorting to the main Sigatoka River for their daily needs.

Madam Speaker, the cane belt settlements and villages towards Nadi are the worst affected areas. They rely heavily on water catchments, wells, creeks and very old boreholes which have mostly dried up. Many of these residents travel by bus to the main centres as far as Sigatoka or Nadi and return, with plastic drums containing 4 x 20 litres or more of water to last them for a week. Other farmers are doing it in groups, where they all pool their finance and hire four tonne carriers to cart water from the main centre.

Madam Speaker, this Government is quickly reacting to these difficulties, and the 2016 Budget has laid out the means by which we can resolve them in the long-term. As surface water alone cannot meet all of Fiji's water demand, other sources of water such as ground water sources are being tapped into.

Madam Speaker, ground water resource can be used directly as a source of drinking water or in other ways which would assist the community in the preservation and conservation of good quality water for human consumption. In an era fraught with problems from external causes such as the impact of climate change and the changing weather pattern, a sustainable solution is the most viable option.

Madam Speaker, the people of Fiji welcome the allocation of \$750,000 for ground water resources, assessment and devolvement to larger islands under the Department of Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Land. This project will allow people facing water problem in rural areas to have access to clean and safe drinking water, generated mainly from boreholes.

Madam Speaker, the increase in the Budget means that more can be done with projects in terms of full completion, whereas before, the Department was solely funded for investigation, drilling and construction of boreholes. The Department can now also complete reticulation and deliver ground water supply directly to the people. It is a one-stop shop for the Department of Mineral Resources to assess long-term viability, drill boreholes and also supply water to the community.

Madam Speaker, I hope that I have clearly illustrated a very simple fact before this august House today. This Budget is one that takes into consideration a very real problem that our people are facing and works to resolve them by finding actions which directly addresses our peoples need.

Yes, Madam Speaker, this Budget is a People's Budget. Our Honourable Minister of Finance has compiled a realistic and necessary resolution to our people's concern and it is vital that we all get behind them. I have seen no reasonable points for amendments from the Opposition. I see no area that warrants derailing of an already good, revolutionary and a realistic plan.

Madam Speaker, I pledge my whole-hearted support for this Budget and I commend it to the House.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Ruveni Nadalo for his input and I now invite the Honourable Alexander O'Connor to have the floor.

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Honourable Acting Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Cabinet Ministers, my fellow Members of Parliament, the children of Saint Joseph Secondary School and Saint Thomas from Lautoka, members of the public in the gallery and those watching from the comfort of their homes: a very good morning to you all.

Madam Speaker, in the lead up to the September 2014 General Elections, our FijiFirst Manifesto highlighted that we would establish Vocational Colleges in each district of Fiji that would provide a Level II Certificate in key trade areas. A proper education in technical and vocational field is something that should never be under estimated or undervalued.

What our Government has continuously sought to create for our youths are options, a wide array of career paths that are attainable and necessary for the development and growth of our workforce and industries. There is a subtle stigma that has existed around those career paths and our Government has actively sort to dispel it.

These positions are as vital to the economic success of our country as any popular career choice. We cannot allow their growth to remain stunted. We must grow these opportunities, grow these qualifications and grow this young and abled workforce. We are beginning with easily accessible education that is targeted, streamlined and relevant - an initiative that is quite frankly a foray into previously uncharted waters. The future under this Government will only hold more progress and more opportunities.

Indeed, this Government after only our first year in office has delivered on our initial promise by piloting three campuses in Suva, Labasa and Nadi, under the auspices of the Technical College of Fiji, offering Certificate II Programmes and short courses.

Currently, there are 1,059 Certificate II students, a total of 1422 students have received their certificates so far. These certificates have been in Cookery, Automotive, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, Refrigeration, Carpentry, Plumbing and Horticulture to name, but a few. Short courses have been offered in construction, bricklaying, agriculture and the basic sewing machinist course, as well as a number of other courses.

Furthermore, I am pleased to say that this year's Budget continues from last year by making bold moves to accomplish the ambitious goal we set for ourselves. In 2016, the Government shall establish an additional eight Technical Colleges around the country and when we ponder about the changes that this will bring about, the difficulties that many citizens once faced such as travel and living expenses from commuting or relocating for an education will be whittled down extensively. The Government has also provided the means through which students who were previously held back by financial constraints may acquire these qualifications.

On the Certificate II Programmes, students may pay their fees through the Tertiary Education Loan Scheme (TELS), ensuring that these opportunities are realistically attained. A skilled trader workforce will emerge from areas in the country that for so long have been held back or forgotten.

Madam Speaker, Government's commitment to elevate the quality of education in Fiji is also clearly apparent in the Education budget allocation, which has seen an increase by 7.6 per cent in 2016, compared to 2015. Added to this, the Higher Education budget is allotted \$76.6 million, which means that in 2016, our Government has budgeted over \$500 million for the sole purpose of improving the education system in Fiji. This Budget, in fact last year's budget as well, has shown us all that our Government is committed to fulfilling its promises, committed to prioritising the things that matter the most, committed to developing our workforce, committed to providing greater and more varying opportunities for our youths and committed to our economy, our people, development and progress.

Madam Speaker, I emphasise the fact that this is a People's Budget. Indeed, this Budget has outlined a clear path for progress and to change anything at all is to veer right off the illustrious path. For that reason, I declare that I fully and whole-heartedly support this Budget.

With these words, I commend the Budget to the House.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable O'Connor for his input, thank you, and I now give the floor to the Honourable Viam Pillay.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I rise to support the 2016 Budget as presented by the Honourable Minister of Finance. This is a Budget that is attentive to the needs of the people, our People's Budget in short.

Madam Speaker, as many of you may know, I take great pains to always ensure that whenever we gather here in this House, the interests of our rural citizens are not forgotten. Today, is no exception as I draw the attention of this House to the developments made to the rural roads and the effects of such a move.

Since the Government established the Fiji Roads Authority in 2012, we have seen many tremendous improvements, such one example is the 70 kilometre sealed Nabouwalu-Dreketi Road, upgrading in Vanua Levu, which is very close to accomplish. Similar projects are underway all over the country in rural and urban areas alike.

The 2016 Budget is set to continue from the work done so far and to begin new projects as well. One such example is the allocation of funds for the capital community programmes, which aims to improve the quality of roads in rural areas and enhance pedestrians' safety, with the construction of urban footpaths and upgrading, and replacing of bridges.

Madam Speaker, new roads in rural areas mean a world of difference for most of us. It gives us access to the municipal markets, exporters, shops and work. It enables us to engage more in commercial activities and more importantly, it rises the earning power of our people.

To illustrate further, Madam Speaker, there are allocations made in the 2016 Budget for better farming roads. Developing new farm roads and improving existing ones will make farming areas more accessible and reduce travel time to and from farms. Everyone will benefit from the improved quality of agricultural products, greater consistency of supply and increase land under cultivation.

Yes, there is much we can be thankful for and much to look for in the coming years. Personally, I would like to thank the Government for having a vision for a more connected Fiji and for daring to make this vision a reality.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government has faced a great deal of criticisms for the initiative to extensively develop our roads - this I find astounding. Criticisms, I can understand, but criticisms on the initiative to build up our country, make room for the exponential growth of our industries, provide job opportunities and connect our people effectively and efficiently?

Madam Speaker, when a Government does everything in its power to build up its nation and provide opportunities for its people and the Opposition still blindly opposes, one can only shake one's head and lament the defeat of reason. Shall we do nothing for our people, shall we have no progress?

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government has set in place a foundation for developments and plans for the prosperity of all Fijians. In many rural areas today, believing in progress, believing in opportunities require only a simple act of looking out your window and seeing the country transform around you; seeing roads laid and bridges and buildings rise and seeing the light of a street lamp on a once dark village street. That is the legacy this Government will someday, some very distant day, leave this nation with - the creation of a developed, inclusive and a modern Fijian state.

With these words, I commend the Budget to this House. Thank you.

(Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Viam Pillay for his input. I now invite the Honourable Aseri Radrodro to take the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you and good morning Madam Speaker. Honourable Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Honourable Ministers, Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Members of Parliament: before I commence my Budget response this morning, I take this time to welcome the students of Saint Thomas Primary School and Saint Joseph Primary School, *bula vinaka*.

Madam Speaker, I rise to give my response to the 2016 Budget Address. Firstly, allow me to state that the implementation of last year's budget overall leaves a lot of questions to be answered still, especially as progress implementation updates on infrastructure developments have yet to be furnished.

In summary, the 2016 Budget is no doubt similar to the 2015 Budget, where major investments are being put on infrastructure development supposedly and there are other additional areas that Government is now focussing on, apart from the traditional sectors to spur its growth plans. This has already been alluded to by various speakers before me from this side of the House, so I will not deliberate on that any further. However, given all these new plans and ongoing ones to be soon rolled out by the Government, I am reminded by an economist, who stated and I quote:

“A country’s development cannot be judged simply by looking at economic growth, you have to determine what has happened to unemployment, inequality and poverty. If one or more of these increased then development has not occurred”.

Madam Speaker, for this year’s Budget Address, I would like to highlight some of the key principle areas that seem to have formed the foundation of the Government’s Budget policies and spending for the coming year.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been credited in this Budget announcement as having commended Fiji’s growth and economic performance. I found the mention of the IMF quite interesting, Madam Speaker, especially when I have been personally following with keen interest their global influence on the implementation of growth and development conditions.

Madam Speaker, it seems to me that the Fiji Government has somewhat, like other developing countries globally, succumbed to external pressures and manipulation of institutions like the IMF in its preparation for our 2016 Budget, judging from the way this budget has been structured. Madam Speaker, the IMF has unfortunately joined other institutions like the World Bank and ADB, amongst others, in being criticised for their conditional loan policies that have been seen to have simply widened the inequality gaps of developing nations and contributed to making most of the countries they have assisted become poorer, if not properly controlled by the recipient countries of these funding and so called grants being offered for developing assistance.

Madam Speaker, please allow me to begin by saying that it seems to me that the 2016 Budget has given considerable consideration for the reduction of public spending. This is clearly articulated in the expenditure mix of 60 per cent operational and 40 per cent capital. What is evident Madam Speaker, is that the majority of the capital budget allocation is still under Requisition. For example, majority of the budget allocated for the Fiji Roads Authority and the Water Authority of Fiji is under its Requisition tagging. In other words, the guaranteed expenditure for Government is just 60 per cent, which will no doubt mean an obvious reduction in workforce number.

HON. MEMBER.- No money there!

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- If you combine the FRA and the Water Authority of Fiji capital budget, they in fact make up more than 50 per cent of the total capital budget for next year, and all of that combined together is on Requisition. When expenditures are placed under Requisition, it means that they are not confirmed expenditure and every time they are accessed, they will need prior approval of the Honourable Minister of Finance.

Similarly, on the reforming of the Public Service, there is expected to be loss of employment and in fact, civil servants have started receiving their termination notifications and

there is no guarantee of an employment in the new Ministry of Civil Service, for example, as they have all to reapply for the positions.

Madam Speaker, the question I would like to ask is, how long will Government continue on this exercise before it realises the loss it is causing on its valuable resources, which is human capital. Administrators will know that it is always difficult to replace institutional memory acquired over time by workers.

Whilst the reforming process of the Public Service is being carried out, Madam Speaker, I would like to raise some of the irregularities in the teachers' promotions, I will just name a few.

One is the Head Teacher of Nadi Sangam School, current grade is ED5E and promoted grade to 1D – Head Teacher. The remarks been given is that he is the Election Campaign Manager for the Honourable Minister for Education.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Reddy, current Grade is ED6A, promoted grade ED3C ...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is true, that is the fact.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- ... is probably the brother of the Honourable Minister for Education and does not meet the MQR.

Madam Speaker, the third one is ED5A and promoted to ED4C from Nadovi Primary School in Sigatoka and the cousin of the Honourable Minister for Education.

HON. MEMBER..- Shameful.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is nepotism.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, on tax reform. The Budget is also focussed on reforming the tax system. In this aspect, Government has, over the last few years, lowered direct taxes and broadened the tax base through goods and services taxes.

The lowering of direct taxes can be evident in the anticipated revenue that Government is intending to collect, which is tagged at 22 per cent of total operating receipts.

Madam Speaker, there are now additional revenue tax base being introduced in 2016, which include the environmental levy and the health levy. These will be additional costs that will be borne by the ordinary citizens and is another way of Government earning more revenue indirectly and a devious means of dipping further into the pockets of the unsuspecting or helpless citizens. Now, ordinary people of this country will have to pay more.

Madam Speaker, I now wish to turn my attention to the privatization or selling off of State-owned enterprises or parts of it. This issue of privatisation has of course been the brunt of a lot of discussions lately, including inside this august House.

As announced in the recent Budget, the agreement for the partial divestment of shares in Fiji Ports Corporation Limited, for example has been secured and the FNPF, along with a

strategic partner, Aitken Spence have successfully acquired a 59 per cent shareholder of the company.

Madam Speaker, Fiji Ships and Heavy Industries Limited, which used to be the Fiji Marine Department is also a part of Fiji Ports Corporation, has a long and proud history in Fiji's shipping industry, where it has contributed to the building of many ships that are now enjoyed by the tourism industry, for instance the well-known *Reef Endeavour* and the many former Blue Lagoon Cruises which included *Salamanda*, the *Yasawa Princess*, *Nanuya Princess*, *Talianda* and the *Lycianda*, to name a few.

Madam Speaker, for the interest of the House, if any Honourable Member who wishes to use the *Tikos Restaurant* for their Christmas Party, let it be known from today that that is the product of the skills of the Fiji Ships and Heavy Industries that used to be the Marine Department before.

With all those experiences now be confined to just distant memories and glories of the past, Madam Speaker, are we not wanting to promote real entrepreneurship? What a waste, Madam Speaker? This is a real opportunity for employment of our people and could be a niche market in this part of the world, if we were to regain our place in producing these top notch ships that once graced our waters and others that were built for foreign countries and have graced international seas.

Madam Speaker, we need this industry to be reactivated, especially as a means to create employment and capitalise on the skills of the *Mataisau* clan in Fiji for example, apart from maintaining our skills base and creating for ourselves a niche market of expertise. We do not need to sell off these assets. It would be foolhardy to do that when we have the expertise trained locally and we keep losing them overseas. In fact, lest not we forget, it was also the Fiji Ships and Heavy Industries employees who contributed to the construction of the new Rewa Bridge with their expertise. Likewise, in the *Anaconda* movie, they assisted to build a lot of equipment they used, including water vessels like the barge used in the film shooting. What has the FPCL reform exercise achieved, Madam Speaker?

Meanwhile, Madam Speaker, before the finalisation of the divestment exercise in the other earmarked entities, namely FEA and Airports Fiji Limited, there remains a lot of ambiguity about the sale of Fiji Ports Corporation Limited, which has to be declared publicly. We understand the FNPF owns 39 per cent of its shares invested, which means all the workers of this country co-own FPCL, but then how come someone from Aitken Spence is now the CEO of FPCL? Of these consortium of investments of which FNPF is a major shareholder, how much was paid by Aitken Spence and not only that, how independent is the valuation exercise carried out by FPCL, of which Aitken Spence determined its acquisition price?

Madam Speaker, when the overall picture of the divestment exercise is being provided through the Budget announcement, it would have been better for the people of Fiji to have been informed of the crucial nitty gritty details to avoid unnecessary speculation.

The reason I draw this to our attention is because the recent sales that have transpired, for example the sale of the FINTEL building that was valued at a higher value, yet was sold at a value lesser than that. Similarly, the Fiji Sky operations that was supposedly announced and sold to Digicel Pacific at a cost much lower than the investment that went through establishing that

entity and upgrading it. The people of Fiji have the right to know the basis of these undervaluing and disposing of assets.

Madam Speaker, in 2009, Fiji's telecommunications market, for example, was fully deregulated and continues to be done so. Obviously, there were benefits in the establishment of new players into this industry, rather than the monopoly status held by FINTEL, but there are also massive job losses to workers as the effect of some of the downside to this deregulation, as well as a lot of confusion to customers on the service providers with continued deregulation process. The customers lose out because of the quality of the services that was expected to be improved in some instances.

Madam Speaker, allow me to briefly speak on the need for a separation of regulatory powers from a number of Government Commercial Companies that have undergone reforms, for example the FEA and LTA. These two entities cannot be creating policies by which they themselves then operate. There has to be a clear distinction of these roles to allow for a more transparent and responsible process by which business oversight is provided and operation is affected, otherwise, these institutions can operate within a vacuum that is inefficient and self-serving.

I also bring to the attention of this House, Madam Speaker, the request from the RSL holders in the province of Naitasiri. They have invested in the RSL vehicles, community investment, based on the fact that they will be financed on the free bus fare assistance. To-date, that has been reviewed and they are asking as to who will be helping them in the repayment of this investment.

Madam Speaker, on the area of infrastructure. I have confidence in my good friend, the honourable Minister for Infrastructure and I am sure under his watch, all the areas of concern and need that remain will be addressed and the trend of current developments will be further complemented, especially the construction of the new Vatuwaqa Bridge. In fact, I am sure this House can be rest assured, Madam Speaker, that if this promise of further infrastructure development do not come into actuality, my face will be one my Honourable friend will have to reckon with inside this House, where I will intend to hold into account against this Budget provision, especially when the majority of his capital budget, Madam Speaker, is under 'R'.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, further, I would like to now speak on two areas of concern for me personally, which are the modernising and further improving and growing of our transportation industry and the mushrooming number of second hand car dealer businesses in Fiji.

On the first part, I wonder whether we will eventually have a government that will have the political will to direct that the people of Fiji, begin showing appreciation and recognition of the improved road conditions and access we now enjoy in most parts of Fiji, and thus take advantage of the much improved public transportation likewise now provided. Instead of choosing to not only own how many cars in one family in instances, but also choosing to drive to work from just a stone's throw away from the respective offices they need to access, ultimately contributing to the daily traffic jams on our roads, as well as the obvious smoke emissions contributed by these increasing number of vehicles, adding to our pollution.

In addition, to limit the stress of long travel by road and to curb the high cost of travel by air for those journeys from Suva to the West, or vice-versa, or from Labasa to Savusavu, for example, would it not be better that we begin investing in bullet trains or trams, for example, that would take us to our destination in a fraction of the time now currently travelled?

I leave that, Madam Speaker, for the imagination of this House. If we were to argue that Fiji is just a small place, well we should consider countries like Singapore, which we often hear we are being benchmarked against, and see for ourselves the implementation of their transportation policies that includes these modern day infrastructure services that I have mentioned, apart from the traditional ones. It is the political will, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, now the issue that I am passionate about, an interesting revelation was made during the 2016 Budget Address, where it is said that a particular major accounting firm has been assisting its clients make exaggerated claims of allowable expenses. As a result of this discovery, FIRCA will soon develop a Tax Agents Code of Ethics to act as guideline for tax agents, to ensure compliance to tax laws.

Madam Speaker, why does the rest have to suffer for a misdeed of one accounting firm? You will recall, Madam Speaker, that in my first maiden speech in this House, I had questioned Government's compliance with their revelation in 2010 to create and establish an independent body called the Independent Financial and Auditing Services Commission (IFASC). The intention of Government, through the establishment of IFASC, was to liberalise the functions of the Fiji Institute of Accountants of which its functions and overall services on CPPA are only enjoyed by an elite few at the moment.

That promise by Government, Madam Speaker, was to be, in my view, a credible process that would ensure registered members of the profession are not a law unto themselves. After all, Government has similarly addressed the issuing of practising certificates for the legal profession by making it come under the Judicial Department since 2009.

This recent revelation of unscrupulous behaviour by an accounting firm, Madam Speaker, is reconfirming a lot of recurring findings in the Auditor-General's Reports over the years, where there are so many breaches to accounting policies. So, in this particular instance, we now have a new Government policy implemented just because of the misdeeds of an accounting firm. What has the FIA done in this respect, Madam Speaker? Has Government made them aware?

This is why, Madam Speaker, the Public Practicing Accounting sector needs to be liberalised and administered by Government instead. Government has particularly addressed these kind of compliance issues in the proposed new Fiji Companies Bill, 2015, whereby the registration of auditors and liquidators will come under the Ministry of Justice. However, let me particularly highlight a possible bottleneck will again occur as the new Companies Bill includes a provision that requires the Ministry of Justice to fall back and rely on the recommendation of the FIA before it can issue practicing certificates.

Madam Speaker, once again I ask Government to look into this issue and I call upon the Honourable Minister for Justice to amend Part 33 of the Companies Bill.

There are just too many breaches and inefficiencies in the accounting sector. With the many initiatives being championed by Government, like the bus fare scheme and the free tuition fees policies of Government, these all require the audited financial statements by schools before

the provision of another disbursement of funds. Unfortunately, majority of these statements are not being prepared by registered auditors and these compromises the principles of transparency and accountability.

Madam Speaker, let me just say that the Fiji Institute of Accounts Act was first introduced in 1971 and since then, it had been amended only twice in 1982 and 1997.

As it is, Madam Speaker, that makes the FIA Act 18 years late of modernising this crucial Act to become an Act that is abreast with the fast changing modern practicing principles of business and compliance. If these were a business, Madam Speaker, they would be fit as a relic in the museum.

Madam Speaker, out of interest, I will conclude today by asking whether the 2016 Budget is really intended to assist in the future of the Fijians, or is it intended to set up an environment for future borrowings from international lending agencies?

Whatever the outcome this Budget will be for the people, I am hopeful that we will begin to reflect a society that takes responsibility of our actions and fosters a spirit of mutual interest in the common good.

On that note, Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to wish all Members of this august House, including your good self, a very Merry Christmas and a Prosperous 2016. Likewise, to all our people watching live on TV and elsewhere around the world, I also wish you well and hope you all enjoy a wonderful festive season. *Vinaka vakalevu* and God bless.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Aseri Radrodro for his input and I invite the Honourable Salote Radrodro to take the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications and Members of Parliament, I rise to make my contribution to the 2016 Budget, and before I do so, I acknowledge and say good morning to the students up there in the gallery and also may I pay condolences to the people of France and we must stand ready with the international communities in our fight against terrorism.

Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Honourable and learned Attorney-General and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications for the Budget Address and I also welcome this opportunity to respond accordingly. May I also take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Finance officials, all Civil Servants who have worked hard and even sacrificing their personal and family time to meet the budget process deadlines. *Vinaka vakalevu*, for remaining true to your calling in serving the people of Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I will firstly provide some key Budget general observations and then focus on the Ministry of Civil Service, the Public Service Commission and the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation.

Madam Speaker, may I also extend my appreciation to you, for the facilitation of our Women MPs travel to East Timor, which gave us the opportunity to learn and advocate in this House on critical women issues and my main take away from that trip was their well-known

slogan “ Strong Women, Strong Nation.” Promoting women participation in politics and in nation building and as proudly shared by their Prime Minister, East Timor boasts 25 Women MPs out of the 60 Members, which is the highest in the Asia-Pacific Region and this I believe, Madam Speaker, is something Fiji could aspire to.

Madam Speaker, may I also acknowledge the Minister for Employment Productivity and Industrial Relations efforts and outreach to move harmonious labour relations forward and at the same time, may I urge Government for goodwill and redoubling of efforts in the coming weeks and months to meet the ILO expectations and commitments, particularly so when follow-up opportunities in this House is almost absent due to the Budget debate being reduced to one week, and with question time removed. So issues of national interests such as this will not be raised in this august House until the next sitting in February next year.

Madam Speaker, may I also highlight the Government’s recognition of motions tabled from this side of the House and even though they voted against it at that point in time, the fact that subsequent provisions are reflected in the 2016 Budget in regards to their expansion of the free medicine list, the increase in subsidy to reduce local air fares are indeed encouraging.

Madam Speaker, in my 2015 Budget response, I spoke strongly against the 15 per cent VAT and urged Government to reduce it, and like many people we are happy that in the 2016 Budget, VAT is now reduced to 9 per cent. However, we must remember that whilst VAT is being reduced to 9 per cent, the Government is at the same time applying VAT to the exempted food items and prescription medicine. We asked; is this is good for the poor and I say no, because all those people under the Poverty Alleviation Programmes like food voucher, senior citizens pension will now be paying 9 per cent VAT to all basic food items which was exempted in 2015. People will now have lesser buying power, “*e sa na lailai na ka o rawa ni volia*”.

(Audible murmurs)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, this new VAT system is like a trick where Government gives with one hand and on the other hand takes out more from the people. If the Government is really concerned about the poor, reduce the VAT to nine per cent ...

(Laughter)

... and also keep the exempted zero items ...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear! As you promised.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- ...bearing in mind that almost 72 per cent of our population earn below the tax threshold of 16,000, otherwise the already marginalised sector of our population will be pushed further into poverty and making the Government Poverty Alleviation Programmes an exercise in futility.

Madam Speaker, let me highlight that almost 50 per cent, if not more, of the total budget for work programmes in ministries and departments are held under Requisition, both in the 2015 and also now in the 2016 Budgets.

HON. MEMBER.- Which means no money!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- It is important for members of the public to know that all items under Requisition is still under the authority of the Minister of Finance. Line ministers will have to request time and again to the Honourable Minister of Finance to incur expenditure. Acquisition of funds under “R” can be a long process, thus causing delay in service delivery to reach the poor and the needy and therefore, the comment by the honourable Minister, and I quote:

“We will do all we can to root out unfairness, to eliminate undue burdens, particularly on those least able to bear those burdens is a simple example of unprecedented false promise.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, may I also ask the Honourable Minister of Finance; what happened to my request for expenditures summary on all items under Requisition for the 2015 budget? This is standard information and must be provided by the Minister of Finance for verification of the promises made in the 2015 budget and to hold the Government accountable to their words and performance, otherwise all these promises are just as mentioned before, unprecedented false promises that have become the rhetoric of this Government.

HON. MEMBERS.- Whoa!

Madam Speaker, even though the Honourable Minister has said, and I quote: “Your Government believes in you”, but with all these unprecedented false promises ...

(Laughter)

... may I ask, “Do you believe in your Government?”

HON. MEMBER.- Do you believe in yourself?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, the 2016 Budget is very infrastructure-driven as opposed to job-creation, benefits of infrastructure driven development is debatable and from a poverty alleviation perspective, there must be corresponding economic activities and employment opportunities, otherwise infrastructure development will be just like a white elephant, an unproductive use of much needed resources. Unemployment is one of the root causes of poverty and that the Government must address while investing in infrastructure development.

Madam Speaker, let me share some observations with the Ministry of the Civil Service. The total budget is \$5.8 million, with a reduction of \$31 million due to Civil Service Reform Downsizing Programme, resulting in the 120 staff being laid off, \$1 million is being set aside for the reform and may I also again reiterate that the Civil Service is still very highly militarised and politicised and this is not good for our new-found democracy, and I also ask the question: is there a staff listing? Why is the staff listing not attached to the Budget Estimates?

Madam Speaker, in the 2016 Budget Address, the Honourable Minister said, and I quote: “The Permanent Secretaries are the senior non-political executives in the Government”, and Madam Speaker, how can he say that, when knowing fully well that the comment contradicts Articles 126 and 127 of his 2013 Constitution which says that “appointments and removal of Permanent Secretaries are done with the agreement of the Prime Minister, and also permanent

secretaries in discharging their duties as the chief accounting officer and overall administrator of the Ministry must have the agreement of the Minister.”

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Whoa!

Therefore, according to the Constitution, who is the overall boss in the Ministry, is it the Permanent Secretary or is it the Minister or other Permanent Secretaries’ political appointments?

HON. MEMBER.- It is controlled by the Minister.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Yes, the Ministry is controlled by the Minister but what is alarming, Ministers are not bound by any Code of Conduct, as required under Clause 149 of the Constitution, because the Government still has not established the relevant legislation,

HON. MEMBER.- Where is it?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- ... and why the non-action by Government?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- It’s news to them. It’s news to them!

HON. MEMBER.- Tell them, tell them.

(Laughter)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Is it because to give a free hand to do as they like in the running of the Ministry and not being made accountable? However, on the other hand, the Permanent Secretary and the civil servants are held accountable according to the Public Service Code of Conduct and Values as prescribed under the Public Service Act, and the Permanent Secretary and civil servants will always be in a vulnerable and compromising position out of fear in losing their jobs? So what happens to good governance? as the Honourable Minister alludes to, and I quote: “To advance the values of equality, fairness, personal responsibility and good governance.”

Madam Speaker, the 2013 Constitution deliberately sets out the Civil Service system to allow for political interference and this, as we all know, blurs the separation of powers and subsequently opens up doors to abuse and corruption which is our political reality of today, ...

HON. MEMBER.- Right. Right.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- ... and Madam Speaker, how can the Government side explain the following:

1. The sudden resignation of the Commissioner of Police and the appointment of the new acting Commissioner of Police; and
2. The highly visible family tree and crony tree, with members holding key positions within the Civil Service and statutory bodies and in boards.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, this is unprecedented political interference and unprecedented nepotism

...

HON. MEMBER.- Yeah. No shame!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- ...which is the hallmark of the FijiFirst Government.

Madam Speaker, clear separation of powers is an essential element of the rule of law and sustainable democracy and may I urge Government to review and amend Sections 126 and 127 of the 2013 Constitution, and formulate subsequent legislation to establish the Code of Conduct and to hold Members of Parliament accountable for their actions.

HON. MEMBER.- Very hard to obtain.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, in my 2015 Budget response, I had highlighted that the big promises made on the Civil Service Reform through the World Bank assistance were misleading because the Honourable Minister of Finance did not allocate enough budgetary provision to support the reform.

Again, the 2016 Civil Service Reform is just like that of 2015, therefore, the Honourable Minister of Finance is deliberately misleading the people again with nice big promises but with inadequate budget therefore, the Fijian people will always end up with big false promises. Also, in the 2016 Budget Address, the Honourable Minister turns around and blames the World Bank for the lack of substantial progress in the Civil Service Reform ...

HON. MEMBER.- and everyone

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.-... and he also turns to the civil servants and blames them for the non-performance of the 2015 Budget, and I quote:

“Delays are caused not because of lack of funds of Government will, but simply because the ministries have lacked the experience and technical expertise or have not carried out the necessary preliminary work to undertake the project from beginning to end.”

So, Madam Speaker, who will the Honourable Minister of Finance blame next?

HON. MEMBER.- You!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Should he blame himself, should he blame the Ministers or blame leadership for political interference? Why should the civil servants be blamed, when they are made very vulnerable, working in an environment clothed with the culture of fear, due to constitutionalised, institutionalised and systematic political interference?

Madam Speaker, due to the Civil Service Reform Downsizing Programme, approximately 120 staff will be laid off from the Public Service Commission, starting in December and with the last batch to leave by 29th February, 2016. These are the staff at the lower bracket. They are below 50 years of age with young families and also with no specific skills.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- I have seen, if I may reply to the interjection, a copy of the letter given to those who will be terminated.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED- KHAIYUM - That's wrong! Get your facts right.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Therefore, Madam Speaker, their employability in other sectors will be very slim or absent, so these 120 people will automatically add to the army of unemployment and poverty statistics. So Madam Speaker, I call on the Government and make this plea that a fair and just redundancy package is paid to all those affected, to help them cope with challenges brought about by unemployment.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Finance also said that the new Permanent Secretaries will be recruited and a notable feature, and I quote:

“We are not reluctant to bring in skilled administrators from abroad for this position.”

Madam Speaker, what is wrong with this Government? They only talk localisation but they do not walk the talk. What happened to the big billboards displayed ‘Buy Fiji Made’ ‘Use Fiji Made?’

(Chorus of Interjections)

We have an abundance of highly qualified people in Fiji, ready for the jobs, just like those who have served Fiji faithfully in the past and others who have fled to other countries around the region and are now holding Permanent Secretary positions, or equivalent, or even higher.

HON. MEMBER.-. Not genuine, not genuine.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- If this Government really cares about the taxpayers, then let us remain local, it is cheaper and a sustainable option.

Madam Speaker, overseas recruitment is not the solution, just as we have seen with the sudden resignation of the Commissioner of Police.

What the Civil Service needs is:

- Unprecedented clear separation of powers;
- Unprecedented zero political interference; and
- Unprecedented genuine sincere political will towards nation building.

That is what the Civil Service needs.

Madam Speaker, the current pay structure for Permanent Secretaries is so huge, ranging between \$160,000 to \$200,000, and it does not trickle down to other levels. It is simply pay discrimination and the gap will be more with expatriate recruitment. In this regards, I recommend and urge Government to undertake a Civil Service Job Evaluation Review.

Madam Speaker, on the Public Service Commission, under the Constitution, Section 126 – Function of the new Public Service Commission is now very limited to only the Recruitment, Discipline and Management of Permanent Secretary Contracts, and it is important to note now that one of the core roles of the previous PSC, being a central agency driving harmonising and coordinating the Civil Service Reform has been removed, and that role is now taken over by the Civil Service Reform Unit, which only has a budget of \$1million.

So, basically the running of individual ministries, that includes Civil Service Reform, Financial Reform and whatever reforms that may come along will be driven by the Honourable Minister, who has been given a free hand under the Constitution, coupled with the absence of a Code of Conduct and Values to run the Ministry.

Madam Speaker, history has proven that power concentrated in one person, or in a very small group, breeds abuse of power and corruption.

Madam Speaker on the Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Ministry, an important point to note is that, out of the budget of \$52.2 million, almost \$40.8 million are held under Requisition and this consists of the \$39.3 million under the five priority areas – Poverty Benefits, Child Protection, Social Pension, Food Voucher and plus the \$1.5 million in the Department of Women. Holding 78 per cent of the Ministry's core work programmes for Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation under 'R' is just ridiculous.

It is like the Honourable Minister of Finance telling the ministry staff "here, take it \$52.2 million, go and work to help the needy and the poor" but then on the other hand, he is controlling the purse string with conditions to release the fund, and when the work is delayed or not carried out, he blames the staff, and I quote from the Minister's Budget Address 'too often appropriate funds have been left unspent and projects have been delayed because Ministries and Officers have not been able to lay all the ground work and follow all the necessary steps.'

Madam Speaker, may I request the Honourable Minister of Finance, please release all those money under Requisition to the Ministry of Women, Children Poverty Alleviation so that the recipients will benefit

HON. A. SAYED.- KHAIYUM: Don't worry.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- I will do that.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you. Madam Speaker, I also note that \$500,000 is again being allocated for the Women's Expo. Whilst the benefit has been highlighted by the Minister, it would be interesting to note though, what the findings of an independent review and evaluation of the programme, bearing in mind the many deflated hopes and dreams due to unsold items as I had witnessed myself. The local handicraft market is saturated so are there any new market policy initiatives?

Pearl farming fetches very high yield and offers good employment opportunities for women, as I had witnessed in the Hunter Pearl Farm in Savusavu. So what assistance is there to grow this industry, which women in the maritime areas, particularly from the Lau group would greatly benefit from?

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I have expressed reservation and I do not support the Budget.

I have also made some very good recommendations and urge the Government for favourable consideration for the benefit of our people.

Madam Speaker, I also take this time to wish the Government well, wish the Government well in your revenue collection and I also wish the Government well in the implementation of the 2016 Budget for the benefit of our people. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Salote Radrodro for her input. I now invite the Honourable Dr. Mahendra Reddy to have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, my fellow colleagues and Members of the Opposition bench, I rise to speak on our Budget that has been prepared to run the affairs of the Government for the year 2016, to meet the aspirations of the people of Fiji.

Madam Speaker, in so doing, I support this Budget that has been delivered by our Finance Minister, the Honourable Aiyaz-Sayed Khaiyum.

Madam Speaker, before I begin, I just want to clarify a few allegations made from the other side this morning, one was in regard to promotions and I need to see evidences of that. It is easier to make those kind of allegations in the pretext of this Parliament but give us the evidence. The school you mentioned, I do not know the guy by the bar of soap.

On the other allegation about debate time, their debate time has not been reduced by a single second, single minute, it is our Members who have taken a cut, Madam Speaker, one hour debate, one week debate was there last week and last year as well.

(Chorus of Interjections)

Madam Speaker, on the third one, the Honourable Member is saying that “no, we should ask the schools to provide accounts audited by chartered accountants.” How do you get to know schools in Cicia, Wainikoro, et cetera, to get chartered accountants? The problem is these guys are not at all realistic about this.

(Chorus of Interjections and applause)

Madam Speaker, let me begin. I must say that the FijiFirst Government is here to uphold and implement the Fijian Constitution. Since assuming the mandate to govern last year, we have ventured into avenues to provide equal opportunities for all aspiring Fijians.

Madam Speaker, the Budget announced by the Honourable Minister of Finance is a step towards realising the dream of this Government to provide a stronger, fairer and a healthier Fiji.

Madam Speaker, you will note that every aspect of our Manifesto is being delivered by subsequent budgets. Our Prime Minister undertook extensive consultation prior to the last Elections and the wishes of the people and the development needs of the country are reflected in our Party Manifesto and are now mapped on to successive budgets.

Madam Speaker, other colleagues from our Government will be explaining to the other side the various aspects of this Budget and how it addresses the overall vision of the Government as laid down by the President and as it is in our Manifesto.

I will now provide an overview on the Education Ministry.

Madam Speaker, the Constitution of this nation has given every Fijian student the right to be educated. Education is a basic human right that is critical for people to improve their social and economic standing and to ensure that the nation can meet the challenges of a modern society. When the people of the nation are educated, they will find ways to become self-sufficient and contribute to the society.

Madam Speaker, some Members from the other side mentioned that we are not supporting education as we should. Madam Speaker, this is far from the truth. To the contrary, Education Heritage and Arts has never received this level of education as it has received for 2016.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education Heritage and Arts received a total of \$432.2 million this year, which represents 12.6 per cent of the overall Budget. This is not all, on top of this, we have also separate allocations for Higher Education Institution, TELS and Toppers which takes the total direct allocation for Education, Heritage and Arts to \$613.2 million for 2016. This is a clear demonstration of Government's commitment towards educating all Fijians.

Madam Speaker, we are raising the benchmark in our education system, and so I move to dig deep and fix the loopholes and the gaps that we have so that it is second to none.

At all local levels, we do not want any parent to say "I do not want to send my child to this nearby school because the standard is not good. I want to send him to a school further away from the home." We all want our schools to be of the same standard and this will happen.

Just last week, a very senior ranking officer in a Government department called me to say that he does not want to send his child to Kalabu High School (which is just meters away from his house) but to Rishikul College.

Madam Speaker, this is what we want to fix. All schools in Fiji, no matter where it is located, must have the same standard of education delivery.

At the international level, we do not want our children to bypass our university and attend overseas universities. We want our universities to be second to none. This will happen, but with continuous guidance and scrutiny, Madam Speaker, detailed scrutiny to our universities as well. The Members from the other side do not understand this, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the disparity with respect to quality of education amongst our schools across the country is known, it is no surprise. We will have to fix it.

Last year, I had the benefit of knowing about the true state of affairs after examining the unscaled Year 12 and 13 marks.

Madam Speaker, last year, I did not have the benefit of knowing the state of student performance in our primary schools. We brought back exams this year and now we are getting to

see the state of affairs of our primary school education results as is seen in the provisional results of Year 6 class. More will be seen as we finalise Year 6 and Year 8 results; hence the reform.

Madam Speaker, on the supply side, Pillar 1 of the Reform includes quality of staff and delivery. With regards to this, we have started a major programme on teacher professional upgrading at no cost to them. We are running shorts courses on First Aid, OHS, Counselling Skills, Teacher Motivation and Delivery Skills. Of course, not all teachers have been through these trainings as we have close to 10,000 teachers, hence it will take at least three years to complete the above.

Madam Speaker, as alluded to earlier on, we have 457 Primary Schools, with less than 8 teachers implying that one teacher teaches two different classes simultaneously.

Madam Speaker, there are schools where one teacher is teaching three classes simultaneously. In these circumstances, quality of delivery will be seriously affected.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Finance has allocated \$6.87 million to recruit 350 additional teachers next year, 250 of these will be Primary Teachers who will be deployed to schools with less than 8 teachers, hence a direct solution to reduce student teacher ratio and raising quality of classroom delivery. After a year's real class room teaching, the current diploma holder's salary will now be raised to \$16, 610 and the degree holder salary will be raised to \$33,411 for those with teacher training qualification.

Madam Speaker, further on this reform, up till now, we did not have a separate allocation for rural service allowance for teachers. It is for this reason that our SEG 1 budget used to bust. We now have a separate allocation of \$7.9 million, to not only meet this obligation, but also increase the rural service allocation for remote locations as announced by the Minister of Finance. Madam Speaker, this will allow us to encourage teachers to take up teaching positions in remote locations.

Madam Speaker, we also have raised the per capita grant to students studying in special needs schools, so that they are better looked after. Their allocation has been doubled, along with additional special needs grant to Special Schools to purchase certain special equipment.

Madam Speaker, Special Education is associated with creation and provision of meaningful, relevant and individually prescribed learning programmes to any child who may possess special need as a result of a disabling condition that the child may have. This is the first time ever that any Government in Fiji's history has recognised this with financial support backing.

Madam Speaker, you would also recall our Pillar 2 of the reform, with regard to review of curriculum and improvising of literacy programmes. I am happy to note that despite numerous challenges, we have done remarkably well.

Madam Speaker, with discontinuation of scaling and re-introduction of exams, we are now getting a true picture of the state of pay on student performance and where the gaps are. We will use this information to further fine tune our strategies to deal with these gaps. The results of these cannot be delivered over night. It will take time because these students, who have not been adequately prepared, are now progressing to upper classes.

Madam Speaker, we are examining both the content and delivery. We are examining our curriculum to ensure that it is benchmarked to countries that have very strong Primary and Secondary Education systems. This work will take some time. We have prepared new text books because if we continue to use the same text books that were used by our grandparents, then we will remain in that era. We need to recognise that times have changed, knowledge base has changed, and we need new resources materials to educate our children. The Budget has new allocations to enable us to do this.

Madam Speaker, you may recall that our Honourable Prime Minister had launched a framework for Digital Literacy, to be rolled out in our school system from next year. A grant of \$2 million has been allocated for this.

Madam Speaker, this is digital age. Our children needs to not only acquire digital skills but also use and explore enormous information out there in the IT platform, to enhance and broaden their knowledge base. Digital literacy will also allow us to develop and introduce various apps for broader knowledge and broader education such as health and wellness education.

Madam Speaker, an allocation of \$2 million has been provided to roll out this initiative. This will be done in collaboration towards world's leading IT giants like Microsoft and Intel, to provide better resource uptake by our students, we have been given a grant of \$2 million to digitize reading resources for libraries.

Madam Speaker, these are some of our new initiatives that will complement the existing ones to raise education standards going forward. We cannot be sitting back and maintain the status quo, the global education landscape is changing rapidly.

Madam Speaker, on Pillar III of the Reforms, you may have noted the Ministry's effort to ensure we improve quality of infrastructure in interior and remote schools.

Madam Speaker, this work will continue for next 3 years. I am pleased to note that we have an allocation of \$8 million, which is dedicated towards this, as well as construction of few new schools. We want, and are steadfast in our resolve to remove the burden away from the management to undertake repair and maintenance of the schools. We will assist them. They have done their bit at a very difficult time when their income levels were very low. Yet, they had set aside part of their income to construct these schools. We will now help upkeep them.

Madam Speaker, in the last Cabinet meeting in October, the Cabinet has approved further change in the formula of the Free Education Grant (FEG) disbursements where smaller schools in the remote interior areas will be given an additional amount of grant to fulfil their repair and maintenance requirements.

Madam Speaker, this change, along with small capital grants that we will provide to remote schools, will ensure that quality of infrastructure in these schools is second to none.

Madam Speaker, we are doing our best to ensure that quality education is provided by our school system. This includes ECE, Primary and Secondary Education. In addition to this, our tertiary institutions provide Higher Education have also been provided with an allocation of \$76.5 million, to ensure every child get a space in the University system for their Higher Education studies.

Madam Speaker, to top this up, Government has provided a grant of \$19 million to ensure that we provide basic skills education via short and award course to students who have an aptitude for skills training throughout Fiji.

Madam Speaker, not everyone would have an interest to attend Higher Education studies. Lack of opportunities at any early stage gets them to drop out. Now, Madam Speaker, they can opt out from High School and enrol at one of the eleven campuses of the Technical College, closer to their home and make a livelihood.

Madam Speaker, the demand side. Well, I have spoken about the supply side dynamics to fix the supply side so that there is opportunity for everyone. We can have good schools and university but if the children cannot afford to pay, these classroom and university lecture rooms will remain the domain of the rich and elite.

Madam Speaker, the Bainimarama-led FijiFirst Government believes in providing opportunity for all, immaterial of your ethnicity, economic, social status or where you hail from.

Madam Speaker, it is for this reason that this Government has made it free for anyone wanting to study from ECE right up to University for their first degree studies. Ordinary Fijians also have dreams to send their children to University to become Doctors, Engineers or Pilots. These dreams will now be realised. Those who could not afford to provide bus fares and thus dropped out will no longer have to do so because Government is providing bus fare coupons to them .

Madam Speaker, I noted the Honourable Leader of the Opposition criticizing this. What was she doing when she was Minister for Education during her time?

(Laughter)

Those who kept their little 6 year kid home because they could not afford to provide lunch to their child no longer have to worry about it because we are providing free milk and Weet-Bix.

(Chorus of Interjections - Hear! Hear!

HON. MEMBER.- What sort of Milk?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I saw the Honourable Karavaki criticizing saying “Milk causes cancer.” There are billions of people consuming dairy products including milk, are they all dying because of cancer?

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, this is the calibre of contribution we get from the Opposition side. I give up, I give up!

(Chorus of Interjections and laughter).

This is what we have. This is what has been gifted to us here.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Go and read!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, Toppers and TELS was introduced in 2014 which saw the unlocking of potentials of those who were giving up. With the introduction of this new Scheme in 2014, a total of 7,509 additional students were able to study in tertiary institutions.

Madam Speaker, no longer the poor households and farmers have to withdraw their only social security deposits from FNPF to fund their children's education. No longer they have to sell their draft bullocks or borrow money from unscrupulous money lenders. Those days are gone, Madam Speaker. Those days will never come as long as the Bainimarama-led Government is around.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the Opposition just do not want to recognise this fact. However, the ordinary Fijians understand this.

HON. OPP. MEMBER. All from the *dinau, dinau!*

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- The canecutters, the garage labourers, the dalo farmers and the taxi drivers know it well that the Bainimarama-led Government will educate their children, right from kindergarten to university – right from kindergarten to university.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus interjections)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Yes, Madam Speaker, in their own terminology, this is unprecedented.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, we have mapped out a four year Strategic Plan to roll out necessary reforms in the Education Sector, to bring about the desired output. I wish to state at this juncture that the Ministry of Education is output driven and we will pursue all avenues to ensure that quality education is achieved in our schools.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- (Inaudible!)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Yes, yes, we will do that. Look at the full budget!

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- (Inaudible!)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- You had your turn, Biman!

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, these reforms were not borne out of thin air. They are well researched. Unfortunately, our detractors do not read volumes of literature out there in the libraries, as well as they have no idea what some of the neighbouring countries have done.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, some on the Opposition bench keep on throwing their usual jab of lack of consultation. To the contrary, the level of consultation that we did this year is unprecedented.

(Laughter)

Let me shed some light on this. As per the Education Act, we are required to undertake three Education Forums per year, attended by various stakeholders. We did four this year. The honourable Minister never attends the Forum, it is chaired by the Permanent Secretary. I attended all four forums, and made presentations at all four forums, and provided an open forum session for stakeholders to ask any questions that they wish to ask or seek any clarification. In addition to this, I held 31 other open forums with various stakeholders throughout Fiji

HON. MEMBER.- Vinaka!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- ...to inform them, as well and give them an opportunity to provide their feedback on the reforms that we are undertaking. Madam Speaker, they cannot digest it. They will not, it is very difficult!

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Lack of proper knowledge!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I want to give the assurance to the people of Fiji that the Budget presented is the best we can provide. Madam Speaker, this Budget is not our Budget, it is the People's Budget. We consulted them, they asked for it and here it is. The Budget has been specifically designed to assist ordinary Fijians to seize the opportunities that will develop them as individuals and their families.

Madam Speaker, I now join our Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and other honourable Members of our Government, and the silent honourable Members on the other side in ...

(Laughter)

... commending this Budget to the House, and to the people of Fiji.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the honourable Dr. Mahendra Reddy for his input. I now give the floor to the Honourable Netani Rika.

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, today I rise before this august House to pledge my support to the 2016 Budget, a Budget that is meticulous, catered specifically to the circumstances and needs of our country, and appropriately reflects the priorities of our Government. For this, I thank the honourable Minister of Finance.

There are many noble and revolutionary elements to this Budget, and as we all have heard yesterday and continue to hear today, one could speak for days on any one area of development.

It seems like our country has been committed to a journey of self-improvement these past few years that has become so extensive, one would run out of breath just from listing it. This is a good thing, Madam Speaker, it heralds an era of true prosperity and modernity.

In particular, today I shall be addressing the House on an element of the duty system that the Budget introduces. As we all know, duty is a tax charged on imports, therefore, it is an excellent tool for the regulation of goods, based on a country's stance and a Government's devotion to certain principles.

Madam Speaker, the charges in duty fully reflect Government's commitment to our people and demonstrates our desire to ensure that we all lead healthy and fulfilling lifestyles. This is the rationale for the increase in duty for alcohol and tobacco by 12.5 per cent and a further health tax of six per cent. This will noticeably raise the price of these goods, but I have always agreed with the view that if we are to place a burden on anything, let it be on our vices. If this charge pressures us to live healthier lives, then it is a change that we should all support. This is also true for the excise duty on sweetened drinks that will increase from five cents per litre to 10 cents per litre.

Madam Speaker, this initiative will hopefully address the rise in non-communicable diseases in Fiji, a problem that persists for most of the Pacific. I am glad that our Government is taking sensible measures to push our population towards more healthy alternatives for consumption.

Madam Speaker, yesterday, Honourable Karavaki devoted a fair share of his speech to trying to convince this august House that milk will give all of us cancer. I believe he used the words, "main contributor". I did some research of my own on this matter and was not surprised to find that research backing his claims resides primarily in a grey area of medical science.

Research on the benefit of milk to growing children on the other hand is abundant. However, I bring this up to point out a simple fact. I know that Honourable Karavaki cares a great deal about health, and I know that he is glad that we are raising the duty on alcohol, tobacco and sweetened drinks.

(Laughter)

I believe it would do us all the world of good then, if the other side of the House took some time to express their positive assessments on the Budget every once in a while instead of always scraping the very bottom of the barrel to find pointless positions to attack us on. Fringe medicine, Honourable Karavaki, I think you broke the bottom of the barrel.

(Laughter)

To be honest, I think the entire country would listen more to the other side of the House if they tried to present a more balanced view of issues, rather than the current onslaught of unreasonable pessimism.

Madam Speaker, allow me to round up my response on the Budget by commending the Government for its initiative in promoting healthy lifestyles in Fiji. My fellow Parliamentarians have expressed their sentiments, and I join my voice to the chorus.

Madam Speaker, this Budget is the People's Budget. On that note, I commend the Budget to the House. *Vinaka!*

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the honourable Netani Rika for his input. I now invite Honourable Seruiratu to have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker and Honourable Members of the House, I rise to complement the voice of the Honourable Members who have spoken before me in commending the Honourable Minister of Finance and his team for a comprehensive Budget.

Before I do so, Madam Speaker, I have a few comments as a rebuttal to some of the statements made from the other side of the House. One, again on peacekeeping, Madam Speaker, I find it confusing. You would recall that earlier in the year, the Honourable Gavoka came up with an Adjournment Motion to review the conditions, and of course, the environment in which our peacekeepers are operating. However, on the contrary, just for this Budget, they have totally condemned the allocation given for peacekeeping duties. Of course, there are costs and benefits, Madam Speaker, as we all understand. Of course, peacekeeping brings money into the country, and the shadow Minister for Defence and Foreign Affairs just last week in the weekend's *dailies* was asking on the money owed to the country by the United Nations, and again it was brought up by the Honourable Niko Nawaikula yesterday. There are a lot of benefits.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition talks about remittance. Take the Military people out of the remittance, the \$400 million, how much is left of that?

Rural development, you go to the villages in Fiji homes, a lot of economic projects, people who are coming back with capital, they are not relying on Government huge benefits, Madam Speaker, so I find the statements made yesterday to be very contradicting.

Let me also assure Honourable Members of the House, and of course Government that any government is an equal employment opportunity provider because it has been raised from the other side that it is bordering on nepotism, they are trying to portray that picture.

Madam Speaker, again let me say government, any government is an equal employment opportunity provider. My family members, my son, they have rights. They do not have to simply because they are members of my family. It does not mean that we deny them the opportunity to be given positions and vacancies do exist.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Merit-based.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- It is logical, Madam Speaker, and of course it is merit-based. Look at the performances of these institutions.

HON. MEMBER.-.- It can do better. It can do better.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, they are trying to portray that there is a lot of nepotism, abuse of power. I worked in Government for the last few years, there is a lot of capacity gap in Government, Madam Speaker. We need to have the right people so that they can deliver.

I work in the Agriculture Ministry, unfortunately retention is one of the biggest issues in the Agriculture Ministry. We keep losing our people. There is a lot of gap in the Agriculture Ministry and it is the same in all Ministries, Madam Speaker. If we want people and the ministries to deliver, then we must have the right people in the right job so that they can perform ...

(Applause)

... .. and that we need to understand. Of course, we want to localise appointments, but of course, we cannot compromise standards, we cannot compromise standards, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Use your intelligence please.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Most of you from the other side of the House were civil servants. They know the culture in Government. They know very well the culture in Government.

HON. MEMBER.-They want to retain it

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- It needs reform, Madam Speaker, we need to have the right people and of course, we will give them the right remuneration, terms and conditions, but there is work to be done and that is something that I wish to raise, Madam Speaker.

I support the intentions of the Budget, both in its audacity to deal with current realities, and its endeavour to improve Fiji's overall social and economic landscape. This is shown by the significant investment in Agriculture, Health, Infrastructure, Education, Housing, Water and Energy.

We welcome the new directions towards these sectors and, of course applaud the continuous emphasis on their contributions towards rural development.

Madam Speaker, the features of a progressive nation are all captured in the 2016 Budget. The Budget reiterates Government's belief in the Fijian people and their ability to determine their own destiny through making use of the opportunities that are available to them.

Yes, ordinary Fijians are capable of achieving extra ordinary heights. This is the pulse of the 2016 Budget. Additionally, Madam Speaker, the total projected expenditure of \$3.4 billion for 2016 will be offset from the total projected revenue of \$3.1 billion. The minor deficit should not be a cause for alarm. This means therefore, Madam Speaker, that loans will only be directed to capital investments, which in turn will provide returns not only for the Government, but more so for the ordinary Fijians. It should be well noted, Madam Speaker, that Government has been able to alter the capital to operating expenditure makes from a fee of 14 to 80 per cent. This was way back before 2007, to a forecast of 40 to 60 per cent in 2016. This clearly demonstrates a commitment to investing in the potentials that Fiji has.

These, Madam Speaker, are the hallmarks of a good progressive budget and for that, the Honourable Minister of Finance ought to be commended.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development and National Disaster Management has spoken in detail on the programmes on

rural development and it is imperative therefore, that I do not tarry further on this, but list some of the key initiatives in the 2016 Budget that will improve and support rural development. This include rural electrification programmes, electricity subsidy, rural housing assistance and rural water assistance, to name a few.

On Rural Housing, Madam Speaker, again this has been doubled from 2015, the allocation was initially \$700,000. In 2015, the allocation was \$1.4 million, and again for 2016, the allocation is again \$1.4 million.

Madam Speaker, we are doing two things. We are improving on the livelihoods, the safety and the security of our people and more importantly, we are investing in disaster risk management. Whenever we build a new house, we are again saving costs particularly in the future. If you recall during *Cyclone Thomas*, housing alone was for about \$15 million worth.

During *Cyclone Evans* in 2012, housing costs alone was about \$30 million, Madam Speaker. So, we are investing in disaster risk reduction as we are putting more into rural housing allocation.

Madam Speaker, the Integrated Rural Development Framework was approved by Cabinet in 2009 and we are working towards it. I have got a team dedicated in the Ministry to look at the policy and of course operationalise the framework.

Additionally, Madam Speaker, I will not go into the details. We are reviewing the current programmes that we have, simply because we want to consider the changing landscape of the development and the varying needs of the people, and of course, against the Programmes that we have, particularly in Self-Help, Rural Housing, Poverty Alleviation and the Non-Cane Access Roads because Government allocates \$4.4 million to these Programmes, and we wanted to make sure that Government gets its dollars' worth from the services provided through these various programmes. At the same time, Madam Speaker, Disaster Management Act of 1998 needs to be reviewed to be consistent with the Sendai Framework, and of course, the shift from a culture of reaction to one of prevention in our approach to disaster management and this will be the basis for the review of the Disaster Management Act 1998. As I have stated, consistent with the Sendai Framework for disasters reduction which has altered the focus of disaster management from managing disasters to managing risks.

The provision of \$2 million in the 2016 Budget for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change will hasten our progress in this regards and enhance our communities' resilience to natural disasters.

Madam Speaker, the allocation of \$50 million to rural roads that will be administered by the Fiji Road Authority is welcomed, as it will help improve accessibility for our rural communities both in terms of access to services and access to markets, particularly for our rural farmers.

Talking about agriculture investment, Madam Speaker, previously the focus was on agriculture production, but it is time that we look at the whole value chain and for that market accessibility is important and therefore, we applaud the allocation given for rural roads and this will be good news to our farmers and not only that but of course the vessels, a new vessel in 2016 which will be good for the maritime islands, Madam Speaker. And of course this is important, particularly for our people who live in the rural areas when it comes to market access and of

course for the efficient delivery of services to those who need it and from the respective Government ministries as well.

I want to focus on agriculture, Madam Speaker. We will agree that rural and maritime developments in the context of most developing countries is synonymous with agriculture and most of our rural communities are reliant on agriculture for their livelihood and I want to come up with a bold statement today, Madam Speaker, and this is what I want to say to the people of Fiji; if there is time to be a farmer, it is now. If there is a time for you to be a farmer, it is now. Madam Speaker, agriculture will remain one of the backbones of our economy in terms of supply and the provision of employment to our youths. This needs no further emphasis, the key policy objectives of the Ministry as reflected in the National Agriculture Policy is to ensure positive contribution to the economic development of our country and enhancing rural livelihood.

Madam Speaker, the sentiments expressed by His Excellency, the former President of Fiji at the Opening of Parliament last year, that “we are resource rich but cash poor” will be the catalyst that will drive my Ministry to aspire to identify and exploit opportunities available within the agricultural sector for the benefit of all Fijians and of course our national economy.

Madam Speaker, the increase in budgetary provisions in 2016, in the agricultural sector is a strong indication of Government’s will and commitment to the development of the nation and the very lives of our people and further denotes our economies reliance on the agricultural sector.

Madam Speaker, the 2016 Budget for the Ministry of Agriculture has seen an increase in allocation from \$64.9 million to \$76.2 million, an increase of 17 per cent and this budget will allow the Ministry to carry out its various programmes, aimed at modernising and increasing productions in the agriculture sector.

Modernisation of the agriculture sector, Madam Speaker, is consistent as captured in the 2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda and one of the key focus in 2016 is the coordinated approach, particularly to production and of course the marketing of the commodities.

As I have said, Madam Speaker, if there is a time to be a farmer or an agricultural entrepreneur in Fiji, the time is now ...

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Amen!

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- ... because the Ministry, through the budget allocation for 2016, has created the environment for our people. I thank my brother for the support given, because I know that we started off in the Garden of Eden and that is why he is supporting me, but I am worried that the Rewa Milk is not recommended for our people to drink and I was concerned because *na Marama na Roko Tui Dreketi* was a bit worried because of Rewa Milk.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, let me just go through some of the Programmes, and I hope that the farmers are listening. We have a few new Programmes, as alluded to by the Honourable Minister for Education. We go out to the farms, to the people, we listen to them and of course this has been facilitated as well in the 2016 Budget. This also includes the consultations for the next five year plan and the 20 year plan.

Madam Speaker, let me focus first on dalo. Dalo was never given any separate allocation in previous years. You would either have dalo projects from (Rural and Outer Islands Programme (ROI) or the Food Security Programme or Export Promotion Programme. These are existing Programmes, I will not go into detail but this year, we have allocated \$650,000 for dalo. This is based on our market survey.

Previously, Madam Speaker, in terms of agriculture, we were doing a lot of production but there was sort of a lack of consultation, no relationship between production and demand. Agriculture should be demand-driven. We have done agriculture market surveys in the US, Australia and of course in New Zealand as well. We had some surprises from the retailers in Australia. They told us “we do not want to see your face, we want to see your product.”

There is a lot of demand for dalo, unfortunately, Taveuni, the major dalo producer in Fiji, has got depleting soil problems. We have to shift dalo to other areas. We will still maintain Taveuni and we are working with the other agencies but we will still focus on other areas such as the interior of Ra, Naitasiri, Tailevu, Rewa and Namosi. The allocation for dalo is \$650,000.

Yaqona was never given any allocation. *Yaqona* is hitting the international market as a relaxation and anti-depression drink, let alone other pharmaceutical purposes. There is going to be an increase in the *Yaqona* demand, thus an allocation of \$1 million for *Yaqona* farmers

HON. MEMBER OF THE HOUSE- Vinaka!

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.-... BQA farmers in the Sigatoka Valley,

Madam Speaker, BQA is a Bilateral Quarantine Agreement. These are farmers who particularly supply eggplants, okra, chillies and papaya and they are important to our exporters. We have given a separate allocation of \$100,000 for them, which is new.

Infrastructure: previously Madam Speaker, the allocation for non-cane farm access roads is with the Division Commissioners but that is insufficient. Government has now allocated \$2 million to the Ministry for Agriculture so that they can handle the new projects, particularly when it comes to need for infrastructure.

Agro Marketing Authority, \$5.6 million on their capital budget alone so that they can buy from Rotuma, Koro and all over Fiji, where other operators are not accessible.

Madam Speaker, flat land, this is for those in the Central Division. I was in Serea a few weeks ago, we have a lot of flat land in the Central Division in Tailevu, Rewa, Naitasiri, Namosi but the problem is that these lands are idle because we just need watershed management or we need grading for that purpose - \$500,000 has been allocated.

Mechanisation - \$800,000. Just last Friday, we handed over a new tractor to Lutu Village in Lutu Wainibuka. Of course, we also handed one to a young farmer, an Indo-Fijian farmer in Visama. This is through this farm mechanisation allocation.

Of course, we are also looking at increasing allocations for cocoa. There is huge demand for cocoa and of course, for coconut, an allocation of \$500,000. Ginger, we have new markets as

well, particularly now with Ginger Puree and Ginger Juice, additional to what we have been processing previously, thus an allocation of \$800,000.

In livestock, we have allocation for beef breeding and we have allocation for beef research as well. This comes to about \$600,000 in total and we want to revive the dormant beef schemes, Uluisaivou, Yalavou and Tilivalevu, to name a few.

Sheep building programme, Madam Speaker, we have about \$410,000 allocated for the sheep multiplication and for the sheep breeding programme. Dairy Industry support, we have an allocation of \$880,000 and of course the Dairy Development Programme, we subsidised the Fiji Corporative Dairy Limited. We have \$500,000 allocated for that.

Madam Speaker, this has been one of our major problems and of course again this year, I thank the Ministry of Finance for allocating \$1 million for the brucellosis and the tuberculosis eradication campaign. That we will continue, unfortunately some of our farmers have faced losses but we are looking at ways in which we can improve.

And lastly, Madam Speaker, Honourable Ratu Matanitobua talked about youths. To support youth development, we are also providing \$515,000 increasing from \$300,000 allocation this year to Navuso Agricultural School and of course \$614,000, an increase from \$500,000 to Tutu Rural Training Centre. Tutu is operated by the Catholic Church and Navuso by the Methodist Church but it does not mean that only Methodist and Catholics qualify into these institutions. If you meet the criteria, you will be accepted into the institutes.

Madam Speaker, as I have said, this is the right time to be a farmer and I would urge every Fijians, if we talk about unemployment in Fiji, there is a lot of employment in the agriculture sector. There is a farmer in Tailevu who plants 50 *yaqona* a week, 200 in a month, 2400 in a year at \$40 each, \$96,000 income in a year, Madam Speaker. That is employment.

On that note, let me reiterate my support for the 2016 Budget and I thank you Madam Speaker and the Honourable Members of the House for your indulgence. *Vinaka*.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Inia Seruiratu for his input and now I invite the Honourable Balmindar Singh to have the floor.

HON. B. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, Honourable Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers, Honourable Members of Parliament, Members of the media, members of the public in the Public Gallery and all Fijians who are watching this Budget Forum in the comfort of their homes: *Bula Si'a!*

HON. MEMBERS.- *Bula Re!*

HON. B. SINGH.- I would like to begin by thanking the Honourable Minister of Finance for his hard work in producing this Budget, indeed it is a balanced Budget that reflects the Government's commitments and continuing service to our people.

The objective of the 2016 Budget is "A strong Fiji, a fair Fiji and a healthy Fiji".

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government believes in our 2016 Budget's objective and we are committed to deliver the expected outcome. One of the strategies that I will be referring

to is the allocation of \$2 million to the digital literacy which was also alluded by the Honourable Minister for Education, programme in the 2016 Budget, an significant increase in the allocation in the library programme.

In this new age, digital literacy is necessary for our people and it is a sensible and progressive move on the Government's part to push for its use of educational tools. The manner in which children learn and in which people access information have changed dramatically since the blackboard was invented in 1700s.

Innovative technologies are creating new forms of adapting and peer learning, increasing access to trainers and mentors and providing useful feedbacks and data in real-time. With technology, a whole world of information is but a few keystrokes away.

The current generation of 12 to 18 years, people are comfortable with technology and eager to use it. There is also considerable potential benefits in using new technology techniques to improve progress and continuity for secondary education to higher education.

Madam Speaker, the initiatives by the FijiFirst Government to embrace and integrate ICT into the education system is a way forward in building a better and knowledge-based society which is also articulated in the *Peoples Charter for Change and Progress*.

Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, learning has come a long way since the era of the blackboard. If we are to realistically compete in this ever changing world, we must move with the time and more importantly, we must give our youths, our children, the tools and the skills to carve out their place in this world. Some may say, we cannot afford to implement such an ambiguous programme. However, the reality is that, what we cannot afford to do is to let our children lag so far behind in the types of progress and development. This allocation is in fact, this Budget as a whole is an investment, an investment in our children and also investment into the future of our nation.

Madam Speaker, I emphasise the fact that this Budget is a People's Budget. It is a roadmap to progress and we must not let ourselves to be led astray. We must stick to this Budget and allow no frivolous alterations to the document that has potential to push our nation forward. Yes, Madam Speaker, I truly believe this Budget is our country's best hope for progress and I fully and heartily support that.

Before I conclude, I close with the thought from Thomas Jefferson who said once, and I quote:

“The care of human life and happiness is the only legitimate object of good government.”

This Government prioritises the well-being and happiness of its citizens and seek to enable social progress through good and fair public policy.

With these words Madam, I commend this Budget to the House. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Balmindar Singh for his input and I now invite the Honourable Prem Singh to have the floor.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I start my Budget response, I wish to raise two issues. Firstly, on my way to Parliament this morning, I received a call from concerned parents of a Year 6 student, as well as management of some schools who are still awaiting results of Intermediate Examinations that were released last Friday. One school management member even told me that in cases where results have been made available, these were riddled with errors and A grade English students have received zero marks in this subject. This needs urgent clarification by the Honourable Minister for Education.

(Chorus of interjection and laughter)

Madam Speaker, the second issue is while raising a Point of Order during a reply to the budget by the Honourable shadow Minister of Finance, the Honourable Government Whip said "Name the lawyers and we will take them to task." Since when, Madam Speaker, a Member of Parliament has so much power that he can ride roughshod over the procedures of the Independent Legal Services Commission? Or is this how the Commission has been interfered with?

Madam Speaker, this Budget has been thoroughly scrutinised by the shadow Minister of Finance and the Opposition, and no doubt will be subjected to severe scrutiny during Committee stage.

Much was promised in the 2015 Budget, some are yet to be achieved or delivered. Similarly, Madam Speaker, much has been promised in the 2016 Budget and whether or not their projections and forecasts are fulfilled or their objectives met will only be seen one year from now on.

However, Madam Speaker, scrutiny of a budget, which is the most important policy document handed down by Government every year will be made much easier if Government, through the Honourable Minister of Finance adheres to the requirements of the Financial Management Act (FMA), and tabled in Parliament the Reports on Financial Performance in accordance with the FMA and not on the Budget day but strictly in accordance with the requirements as stated by the Honourable shadow Minister of Finance.

Madam Speaker, the reduction of Value Added Tax from 15 per cent to 9 per cent has been praised in this Parliament. Any reduction in tax is naturally welcomed, but let me put this reduction in its context and its corresponding effects.

What about those below the tax threshold of \$16,000, earning \$2.32 an hour as minimum wage, or living in poverty. or abject poverty? What about those who are ineligible for social pension scheme despite being in retirement?

Madam Speaker, those eligible for \$50 food vouchers will get fewer items than previously because the basic food items that were zero-rated now see an increase in prices because of imposition of nine per cent VAT.

More seriously Madam Speaker, is the imposition of VAT on basic food items - Turning promises into Deeds ? As revealed by the Honourable Members of the Opposition, was this deed promised by FijiFirst in its manifesto for the 2014 General Elections? The FijiFirst manifesto Madam Speaker, is worth repeating and I quote:

“FijiFirst will continue to control the price of the basic food items such as rice, flour, potatoes, dhal, cooking oil and pharmaceutical and medical products. FijiFirst will continue to place zero VAT on powdered milk, rice, edible oil, tinned fish, flour, sharps and medicines”.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, the imposition of VAT on basic food items that have been zero-rated for many years is a betrayal of the promise made to the people of Fiji by the FijiFirst Government.

(Chorus of Interjections)

We are told that the imposition of VAT will be cushioned by the so called free water and free medicine schemes. We are interested to know, Madam Speaker, how many people or households are actually benefiting from these schemes. Government should provide these figures for the sake of transparency.

Government so far, Madam Speaker, has not clarified, what is the actual savings to a household or person accessing the free water scheme subsidy. From our calculations, it is \$13.96 per year, or \$1.16 per month, or \$3.49 a quarter, or every three months. This pales into insignificance or when compared with the increased cost of basic food items like rice, sharps, flour, oil, tinned fish and kerosene. These are bought every week in every household.

HON. MEMBER.- No, it's not! That's not the only thing they buy.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, Government decided to significantly reduce on certain items. These items are not purchased weekly. What Government should have done was to reduce on food items like potatoes. This reduction should also have happened in the case of meat like lamb and chicken, which have become a basic commodity.

HON. MEMBER.- Duty is on imported chicken. Not local chicken!

HON. P. SINGH.- This would have been a reasonable measure to cushion the effects of imposition of VAT on basic food items.

The same analogy applies to milk. While milk and butter, cream and yoghurt have reduced VAT of nine per cent, it still attracts an import duty of 32 per cent. However, Fiji Dairy Limited enjoys zero per cent concessions. However, for the last three years, production of milk by Fiji Co-operative did not increase, as the amount paid to farmers is not enough to cover costs of production. This is despite what Government, through the Permanent Secretary of Trade and Tourism, said a few months ago. Fiji does not manufacture milk powder, then why such high import duty of 32 per cent was imposed?

(Chorus of Interjections)

Inevitably, Madam Speaker, this duty is passed on to the consumers. Milk can be much cheaper if the duty is reduced. The concession provided to Fiji Dairy is not passed on to the consumers.

Madam Speaker, Government projects to rake in \$127.5 million from Service Turnover

Tax (STT). The 10 per cent STT means, for example, if I eat in a restaurant and the food bill comes to \$10, then \$2 goes to the Government. This is apart from the nine per cent VAT and duty on food items.

The same applies to hotels where tourists pay STT, but are the workers of our hotels, resorts and restaurants sharing a piece of this revenue cake? While Government forecasts revenue of more than \$127 million from STT, the salaries of workers remain stagnant. Madam Speaker, we have established that there is no uniformity in salaries and wages of our hotel and resort workers.

For Fiji's largest revenue earner, generating over \$800 million last year (although 60 per cent of the tourist dollar or 56 per cent depending whether one believes the Reserve Bank of Fiji Governor and Deputy Governor respectively goes outside Fiji), our workers in the tourism industry deserve much more.

For example, Madam Speaker, one resort pays only \$2.89 an hour for a receptionist. Another resort is paying \$4.65. The lowest wage rate in the tourism industry is \$2.50 an hour while the highest is \$6 an hour. These are disparities that must be corrected. Affordability by hotel and resort owners is not an issue because some prominent resorts are paying lower wages than smaller ones.

Madam Speaker, still on tourism, the plight of our curio vendors, especially at the Suva Handicraft market is not being addressed by Government. Government is promoting "Buy Fijian Made" but tourists who arrive at the Queens Wharf on-board cruise ships are whisked away on tours or to prominent duty free outlets while the curio vendors are left to feed on crumbs. This is totally unfair.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- That is not true.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- They also have Fijian made, we got it there.

HON. P. SINGH.- What protection are we giving to our curio vendors?

Much has been talked about SMEs. When you let the big guys go in and grab these too, this is totally unfair and unreasonable, Madam Speaker. Every business must have equal opportunity, whether small, medium or large entity. Curio vendors sell locally-made and crafted handicrafts and not items imported from Asian countries.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, one cannot recognise the Handicraft Centre, unless he or she is well versed with the city of Suva. The entire building has Digicel signage and colours, how will tourists know the quality and exclusive handicrafts that are available for sale?

Madam Speaker, each stall owner pays a total of \$2,511.60 in stall fees per stall, per annum at a rate of \$8.05 cents for a 6-day week. The Centre has 71 stalls and it should be generating \$178,323.60 in annual revenue for Suva City Council.

The Suva City Council should give Digicel naming rights, not complete signage that completely overbears a semblance of existence of a handicraft centre. This should be similar to the naming rights of our sporting facilities that still retain their identity, for example like the ANZ Stadium or Vodafone Arena or the Dome.

The curio vendors certainly deserve better treatment from both the Suva City Council and Government, and we urge both the Honourable Ministers of Local Government and Tourism respectively to address this issue with urgency.

Madam Speaker, we see Government is providing incentives like tax holidays and duty free imports on equipment for the establishment of the state-of-the-art hospitals and diagnostic laboratories. Public and private partnership is a good thing, we vigorously promoted this during the last Elections, but this has come to a reality. The last such proposal of the establishment of a hospital by the Apollo Group eight years ago has not seen the light of day despite the offer of similar incentives.

HON. P. SINGH.- However, Madam Speaker, in the absence of the state-of-the-art hospital, it is utterly disappointing to note that tertiary health care, which is advanced surgical procedures like heart surgeries, had been halted.

The Ministry of Health must confirm whether bureaucracy and legal wrangling by the Ministry and the Solicitor-General's Office have halted heart surgeries.

We know, Madam Speaker that when this issue was raised by the Honourable Leader of the NFP a month ago, the Honourable Minister for Health vigorously denied this, but he did not say that the agreement with Sahyadri Hospitals was invalidated on 6th August. The Honourable Minister also said that no one was denied his or her fundamental right to treatment, but the fact is that, only patients who received treatment had to go overseas and they had medical insurance.

This is reportedly because of alleged non-compliance and delays on the interpretation of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Ministry of Health and Sahyadri (Fiji), which is believed to be a subsidiary of Sahyadri Group India, whose surgeons were providing specialist treatments to Fiji patients.

We believe the agreement between Sahyadri (Fiji) and the Health Ministry was valid for five years. Under the agreement, surgeons and specialists from Sahyadri (India) commenced advanced cardiac, orthopaedic and neuro surgeries at the CWM and Lautoka Hospitals from 2013.

The question that arises, Madam Speaker, is if there were flaws in the agreement between the Health Ministry and Sahyadri (Fiji) or even Sahyadri (India), why was not this detected before it was signed by the parties? Why did it take two years for the Health Ministry to seek legal opinion on this agreement?

Madam Speaker, we also believe as part of the reversals being put in place by the Health Ministry, the grant of \$10,000 has been reduced to \$5,000 to these cases since 2015. This makes it even more difficult for patients to be prepared for open-heart surgery. No clear answers are forthcoming from the health personnel apart from the "No money" cry since July 2015. Why, Madam Speaker?

These are critical issues that need to be addressed and we certainly look forward to the Honourable Health Minister to inform this House why the grant has been reduced.

Madam Speaker, if similar obstacles are faced with any new tertiary health care provider who wishes to operate in Fiji and enjoy the tax holiday and duty concessions provided under this Budget, then our patients are doomed.

Madam Speaker, despite what we were told by Government through the Honourable Minister for Health, a patient awaiting heart surgery died. We were told that the agreement with Sahyadri was terminated on 6th August, but on 12th August, a patient travelled from Rakiraki for his scheduled surgery to be performed by Sahyadri surgeons. He was never informed prior to his trip to CWM Hospital that the operation had been postponed or in this case cancelled until his arrival at the Hospital. Madam Speaker, the patient returned home and died five days later on 17th August. If this is not bureaucracy then what is it? Who is responsible for this negligence?

Section 38 (1) of the *2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji* - 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...”

Further, 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 resources are not available”.

Madam Speaker, we see from the Budget that there is very minimal contingency plan to combat the debilitating effects of the drought, particularly in the Western and Northern Divisions.

Further, Madam Speaker, only a comprehensive survey will determine the kind and amount of assistance and crop rehabilitation packages needed for the recovery of these industries or sectors.

Government must immediately move in this direction, apart from supplying and improving the distribution of emergency water supplies.

Madam Speaker, I also totally agree with the Honourable Leader of NFP about the plight of canegrowers and the industry. I will not repeat them, except to say the fact that the cane growers are treated like sacrificial lambs or beasts of burden is best seen from the events of the last few weeks, culminating into the mediocre allocation of only \$5 million for cane planting programme.

For the 2014 season, the actual canegrowers payment received was \$72.59 per tonne. This is almost \$16 per tonne less than the \$88.49 paid out in 2013. The 2014 payment was boosted to \$81, with a top-up of \$8 per tonne for the fourth payment and 41 cents from the final payment, which was growers share of proceeds from the liquidation of the Fiji Sugar Marketing Authority in 2009.

Madam Speaker, growers received the lowest final payment of a meagre 30 cents per tonne a fortnight ago, topped up to 71 cents by 41 cents as growers proceeds from FSM liquidation. This is the lowest in history. In fact, two lowest final cane payments of 37 cents and

30 cents happened under the Military-turned FijiFirst Government in 2010 and 2015 respectively. The special payment of \$2.80 per tonne paid on the eve of *Diwali* is also advance. This is growers own money and it is part of the proceeds for the 2015 crop and is likely to be deducted from the 3rd and 4th payments in March and May respectively next year.

Madam Speaker, the average cost of production, harvesting and delivery of cane is around \$45.00. Seventy per cent of our growers produce an average of 150 tonnes of cane. There is around 9,000 growers.

Madam Speaker, the total earnings for 9,000 average growers for the entire season, excluding harvesting, delivery and production costs is a meagre \$5,400, paid over 16 months. This is \$10,600 below the tax threshold of \$16,000. Growers therefore, are in abject poverty ever since cane production declined by 50 per cent from pre-*coup* levels in 2006 between 1.6 million and 1.8 million tonnes under for almost 9 years.

When you have people in charge of the industry, who cannot differentiate the stalk from its top, then God help the canegrowers. This is the sad and unmistakable reality. Madam Speaker, I wish the Government well in its revenue collection and to use it with the expenditure mix, and I wish them all the best.

(Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Prem Singh for his input and now I invite the Honourable Ashneel Sudhakar to have the floor.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to make my contribution to the Budget debate.

As far as the duration of speeches are concerned, Madam Speaker, that was agreed at the Business Committee and among the Whips and there should not be any issues. Also, s raised by the Opposition as well as the Government non-Ministers, they too had agreed for the five minutes and there should not be a question about that.

Madam Speaker, the importance of Sugar Industry cannot be overemphasised when it comes to Fiji and Fijians. Sugar is not merely an industry for the people of this country. It is bread and butter for almost 200,000 people of Fiji, who directly or indirectly rely on the sugar industry. It is roti and ghee for Ram Prasad of Rakiraki; tavioka for Ledua of Labasa; and dalo for Samisoni of Seaqaqa. This industry must be protected.

It is an undisputed fact that the good the FijiFirst Government has done for the sugar industry and the good it continues to do till today is unprecedented, unprecedented

(Chorus of interjection and applause)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- ...and cannot be matched by all the previous governments combined, and that is well reflected in the 2016 Budget, where a total of \$23.8 million has been allocated to the sugar industry. It is an increase by a massive \$12 million from the previous Budget.

To the poor and hardworking cane farmers who are listening to me out there “ you do not have to worry about paying your Sugar Cane Grower’s Council levy anymore because your Government, the FijiFirst Government for the first time is paying for you in the history of Fiji.”

HON. GOVT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- The money the farmers saved from this policy can be used by the farmers to buy more fertiliser, more seeds and invest more on their farms. In that way, the sugar industry and the whole nation will benefit.

Also, for the first time, Madam Speaker, cane farmers who cannot afford to pay their land rent because they are disadvantaged will be able to get assistance from the Government, so that their leases are saved. What more can the farmers ask for?

HON. MEMBERS.-Thank you!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- The incentive the Government is giving to the farmers in this Budget will not only help the farmers and their families, they will also help the countless lorry drivers and operators, the cane cutters, the labourers, FSC workers and all those people who have heavily invested in harvesting machines and lorries in Ba, Lautoka, Rakiraki and Labasa Mill areas.

Lots of fancy words such as per capita income, GDP, inflation, growth et cetera have been constantly used by the Opposition to undermine the Government’s work. A cane farmer like Ram Sami, Apisai Bula, Ahmed Khan and Dalabar Singh who spent most of their lives on the cane farm do not know these fancy words.

They need cane lease renewals, investment in farms, cost savings and better ideas. They want hope. They want revival. They want relief and this is what this Government is giving them. They certainly will not call this Budget deceptive. They want more money in their pockets. They want better lives and FijiFirst Government is giving it to them.

First it was lamp chops and powdered milk, and now it is cow’s milk. These are what the Opposition was using to discredit the Government’s work. Now, people are using words like disasters, floods, hurricanes and droughts to malign the Government’s work. Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government does not manufacture floods and droughts. They are made by powers beyond us.

(Laughter)

At least, we are doing more than enough to lessen the effects of those disasters on the cane farmers by helping them increase crop size, invest in irrigation to counter droughts and to purchase new equipment and machines.

We are diversifying the industry by venturing into ethanol production, building a new Penang Mill, sugar refinery and co-generation plants in Labasa and Rarawai Mill, so that when the price of sugar falls, we will have alternative income for farmers.

Some Members of Opposition who have made comments about the sugar industry have never planted a single plant of cane and are least qualified to give any opinion on the industry.

(Laughter)

My great grandfather was a cane farmer. My grandfather was a cane farmer. My father is a cane farmer and I am a cane farmer too and I drive cane trucks and cane tractors, even today. If anyone is qualified to give a word on the cane industry it is me, and I am telling you that the sugar industry is in good hands and we will save the industry as we have provided the budget.

This is the People's Budget, Madam Speaker, and if some people sitting in this very House choose to call me a fool, then let me remind them that I am here and I rose through the ranks through hard work, sheer intelligence, competence and merit and not because of accidental supposed noble birth. Listen to that, hear that and note that.

(Chorus of Interjections and laughter)

Madam Speaker, I fully support this Budget and my vote will be in favour of the Budget because I know FijiFirst is doing the best and you guys will not match us. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Asheel Sudhakar for his input and I now invite the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca to have the floor.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, just before I start, I want to comment on the Honourable Sudhakar's speech. I know that he is a part-time farmer who is receiving loans for full-time farmers.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, the Opposition Party and their supporters stand shoulder to shoulder with France in this common battle against Militant Islamic Terrorism. I call on all Fijians to assist in any way possible and I call on the civilised world to unite, to defeat the plague of World Wide Terrorism.

The Militant Islamic Jihad Terrorism attacks our society because it wants to destroy our civilisation and our values. I extend our people's sympathies to those in France and families of those who were wounded and killed in this tragedy.

We, the Opposition, categorically refuses to agree with this Budget. It is a deceptive Budget, cunningly designed to support dictatorial leadership of this country. This Government has again dehumanised democracy and now leading, heading towards creating a para Military by joining the Police, Army and FICAC together, and totally control it to safeguard themselves.

HON. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Let me warn you, democracy is big, it will surface one day. As Lincoln said, "That this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom that the Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from this earth."

I invite the Government to consider Truth and Reconciliation as a way forward, to allow democracy to work properly in our nation.

May I now contribute on VAT deception. VAT reduction from 15 per cent to 9 per cent will result in the revenue give away of \$316 million as claimed by the Government as an illusion. Government will recover this from the new and increased taxes imposed upon taxes, taxpayers - you and me. It collects \$108 million VAT from medicine and essential basic food items and exempted; collect \$127 million from increase of 5 to 10 per cent; collect \$69.5 million from new environmental levy of 6 per cent; collect \$5.4 million from the new Health Levy and collect \$49 million from VAT compliance. Government claims that the success of the reduction in VAT will be realised from volume driven consumption. The more you buy, the more you save. Who will be buying more? The ordinary Fijian. Who will be netting more? The Government of Fiji. The very institution that is supposed to protect the interests of the people of Fiji is promoting more buying so that they can collect more revenue .

The problem about FIRCA not collecting revenue and devising adequate control mechanism to prevent the revenue leakage should not be passed to the ordinary Fijians to answer to and be treated unfairly with the sly VAT compliance programmes. There are many ranting in the Budget Address of the Honourable and learned Attorney-General that expresses Government's disappointment on taxpayers not submitting what is due to the Government. The ordinary Fijians have paid their dues, the problem lies with FIRCA, and the business units. FIRCA and Government should invest more time to engage with business units, talk to them about reforms, get the business units to own the reform so that the revenue leakage is minimised and meet them at least half-way.

Religion: A couple of years ago, the Bainimarama Military Government was fully engaged in imposing its will on the largest denomination, the Methodist Church of Fiji. It continues to blame them as being politicised in the plight of full brunt of security forces to monitor its daily activities. Eventually, they disallow any church or faith to be part of his governance, hence the introduction of secular state.

Madam Speaker, it is us Christians, the native owners of this country who are keeping this country at peace. Christianity taught us humility and respect, hence we are great peacekeepers and the world can testify to that.

HON. MEMBER.- Our fathers.

(Laughter)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, Fiji, in the past eight yearshave witnessed and it is so much visible to all the people of Fiji that a specific faith group with a number of followers have probably taken over the Methodist, and they are leading the country now with their own sectors and are visible everywhere. This is the fact. Has the Government changed its policy? Are we honestly abiding with this 2013 Constitution? When you guess, you will guess right.

Madam Speaker, allow me to express to you, right from the outset, we need to refer this Budget to the demands of this Constitution that imposes race issue of our country.

The 2013 Constitution speaks of Fijians that we are all equal. This is not so when you look deeply into the deceptive, over-estimated Budget. This Budget, not only deprive 70 per cent of ordinary Fijians, it has no space at all to improve the *iTaukei* people in the economic sector. It

revealed and substantiated the *iTaukei* worries that the FijiFirst Party is focussed to dilute *iTaukei*'s participation in Fiji's economy.

The stolen name "Fijian" since the Constitution of 2013 has no character; it has no manners; it does not have a culture; it does not have a language; it does not have a colour; it does not have a religion; it has no tradition; it does not have a national dress; and it stole the name that belongs to the indigenous Fijian people. It wanted to remove the Great Council of Chiefs, and now it belittled the *iTaukei* protocol during the farewell of the former President, a Chief of Fiji, by presenting him with mutton as the *Magiti Vakaturaga*. This is atrocious, we have great leaders of the past who actually went through the leadership of this country and there is food around. And to accept that, check what is covered - very well, that is what you people are doing.

(Chorus of interjections and laughter)

To the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs, I call on the people responsible to retire from what they have done, it is belittling the Fijian people.

Madam Speaker, this Government relegates any indigenous effort to be a partner in the economic growth of our nation, like indigenous active participation in the Fijian Holdings Limited, removing the indigenous Fijians control share with TV One.

Madam Speaker, this Government established its own FBC TV and financed by the taxpayers' money with the Fiji Development Bank, to suppress indigenous Fijians economic leadership in the television media. Government's effort to suffocate indigenous Fijians in any participation in Fiji's economy and they are fast confusing the indigenous Fijians by the provision of handouts and the appalling \$1000 grant to the uneducated mass, to look like they are providing the needy to the indigenous Fijians, and hopefully people will be satisfied with that horrendous tactics and to make it worse, the delivery of this is done by none other than the master of *iTaukei* Affairs himself, the Honourable Prime Minister. He spearheaded the move to totally remove the *iTaukei* Affairs Scholarship and Multi-Ethnic Community Scholarships, in the guise of "all are equal under a common name `Fijian'" but really, further dividing and creating new elite regime belonging to a favoured class of people around Fiji, including even some of my own relatives in the Military. This deceptive estimate is planned to suffocate not only the indigenous Fijians but seven per cent of the population who are ordinary Fijians.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Talk about the Budget.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- It is all to do with the Budget.

(Laughter)

The people of Fiji and especially international communities and governments abroad, if this Government continues in power or worse still are living in fear, they will rule the country economically, socially, culturally and politically. What they are in fact trying to do is what Lee Kwan Yew did in Singapore and that is, to establish a farce of guided democracy as a front of dictatorship and government by an elite few. Guided democracy takes an arrogant attitude that the people are an uneducated mass. That is what you on that side are doing, who need to be led by those who think they know, it holds that the people are incapable of governing themselves because neither they are developed enough nor educated enough in democracy. To do so, and that they need to be led by a benevolent all-knowing elites who are perceived to have their best interests at heart.

Madam Speaker, such an attitude is patronising, arrogance in the extreme, because it belittles the population and reduces them to a status of dependent children who need to be led by their superiors, who will always know better and will always have their best interests at heart. Such an attitude is of course, sheer nonsense.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- Utter nonsense.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.-Hear and listen. Guided democracy is a more softer faith, a form of dictatorship but does not carry out the horrendous elimination of opposition in the way that Communism, Nazism and fundamentalist Islam have done and thus it can appear to the world as a caring responsible system of governance for those who supposedly are not educated enough, not ready to govern themselves. This, of course, is a lie and just another form of intolerant violent, dis respectful and dehumanising system of national government.

Madam Speaker, can the Government, please, make it clear to the people of Fiji why FNPF has to buy the 10 foreign missions properties. It is clearly a bad investment by the Government, as clearly stated by the Honourable and learned Attorney-General and Minister of Finance; “reduced Government’s management and maintenance obligations for offshore properties”.

Government would get money from the sale. The cash for FNPF decreases, the repair and maintenance expenses for the Fund increases, the profit for the Fund decreases and net available to the members declines.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, it doesn’t.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes, it is. Surely, the asset increases by the cost paid to the Government of Fiji to acquire the properties, however, if we were to sell the properties at any point in time, how much will the market be willing to pay? If you argue that the market will pay you more, you did not opt for that opinion or option, why the need to sell these properties, to pay off your debt? How will you use the proceeds? Will you invest in more cash-generating businesses or will you simply use it to pay for your horrendous operating expenses?

The Budget reflects your intentions to lead by your dangling carrot to the populace you have subdued, renegading them to be your wilful subject and deny them their rights.

Madam Speaker, let me speak very shortly about the Public Service and the militarisation of Government.

HON. MEMBER.- No, it doesn’t.

(Laughter)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Please, allow the Honourable Member to speak.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I deserve this more than you and a lot of people on the other side, Madam Speaker.

HON. MEMBER.- *Vinaka, vinaka.*

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, let me speak about our public servants. Earlier on in the 2016 Bainimarama Government, it was introducing the word “paradigm shift”, to civil servants and enforcing changes to suit their agenda -that military person in Government. The idea of introducing that was actually to seek outside of the box but unfortunately, what is

happening is actually delivering something totally different because neither is it tested, nor has it been proven anywhere else in the world. So when you challenge to go outside of the box, beware because of those problems that you will face, they will not have the answers to those issues.

We have Military presence in the Government that instil fear to the civil servants and have badly affected their freedom, frank and professional discussions that are done to find the best solution in any issues. Morale is affected and PSC services delivery are also badly affected.

Agriculture: I refer to comments made today by the Honourable Minister for Agriculture but speech that officially endorse nepotism and he is asking how those lots of gaps were created. Is he short-sighted; has he forgotten this Government brought a lot of gaps in our society, simply because they do not have the knowledge and the know-how of running a Government? Unprecedented and poor vision and unprecedented memories.

Madam Speaker, they seem to trigger happy with the famous words “paradigm shift” and they have lost themselves in that shift. One of the total provision of \$34.3million, 49 per cent are under Requisition where the funds are accessible only to justification request and not under normal. Why do we need more justification for the already drowning economy sector with potential to stabilise our economy? It only means more delays in implementation, 50-50 chances of accessing funds, much frustration officials and beneficiary at field levels, opportunities for industry development in both crop and livestock commodities and are near zero levels when compared to the 1980s production.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- (Inaudible)

(Laughter)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Hey!!

Let me talk, you know some of us, we hold also four and five portfolios, ...

(Laughter)

... we understand that, stick with education. I am educated to cover all - understand! So for you, Honourable Minister for Agriculture, stop and continue at 50 per cent production, ginger processing partially reduced to first exports only. Neither do you need expansion in the West nor fully supported financially - hence the unhygienic milking facility.

Sheep and Beef promotions are struggling to survive, despite the potential and high demand. Pork and eggs also continue on the price hikes.

Madam Speaker, we need to remove the requisitions.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- Remove, remove!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- That is good for you, we are supporting that.

Remove the requisition, it will not support agriculture. It is not only deceptive but camouflage an inflicted figures that may not be accessible at all, come December and 2016. From the Minister's comments, there is a fear or failure to achieve target due to one main factor, either the availability of locally qualified personnel or he has no confidence on the current

personnel. Hence his references to engage foreign expatriate is to be explored. In other words, we are to return to the old colonial, if they are recruiting foreign consultants and expatriates.

Madam Speaker, this Government depends on loans and increase in debts. Any balanced person would calculate the ability to pay his loan before he loans. Agriculture is the mainstay of this nation, the answer to paying debts are with the agriculture sector. This Government does not even consider or promote local farmers to provide quality export to lessen the huge imports coming through to our country through loans.

Madam Speaker, \$41.7 million allocated to Agriculture, (this is not counting the the ones against Infrastructure, Minister or Defence and peacekeeping), the Military alone accounts for five per cent of the total Budget, that is \$172.5million.

Defence: Madam Speaker, I also join my colleagues in paying tribute to the veteran journalist, the late Mr Sitiveni Moce. He was taken by soldiers to the Queen Elizabeth Barracks in 2007, had never recovered from injuries he sustained from the camp and I wish his wife and nine year old child God's divine peace.

Madam Speaker, the Gross Domestic Product of our country stands today at \$9.6 billion and if this is to be measured up, our fledgling democracy then we would need to conclude that we are on track. However, the GDP, as noted by Bobby Kennedy 47 years ago, represents the mere accumulation of material things and does not reflect our own excellence of personal vendors. It does not capture the duty of our own music and the value of our own culture, neither our weak nor our courage and our wisdom, our learning, our compassion and our devotion to our country.

It matches everything in short, except that it makes life worthwhile, it tells us everything about Fiji's material wealth, except why we remain proud to be Fiji citizens, despite the ongoing oppression we face. Now, that the dust has settled and the people have had time to access the actual impact on them that the 2016 Budget is likely to have, it is fair to say that the height of the VAT reduction has made scepticism and in some quarters concern about the truth faith of Fiji's economy.

For my contribution, I would like to concentrate on Military spending because it has been allowed to increase, unchecked and today is the third largest operating budget allocation for this Government. Only Education and Health receive more than our Military, all other Government Ministries receive less. The Military was allocated from 2014 - \$146,000; 2015 - \$158,000; 2016 - \$168,000 - a total of \$470 million. We are not at war, Madam Speaker, at least not externally that it would require us to beef up our combat readiness.

Why have we made such dramatic increases in our Military spending when the only threat that we have is internal? Mine was external when I was serving, not internal threat. Yours – you are creating the internal threat of this country, and if it comes from the Military itself against its own people, to maintain the threat and intimidation levels that death upon victory. Recent events have shown this, which includes interfering in Police cases. While the Military can argue that operation they have caused have remained steady, they need also to admit that in 2014, they spilt the Military into two parts. One is RFMF and the other is Peacekeeping. The other significant thing is that, from 2006 to 2010 the average annual cost for peacekeeping is \$27 million.

Infrastructure: Next year, FRA will get \$6.64 billion, FRA receives \$653.8 million this year and FRA receives another \$420million. In total, from 2013 to 2016, Fijian taxpayers would have given the Fiji Roads Authority \$2 billion, this \$2.2 billion for our population will be \$2,600 per person, baby child, school children, adult, retirees and old included most of them being debt funded. This is a huge sum of money to dish out to one entity to make repair and maintenance of roads, bridges and jetties. Let us compare this with the largest democracy in the world, India where the total national budget for 2016 is \$580 billion.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca for his input and I now give the floor to the Honourable Laisenia Tuitubou.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Madam Speaker, before I continue, I would like to congratulate the Fijiana Team for qualifying for the Rio games and also the Fijian rugby players in France, none are victims of the attacks. As a Government, we condemn the terrorists attack but we wish the victims' families well and comfort soon.

I rise to add my voice in support of the motion before the House and congratulate the Honourable Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communication for a realistic, forward-looking Budget aptly themed – “The Future, A strong Fiji, A Fair Fiji, A Healthy Fiji”. A Budget that is deeply rooted in the Government's unwavering belief in its citizens, as it reaffirms Government's commitment, particularly to those in society such as our young who are least able to bear undue burdens and unfairness. Those young people are our future leaders and most precious assets and this is important to the national agenda and to the development of our nation.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry is responsible for the formulation and implementation of a range of youth and sports policies and programmes, targeted at empowering young people and our sportsmen and women, to enable them to reach their full potential.

The Ministry's Youth Development Programme, in keeping with the 2016 Budget, are aimed at equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to enable them to be useful contributors to their community's livelihood. This vision is being enriched by this Budget, as it seeks not to limit our horizons, but to clear the way for all Fijians, including young people to broaden their horizons and realise their ambitions.

Madam Speaker, in order to facilitate this vision, the Ministry, under the proposed Budget, is allocated a total of \$22.5 million in 2016, an increase of nearly \$5.8 million from this year's budget. As the Minister responsible for Youth and Sports, I am pleased to say that the nature of the Budget is Youth and Sports friendly.

Madam Speaker, in an effort to tailor-make our programmes to be inclusive and taking into consideration the needs of all youths, especially those who are particularly vulnerable, general administration for the Ministry is being resourced with a total budget of \$2.6 million in 2016.

Madam Speaker, this will cater for basic necessities such as human resources needs, including furthering youth training efforts through advocacy and enhancement to existing officers.

Madam Speaker, in addition, a total of \$706,000 is allocated for the upgrading of the five youth training centres that offers training to out of school youths interested in obtaining skills and furthering their knowledge in areas such as agriculture, carpentry and joinery, small engine repairs and music.

Madam Speaker, these training centres have, over the years, equipped outstanding youths who have managed to establish businesses in their own communities and have gone on and secured employment after attending the courses offered at the centres. I just give an example, the Yavitu Youth Training Centre in Kadavu. The evaluation conducted this year for the small engine repair showed that 76 per cent of the trainees reported having used the knowledge they gained from the training centre and repairing engines in their villages which is the cheaper option for the villagers, when compared to the cost of bringing the engines to the mainland in Suva.

Madam Speaker, 13 trainees were able to show the engines that they have repaired with accumulated revenue cost estimate at \$18,000.

The carpentry and joinery training showed that most (88 per cent) of the trainees reported having used the knowledge they have acquired from this youth centre. These trainees were able to conduct house renovations, plumbing, tiling and including repairing of broken furniture. A total of five trainees were able to showcase their evidence of the work that they have done, which gives a monetary value, totalling \$124,840.

Madam Speaker, for Basic Agriculture, 16 former trainees were nominated and monitored and they showed that they are planting *yaqona*, dalo, cassava as a form of income generation. A total of \$342,000 are expected revenue from these trainees.

Madam Speaker, there are other successful youths from all the Youth Training Centres but that is a classic example of how Government is equipping outstanding youth dropouts, who have managed to establish businesses in their own communities.

Madam Speaker, the proposed Budget also has a new addition of \$30,000, which is to cater for the awareness and the sponsorship of the Ministry of Youth and Sports Young Entrepreneur of the year, under the Prime Ministers Exporter of the Year Award for 2016.

Madam Speaker, for the information of the House, this award is usually given to a company that is owned by a young person and it recognises and acknowledges the contributions made by youth entrepreneurs towards our economy.

The 2015 Youth Entrepreneur Award went to Abhinesh Kumar; a school dropout who started on 30th November, 2007 with his tiling business, with just \$25. It is now a fully-fledged business. He now employs 10 to 15 tradesmen and labourers alongside some apprentices and operates in the entire Western Division, from the mainland resorts, residential projects, to island resorts and projects. Such success stories inspire our youths to pursue and accomplish their dreams.

Madam Speaker, the National Youth Day Celebration is an annual event that celebrates the diversity of youths in Fiji. The 2016 Budget allocates a total of \$55,000 for the Ministry to organise a National Youth and Sports Expo on this day; providing an opportunity for youths to showcase their arts, crafts and agricultural products to encourage innovation and productivity.

Madam Speaker, a total of \$2.7 million is allocated to support the implementation of the National Youth Policy, aimed solely for youth developments in Fiji. Out of this, a total of \$1 million is allocated for Youth Capacity Building Programmes. This is to expand the scope of youth programmes and continue with the Ministry's youth empowerment training programmes in order to change their mindset and equip them with the necessary skills for employment, and a better future for themselves.

Madam Speaker, it should be noted that comparing the past years, this is the highest allocation that has been allocated for this programme, which means that my Ministry will be able to expand the delivery of our current training programmes and introducing and meeting the initiatives that were brought up by youths during our consultation when we have a top to bottom self-approach; sitting down with them and hearing what they required, and these are included in the 2016 Budget. This also signifies Government's continuous dedication and commitment towards empowering our youths.

Madam Speaker, \$200,000 is allocated in 2016 for the Youth Grants Programme. This funding is available for youth organisations by application for conducting of training in support of the objectives of the National Youth Policy. It also encourages youth groups and youth organisations to establish sustainable income-generating projects that will create opportunities for growth and improve livelihood for youths.

Madam Speaker, a total of \$100,000 is also allocated for the International Youth Exchange Programme to encourage international and cross-cultural learning and experiences. This is particularly with countries where Fiji has signed cooperation agreements and where we need to meet our international mandates on youths.

Madam Speaker, a well-equipped Research, Policy, Planning and Training Unit is critical for the Ministry, as it plays a major role in improving the efficiency and effective delivery of targeted programmes and projects of the Ministry.

Madam Speaker, the 2016 Budget proposes \$220,100 to equip this arm of the Ministry. This is to implement research needs, in particular publishing a Situational Analysis Research to explore the lives and attitudes of young people in relation to education, health, socio-economic status, political participation and sustainable livelihood. This research is expected to provide a comprehensive analysis of the youth population in Fiji, to enable the Ministry to implement targeted systematic programmes for youths.

Madam Speaker, a love of sport is a defining aspects of what we are as Fijians. It is a unifying force that is central to our national psyche. The major increase of \$5.7 million of the Ministry's budget for 2016 is to meet Government efforts to support development of sports in the country and our national teams participation on overseas sporting tournament, particularly in the preparation and the participation of Team Fiji at the Rio Olympic Games.

Madam Speaker, for once in the history of sport in Fiji do we have a real chance at an Olympic Gold Medal and our teams need to be adequately prepared to compete at the pinnacle of world sports and this allocation will indeed boost these efforts.

The Ministry works closely with the Fiji National Sports Commission to implement sports policies. To this end, the operations of the Sports Commission will be met by a grant of \$1

million while an allocation of \$2 million continues in 2016, to engage international coaches for our national teams.

Madam Speaker, Fiji's performance against Tier 1 nations at the recent Rugby World Cup has reaped instant benefits to this investment and we are confident that having international coaches, position our team better in international outings. This is why, Madam Speaker, \$5.4 million is to be administered by the Sports Commission, to work with sporting agencies and coordinate Fiji's participation in major international sporting tournaments that will be held in 2016. These includes the Rio Olympics, Northern Rugby Tour, Pacific Nations Cup, U20 World Rugby, Pacific Challenges, National Rugby Championship and the U19 World Cup Cricket in Bangladesh.

The Ministry plays a key role in the developing of sports, both in urban and rural areas. It is also charged with creating a vibrant and highly competitive sports in this industry in Fiji to engender national pride and benefit the Fijian economy.

My Ministry will also continue its Programme to develop and upgrade rural playing fields, with an allocation of \$400,000 in 2016. This is double the amount for 2015 as access to standard rural playing fields continue to provide ordinary Fijians the opportunity to showcase and develop their talents in sports. This Programme has been successful, not only in providing our rural people with better facility, but enhancing the development of players and identifying those with the talent to compete at national level, and represent Fiji in international competition.

An allocation of \$2 million is allocated in 2016 to continue the work on rural sports complexes in Vunisea in Kadavu and Sawaieke in Gau, as a long term strategy to develop facility in rural areas. Government will continue in 2016, with an allocation of \$3 million for the upgrade and the maintenance of Government-owned sporting facility such as the Flour Mills of Fiji Gymnasium, after having completed work on Lawaqa Park this year. This is an indication of its efforts to improve access and service delivery to the Sports Council to Fiji's sports loving public whereby an Operating Grant of \$500,000 is allocated for 2016.

Madam Speaker, as the Honourable Minister for Sports, I now wish to show my gratitude to the Government's contribution towards sports development and sports tourism. The dedication of \$9 million indicates the continuous support shown towards the hosting of the Fiji International Golf Tournament as all these, and more, to ensure that we are well on our way to making Fiji a premier destination for major international sporting events, and this spells good times ahead for all Fijians.

Further to that, Madam Speaker, for the first time in our nation's history, we will play host to a Super Rugby match between the Canterbury Crusaders and Waikato Chiefs. We need to grab the opportunity to showcase the international arena that we have the facilities. We congratulate the Super Rugby fraternity for having the confidence in our facility to bring a match over here. The benefit is the television rights, millions of people watching our facilities and our country, and also increase in tourists. Spectators will spill into our country, and we will have an economy impact in the business community.

Further to that, Madam Speaker, our Ministry supports the youths of Fiji, and to all youth clubs of Fiji that are listening, we will visit you by early next year. Those who have been visited, and came up with requests for the programmes that they required, they have been allocated in this Budget.

Madam Speaker, I support the motion before the House to approve the 2016 Budget.

(Acclamation)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. We thank the Honourable Laisenia Tuitubou for his input. I now invite the Honourable Jone Usamate to have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the 2016 Budget, and I would say it is actually a real 'thumbs up' Budget for all the people of this country. In doing so, I must congratulate the Honourable Minister of Finance and his team because this Budget builds on the considerable progress we have seen during this first year of the FijiFirst Government. It continues to do that, and it is a Budget that continues the serge to achieve our Vision of Building a Better Fiji, a better Fiji for everyone who lives in this country today, and those who will follow in the future.

It is a Budget that is firmly focussed on building the basis of sustained development, development that will continue to go on. It sets out to achieve our development targets, and at the same time is hugely progressive in looking after those who are struggling the most in this country.

There have been a number of comments from the other side, stating that the changes introduced do not look after those at the bottom of the socio-economic pile. I think these comments reflect a failure to fully understand the full budget and the other measures that have been put in place.

Overall, obviously the impact of this Budget will be on reducing the cost of living, since VAT has been reduced on all things. Yes, VAT has been introduced for some basic food stuffs, but overall, the impact will still be to the advantage of those who need assistance because the overall cost of living has decreased.

At the same time, as has been mentioned before, the reduction in duty in many items that people use in a day to day basis. A lot of these items are used by people at the lowest socio-economic levels. Those have also been reduced. I think the key point to take into account when looking at the impact of the Budget is to notice where the assistance is given, it is targeted at those who need the assistance most. If you look at the areas, some of the areas in which the targeted assistance has been provided, this year we have seen that there is an extension of free medicine. That is obviously going to impact on those who need that assistance.

Over the past few years, we have had the assistance in free bus fares, tuition and we have recently had the establishment of increase in the National Minimum Wages. There used to be people around this country who used to work for 50 cents an hour, now the lives of those people have been uplifted as they now get a salary of at least \$2.33. So, when you are looking at the impact of the Budget, you also need to look at it in light of all of the other policies that have been put in place by Government.

Assistance to those who are running the Small and Micro Enterprises, as has been elaborated by the Honourable Koya, is making a huge difference in people's lives. Social Welfare payments, assistance in water and power; all these things, when taken in totality, are lifting the lives of everyone in this country, especially the most marginalised and those who need

that assistance. On that ground, I congratulate the Honourable Minister of Finance and his team for coming up with a well thought-out Budget, with targeted interventions to assist those who are less well-off in our country.

Time and time again, Madam Speaker, when comments are made on the Budget, there is a deliberate failure to look at the impact of everything that Government has put in place; this Budget, plus all other initiatives and policies that are in place.

In terms of health overall, this Budget once again reflects the importance that Government attaches to health. The health of our people continues to be a major focus of the FijiFirst Government. This is reflected in the increase of \$11.3million for 2016, and I think if you look at the Budget, one of the most important aspects of health is having enough people, adequately trained people, to be able to deliver the service, and that is reflected in the Budget.

In the 2016 Budget, of the \$280 million, 44 per cent of this Budget is focussed in making sure that we have adequate human resources to be able to provide health services. That comprises of about \$130 million. There is a Capital expenditure of around \$53.8 million, which comprises 18.5 per cent of this Budget.

Other Operational costs, which allow us to run the activities that we need to do, to have an impact on people's lives amount to around \$95 million or 32.8 per cent of the Budget, Madam Speaker. VAT also takes up a portion of 3.7 per cent.

Madam Speaker, there is adequate money that is being provided this year, to allow us to be able to deliver the kind of programmes that we need to do for our people.

Over the years, since the advent of the Bainimarama-led Government, and now the FijiFirst Government, there has been a strong focus on decentralisation of many services in the health system. Initially, a lot of services were centralised in the large hospitals. Over the years, there has been a strong focus on taking these services out, closer to the people so that they do not have to come to the centre. The services is taken out to them. This strong focus on decentralisation has continued and will continue.

Over the past few years, we have seen the decentralisation of General Outpatients, especially in Suva. That drive will continue. We hope to continue that drive across to Lautoka, Labasa and to the other areas of Fiji so that services can be taken down to the people.

We have also seen the decentralisation of mental health services. Initially, this used to be provided only at St Giles Hospital, now they are being taken out to the Divisions and Sub-Divisions so that services is brought closer to people. Other services are now beginning to be decentralised. These include facilities and services in ultrasound and other specialised clinical services which will continue to be taken out to the peripheries.

This year, as part of the overall decentralisation and also as part of trying to ensure that we have stronger execution of our policies and our plans, we are focusing on enhancing efficiency and speed of service that management of the budget is also being decentralised. That is something that is very new for the ministry.

This year will see the commencement of a process that will ultimately see each major hospital and each of the division take responsibility for their own affairs in terms of managing the

budget. The three major hospitals and the two specialist hospitals (St. Giles and Tamavua Twomey Hospitals) have now been given specific budgets. Each of the four divisions have also been provided a specific budget and their subdivisional hospitals will actively manage their health centres, nursing stations and their related public health activities. This will enhance transparency, ownership, accountability and speed of performance. When you decentralise, the one thing that you do get is speed and efficiency in getting things done on time.

The Ministry will continue the trend of outsourcing non-core activities such as security services, cleaning services, mortuary services and in the future kitchen services also - the production of food, so that our people can focus on their core activity of keeping the healthy, healthy and trying to treat those that require assistance.

While we have continued to develop our facilities and have improved the pool of specialists that we now have, especially with the CWM Hospital, and I have been glad to see over the past few years we have been able to develop a pool of surgeons and specialists.

We still have major challenges in the area of sub-specialist care and for this, our Government will continue to try to assist the people in Fiji that needs services that cannot be provided in Fiji but need to go offshore. A sum of \$1.3 million has been set aside for those who need this overseas medical consultation. Applicants will still need to meet the criteria that they need to meet but they have access to this kind of assistance that is provided for in this Budget.

One of the things that we are very fortunate about in Fiji is that, we get a lot of people who come from offshore and donate their time free of charge in a lot of cases, to provide specialist surgical services in Fiji. This include groups like Friends of Fiji, Loloma Foundation and the Seventh Day Adventist. In this Budget, we have provided \$500,000 to assist these teams when they come across to Fiji, to deliver their services to our people.

We also do not forget those in our rural and maritime locations who require urgent medical evacuation to either Suva, Lautoka or Labasa, to make sure that they can access this service, Government has now provided a sum of \$2.2 million that has been set aside for medical evacuation.

We have improved the processes around this and referral guidelines to manage these evacuations have been put in place to deal with the problems that were faced in the past.

Health is something that cannot be addressed by the Ministry of Health alone. It requires collaboration with a lot of other agencies. Grants will continue to be provided for these agencies such as the Channel Home of Compassion, Father Law Home, the Reproduction and Family Health Association, St. John Association and Empower Pacific.

A new grant is provided to Project Heaven to continue screening of school children for hearing and visual problems so that they can be referred as quickly as possible to specialists who will then take on the challenge of looking after them.

A major component of the increase in the Budget this year in the Ministry of Health is in relation to the additional positions for doctors and nurses that are being provided in 2016. In 2016, an additional 150 doctor positions and 200 nursing positions are being established. These are designed to lift the number of personnel and thereby improve the level of service. We hope to be distributing these doctors to our major hospitals, where CWM will be receiving 36 additional

doctors and 20 nurses; Lautoka will be getting 30 new doctors and 50 nurses; Labasa, 24 doctors and 50 nurses; St. Giles Hospital and Tamavua Twomey Hospital will get an additional five nurses each; our Central Division will receive an additional 10 doctors and 25 nurses; Eastern Division, 10 doctors and 25 nurses; Western Division, 20 doctors and 50 nurses; Northern Division, 20 doctors and 40 nurses.

All of these are designed to move closer to our target of a ratio of one doctor per 1000 people and four nurses for every 1000 people. We still have some way to go to achieve that particular target, but I hope to be able to achieve it in the foreseeable future.

Madam Speaker, \$1 million has been set aside for the training and development of our medical staff. This is absolutely critical. There will be a strong focus on developing our local medical personnel who wish to specialise and money has been made available for that in the training programmes.

At the same time, we will look to tap into those who have been able to score scholarships, to undergo training in countries such as China, Cuba and Georgia. Efforts will continue to recruit from other countries.

We will continue to have issues of retaining staff and a number of measures are being put in place to address this. Where necessary, those staff with specialist skills who are about to retire will be retained so we can provide their services to people who need them.

We are also developing career paths for those who may wish to take up specialist nursing positions. This will ensure that we maintain them in areas in which their expertise is required. There will be a development of this in nursing and other areas where such developmental of career progression is required.

We will continue to emphasise the values of the Ministry and the importance of customer service, since this is an area we received most of our complaints about. The values that we have in the Ministry have now been incorporated into the performance management system for staff and all staff will be evaluated against their ability to live up to the values, and to be able to exemplify these values in their behaviour when they meet with our customers who are patients, who come to our hospitals and our health centres.

The other area that we are resolving to address very strongly again this year is our effort on leadership at all levels within the Ministry of Health. We have introduced in 2015 a Leadership Model that looks at six different areas that needs to be strengthened right across the Ministry because I believe one of the elements of poor service in the past has been the weak leadership that exists at different levels. That is why one of the reasons we have been talking about is Civil Service Reform, to bring in stronger leadership, to allow us to be able to provide more efficient and more effective service.

Capital projects are always an important part of the Ministry of Health. Government will continue to invest heavily into fiscal resources in 2016. In 2015, as has been mentioned by the Minister of Finance, issues were faced in getting all the capital projects up and running as required. Delays happened for a multitude of reasons.

In his Budget Address, the Honourable Minister of Finance has pointed out that in 2016, the manner in which capital projects are managed will change. There will be a focus in removing bottlenecks on making processes more efficient without compromising on quality.

My Ministry really look forward to this. We look forward to a time in which we will be able to focus on our core activities, a time in which we will have a central agency which builds for us the kind of facilities that our medical and health people require. This will allow us in Health to focus on what we need to do and that is, as I mentioned before, to keep those who are well, to keep them well, and to heal the sick and the deceased.

Our major projects in 2016 will include the completion of the new Ba Hospital that has commenced this year; an investment of \$21 million has been set aside for this work. Work on this project commenced this year and has been progressing very well.

The land for the new Nakasi/Naulu Health Centre was secured this year and civil works have commenced this month on the development of this facility. An additional investment of \$3.3 million has been made available to make sure this facility can come on line in 2016. The establishment of this facility will allow us to provide better health services to the people who live in the general Naulu/Nakasi and Wainibuku areas - a total of around 22,000 people. It will also ease pressure on the CWM and Nausori Hospitals, both of which are always under extreme pressure.

There have been a number of comments that have been made in the House about the status of hospitals and health facilities around Fiji and the need to keep repairing and upgrading them. In this year's Budget, we have set aside \$3 million for the upgrade and maintenance of our major hospitals and the related quarters in which people live.

We hope that this will be able to improve the facilities that are there to allow us to provide better service to people. It is not only for the urban hospitals but also for the health centres and nursing stations all around Fiji.

We expect the new Rotuma Hospital which has been under construction this year to be completed in 2016 for an additional \$2 million. Initial work on the new Nausori Hospital will continue in 2016 and to be completed in 2018.

A sum of \$1.3 million has been set aside for the initial work on the new CWM Maternity Unit of 200 beds target for 2018 completion and the new Lautoka Emergency Department and Operating Theatre that commenced this year will be completed next year. A sum of \$1.8 million has been set aside for that and \$1.3 million for the completion of the Keiyasi Subdivision Hospital.

For Navua, we will complete the fencing, the landscaping and the storm water drainage for \$.05 billion.

We also note that there are other health facilities that will be dealt with by the Ministry of Regional Development.

For capital purchases, Government will be investing in ICT infrastructure network equipment for urban hospitals, this is not medical equipment - around \$0.5 million.

Equipment for health and nursing stations, \$800,000; dental equipment \$489,000; biomedical equipment, a total of \$11.9 million that includes \$3 million for the new Ba Hospital.

Public Health: In Fiji, we are well-versed with the challenges that face us. We often hear of the problems of NCDs and communicable diseases and for this year, in the area of public health, a budget of \$6 million has been provided. This will be utilised with the team, together with the national advisors and their team.

The current expenditure patterns for health in Fiji are such that our spending is still heavily oriented towards secondary and curative services. We will still maintain this and we welcome the introduction of incentives for those who wish to build new private hospitals and other facilities. We believe that this will help develop avenues for medical tourism into this country and this will also relieve some of the pressure on our public facilities. However, with the onset of NCDs, the need for a focus on wellness will become stronger.

In response to the question by the Honourable shadow Minister of Finance, a proportion of the levies on the tobacco taxation are added to the NCD prevention and control budget, thereby increasing the NCD allocations in 2015 and 2016. In the future five years, we will begin a stronger emphasis on prevention and emphasis on primary health and public health. There will be a stronger focus on keeping the healthy, healthy. This will require action across different sectors and it will also build upon the measures we already have in place such as taxation and alcohol and tobacco and the excess tax on sugar sweetened beverages.

Our three major hospitals, namely, CWM, Lautoka and Labasa, together with the two Specialist Hospitals, Tamavua Twomey and Saint Giles, are critical in providing curative services to our people. Together, they have a budget of more than \$93 million. They will continue to function as the mainstay of medical services within this country.

In the area of medicines and by-medical equipment, the Fiji Pharmaceutical and Bio-Medical Services Centre is the centralised procurement centre for the Ministry. It purchases all our bio-medical equipment and consumables. It has been provided a budget of \$57.1 million this year. Every year, the challenge has been to ensure that medical equipment is provided as and when needed and that medicines are available when needed. Over this year, some initial strategies have been put in place to address the issue of stock outs. Overall however, more needs to be done to this.

The other area that is considered to be a strong focus in 2016, Madam Speaker, is that we will continue to have a strong focus on quality management across the whole of the Ministry. This has started with the renewed programme in housekeeping and then now, we will be strengthening our focus on the Service Excellence Awards Framework, as the basis on which to provide services within the country.

The Ministry has also entered into a collaborative approach with FIRCA, to improve the key processes that we have within the Ministry.

There has been one question asked in relation to Sahyadri Hospital, the services that they provide. I just like to say that the agreement with Sahyadri is still in place, we are however, reviewing with our medical doctors whether the kinds of service that can be provided when we use to have the backing of the Sahyadri Hospital. Now that it has changed and once the doctors agree or if the doctors believe that we continue to have that service, we will continue to provide

the service. If you believe, however, that we need to focus on just evacuating people across to facilities in India, that is also what we will continue to do.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would like to say that I believe that this Budget is the budget for all the people of Fiji. For us in Health, it provides the basis for us to be able to provide health services to our people and it is a People's Budget, and I commend the Budget to this House.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you Honourable Members, we will now break for lunch. Lunch is served in the same venue and as agreed to, there is one hour allocated for lunch. Therefore, Parliament is now adjourned to 2 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 1.00 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.06 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER.- We shall continue from where we left off and I will call on the Honourable Anare Vadei to have the floor.

HON. A.T.VADEI.- Thank you. Madam Speaker, the Acting Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition and Members of Parliament, I rise to respond to the 2016 Budget Address, as presented in this august House on Friday 6th November, 2015. .

I would like to respond to comments made here today by the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, advising our youths to go to the rural Fiji and plant.

This Government must stop limiting the dreams of our youths. It is insensitive and insulting to our next generation and let me remind him that these demographic will be voting in numbers, come 2018. Also, the honourable Minister for Youth was misleading, when he said in his speech that they condone terrorism.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Point of Order.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member is supposed to respond to the Budget Address by the Honourable Minister of Finance and not the speech given by the Honourable Minister for Agriculture or the Honourable Minister for Youth. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Actually, there are really no limitations to the responses to the Budget. Please, Honourable Vadei, you may continue.

HON. A.T.VADEI.- Also, the Honourable Minister for Youth was misleading when he said that they condone terrorism in his speech, just prior to lunch.

In general, I find this Budget is not a productive budget, but a consumptive one. Mainly, because it is driven by public sector investment rather than private sector. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I concur with the sentiment expressed by the Honourable shadow Minister of Finance that the Budget is indeed deceptive and confusing.

In the 2016 Budget, the total estimated revenue of \$3,128,731,000 versus the total estimated expenditure of \$3,414,537 raises many questions in the minds of the people of Fiji and that is, how many projects and activities will be completed to standards of quality and customer satisfaction?

Some serious concerns need to be highlighted, Madam Speaker, on decisions of the Tender Board being influenced by Ministers during the tender process. Additionally, how extensive has there have been political influence on the implementation of projects by officers. We only have to look at the Auditor-Generals Reports to see for ourselves.

It is very obvious from last year's budget that the amount of funds to be used for capital works is going upwards, yet we believe many of these capital works are incomplete or of poor workmanship. This is simply not what taxpayers deserve, Madam Speaker. For example, the Nairai Jetty, the maintenance of roads on Gau Island, the provision of safe drinking water in

villages and islands of Motoriki, Batiki and Nairai, to name a few. These are basic obligations of the Government and it is due to them. It is clear now, Madam Speaker, that this Government is obsessed with spending taxpayers money without restraint. To use the analogy raised by the Honourable Prasad, "There is a wild extravagant party in progress but those footing the bills for this party are not invited and relegated to watch from the windows." Corrective measures must be addressed and instituted immediately, as highlighted in the Auditor-Generals Report, Madam Speaker.

It is deeply saddening to know that most civil servants and statutory workers are being made to work without using their brains and merely carry out orders. His deep fears are at its lowest, paralysis innovations and stifle the ability of thought - it is unproductive.

Madam Speaker, there are some examples of undeserving promotions from the Ministry of Education that has been brought ...

(Chorus of interjections)

...to my attention, which warrants a strong and robust Public Service Commission which can protect staff over some politicians, as the Constitution says it must.

A teacher from DAV, Ba, who was graded AG was promoted to A.D. Patel School in Ba, to grade 3B at a Vice Principal level.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- With one year Master's Degree...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Another teacher from Nadi Muslim College....

(Chorus of interjections)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order, order! Please let us hear the Honourable Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- ... who was the HOD with Grade 5E and confirmed, was promoted within the same school to ED1D and confirmed as Principal.

(Chorus of interjections)

On the Civil Service Reforms, for which instances, this will amount, I can only hope that the ANZ Bank from Australia is proud right now.

Madam Speaker, allow me to turn to some sectors that I believe warrant attention in the Budget.

Tourism: Madam Speaker, Maldives and Fiji was similar in tourism arrival figures in 2006. By 2014, Maldives witnessed a huge surge in their visitors arrivals while Fiji was left behind with under 700,000 arrivals. It does not appear that we are flying in the tourism sector, as we are being led to believe.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. A.T. VADEI.- With the 2016 Budget policy, the tourism sector could be on its way to being grounded.

On Forestry, Madam Speaker, the Fiji Hardwood Limited (FHL) is responsible for mahogany. It has not been able to achieve its logging targets of \$33.5million, of which 88 per cent was rough sawn timber. This means that only 12 per cent of the export quantity comprise the process component of that, only four per cent of the process component is made of guitar parts for a guitar company that controls 73 per cent of the mahogany logging volume. It is eyebrow raising that one company is a favourite and permitted to breach the licence agreement of value adding and down streaming in Fiji with impunity.

At this point in time, it seems evident that while the extension of the high value mahogany is in full throttle, the re-stocking of logged areas is neglected., even though Asian holders have paid replantation fees, there has been almost zero replanting in the last three years. There is almost zero emphasis of research, extension and training for farmers.

The Rural and Maritime Islands Programme: Madam Speaker, this is a very good initiative to our maritime islanders. They are surrounded by the sea and these islands should be introduced to higher return farming such as pearl farming, clams, crab and prawn farming with the technical and financial support by the Government. Government should, perhaps it is a bit more unjust in its allocations for roads towards upgrading, irregular shipping services and therefore, I note that the Consequential Bill No. 37 on the Ship Registration Decree that we will consider on Friday does nothing to reduce discrimination of our marine dwellers.

The lesson learnt from Taveuni., where dalo production has suffered due to decrease in soil fertility. It is also deeply concerning; we very easily shout out to the external world that we are green but the soil on the ground does not support the tale. The Ministry is strong, urge to arrest and prevent the problem with shift precautions and remedial actions.

Soil is the basic building block for subsistence and commercial agriculture. It loses fertility and CDT of the continuous years of use, but soil fertility can be corrected, Madam Speaker, with good farm husbandry practices and the use of fertilizers.

The use of alkaline has been proven successful in most areas, the product deposit is near the Wailotua Cave in Wainibuka. I urge the Government to assist the landowners, it needs extraction, packaging and marketing because it is environmentally-friendly and cheap and will improve CDT and increase farm production. This could be a solution to this problem.

Madam Speaker, unless and until the farmers are protected by Government policies, exporters and mill men to supply certain crops, they will continue to be exploited and remain poor.

Organic farming must be prioritised by the Ministry of Agriculture. There must be very strict controls and policies on the use of weedicides, insecticide, pesticides or other “cides”...

(Laughter)

...and other similar toxic chemicals, the world is moving towards being GMO free and similarly, we too must ensure that farm produce is not affected by the excessive use of these chemicals as a threat to the health of the population and to customers abroad to whom we export.

Madam Speaker, it is noted with concern the allocation made to municipal councils by this Government for capital development. Any development within any municipality is the responsibility of the respective council. The problem is that city and town councils are being run by administrators, appointed by the last elected government. The Government still feels that the running of councils is still its responsibility but the councils are funded by ratepayers.

The local government elections are long overdue and Government should ensure that it is kept out as soon as possible. This is owed to the ratepayers of this country. The affairs of the council should be administered by the councils elected by ratepayers, instead of administrators. The Government appears to be engaged in these developments because it promotes their visibility, it should spend these funds in the developments in rural and maritime zones.

Let me outline some of the developments in the municipal councils as stated in the Budget: redevelopment of Albert Park, Suva is \$7 million; The Challenge and Investment funds is \$4 million; Lautoka city council swimming pool, \$250,000; Valelevu ground stadium in Nasinu, \$500,000. I understand that municipal councils have very high arrears on rates, perhaps the council should pump up their own efforts to collect these rates, so that their developments do not become another unnecessary burden on the taxpayers.

On land, Madam Speaker, the allocation for 2016 is \$31million. State land comprises four per cent of land in Fiji and a core function of the Department of Lands is to administer State-owned lands that generate \$11 million in ground rental. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the Department now has the highest rental arrears ever. To add to that, the Department informed the public that it had missed the reassessment of rental of more than 4,000 leases. This would mean, Madam Speaker, that the Government will not miss out on increased rental revenue for the next five years. This is their core function and with the Land Information System available with the Ministry, why can this not happen?

Squatter developments: The Department has been allocated \$2.7 million for development of State land. Most of the State land within the urban centres have been occupied by squatters and many squatters had been issued with 99 years lease agreement.

Madam Speaker, the squatter settlements need to be further developed to provide lease titles with proper roads, sanitation and other basic services. The land occupied by squatters should be developed to its highest and best use, as squatters should be reallocated to areas specifically designed for residential purposes, but we know that the Department of Land lacks professional surveyors to carry out this development. Maybe, it should spend more resources in developing human resources to enable them to carry out their core functions.

In the Ministry of Health, Madam Speaker, I welcome the Budget increase for health services for 2016. The Honourable Minister for Health did not seem too bubbly now in his response. The treacherous condition of our hospitals all ask big questions as to how public new funded resources are being prioritised for the health care for our people.

Some say that the 2016 Budget is a healthy Budget, which raises taxes on alcohol and spirits and the provisions of free medicine programmes. It is entertaining to observe, Madam

Speaker, that on one hand, the Government promotes a healthy Budget and on the other actively promote companies like Coca-Cola, FMF which sponsor athletic games for secondary schools and Chow Kaji Rugby. Both companies promote products which contribute towards NCDs in Fiji. It is a confusing message, Madam Speaker, and Government needs to learn tax paid services on that front.

Madam Speaker, it is not encouraging to see that most capital projects and purchases, as promised by this Government is under "R" and it is not on the Operating Budget. This has been a regular occurrence from 2012 to 2014, Madam Speaker, and this only show poor planning, reasons and implementation from the very top of the Ministry. In addition, it is not clear as how many staff are employed, retired, re-engaged and how many more to be recruited in 2015 and 2016 in the Ministry of Health.

Madam Speaker, in the 2016 Budget allocation for the Ministry of Health, I could not determine whether the *Nasi ni Koro* will be paid an allowance, relative to the provincial council and *tikina* representatives. Madam Speaker, it saddens me to highlight that when patients are evacuated to Labasa, Lautoka or CWM Hospital and if they die in major hospitals, their bodies are not taken back to their villages for the appropriate customary funeral rights.

The impact of that, Madam Speaker, is their relatives in the urban sectors are burdened with unplanned financial costs at a time when the cost of living is already high. The solution lies in ensuring that more health services, not bricks and mortar, are taken out to the people. That is what an unprecedented people's budget should prioritise. Madam Speaker, not gold paved roads and handouts to Qantas shareholders. The delays in the processing of posts need to be filled quickly within the Ministry of Health because it has direct impact on the quality of service and delivery and its standard to the people.

Madam Speaker, once again, remote places and maritime islands continue to be discriminated against health care. It is the services that they need and I hope that the Government is sympathetic to the associated burden and costs for the traditional aspects of the opening ceremonies when new buildings open.

Finally, on health care. I cannot believe the pitiful allocation of \$300,000 for kidney dialyses. Madam Speaker, it is expensive and is more harmful, as the illness itself costs \$250 per treatment and there are more than one treatment required in a week. This budget allocation should have rightfully been allocated \$2.3 million for more kidney dialyses treatments in more locations and all the associated costs.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, a stable economy in a country growth needs a budget that is sustainable, driven by private sector investment rather than public sector development. It must not be deceptive or confusing and therefore, I cannot support this Budget, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Anare Vadei for his input and I now invite the Honourable Samuela Vunivalu to take the floor.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Madam Speaker, I stand here today to speak in support of the 2016 Budget that has been prepared by the Honourable Minister of Finance . I believe it is an ambitious and bold budget that makes much needed adjustments to the current system and

allocates funding in a way that will benefit our people; the very people we are gathered here to represent.

Today, I will specifically address the work of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, but before I begin, I would like to take a moment to briefly bring the attention of the House to an interesting fact. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that our Royal Fiji Military Forces Rugby Team won the International Defence Rugby Competition (IDRC) at the end of last month, which was held in England. The IDRC consists of teams representing the Defence Forces of Australia, New Zealand, Britain, South Africa, Canada, France, Georgia, Tonga and Japan and therefore, it is not an easy competition to win. This victory is one that we, as a nation, should acknowledge and be very proud of and a big *vinaka vakalevu* to the management, coaches, players and the Commander of the RFMF.

Madam Speaker, allow me to draw the attention of the House to a recent initiative by the Government, to develop sporting capabilities in Fiji, other than conventional rugby. While it is true that we are a rugby nation, let it not be a parcel of truth that prevents us from seeing the potential we have for other sporting fields. One example is golf.

Our nation has produced one of the world's most successful golfers; Vijay Singh. There was a man with the passion and dedication to succeed, despite the trials and circumstances that stood in his way, and succeed he did. This is a tale that should open our eyes to the potential that might lie with our people and spur to action.

As the Government of the people, we should be facilitating the creation of opportunities for our citizens and I am glad to see that that is exactly what we are doing; developing sporting fields that once were basically ignored and while we are at it, we are giving people in this country a greater array of options.

Madam Speaker, this Government is also tapping into prospects for sports in the fiscal sense. Empowering our people and providing them with more sporting opportunities does not simply allow them to pursue their dreams. It also results in benefits for our economy. Last year alone, our country received inward personal remittances of \$382 million and one of the main contributions to that growth was professional rugby players. There is potential for the development of sports and its players as an industry.

As referred to earlier, golf is also a sport that is being developed. Golf tourism is known as a highly lucrative form of tourism in countries that have taken advantage of the revenue earning power of the sport. To illustrate, in 2011, the US economy earned \$68 billion from golf alone. Why do the people of Natadola play golf? They play golf so that they can receive millions of dollars. We are already a major tourism destination, Madam Speaker, the stage is set, we need only to act on it.

The Budget is a framework for progress, a well-chartered route to national development. It allocates funding in a way that aims to educate and empower our youths, whilst providing them with more opportunities than ever before. It is a People's Budget and the mother of all budgets, a budget we should all wholeheartedly support, as I do.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the contribution by the Honourable Ratu Suliano this morning that the preparations to the Rio de Janeiro Olympics has already started two

months ago. In the 2016 Budget, there has been allocation for the Fiji Sevens Team and the preparation for the Fijiana Team, which has already qualified for the Rio Olympics.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, it is with pride and a heart filled with hope that I commend this Budget to the House. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Samuela Vunivalu and I now invite the Honourable Mereseini Vuniwaqa to take the floor.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to present my contribution to the Appropriation Bill before the House. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Honourable Minister of Finance and his team for presenting a well-balanced and inclusive Budget, a Budget which addresses all critical aspects of a vibrant and growing economy, including infrastructure, education, health, the marginalised in society, agriculture, fisheries, forestry and of course, land management.

Madam Speaker, before I go on to the Budget that my Ministry has been allocated for 2016, I would like to respond or reply to a few issues that have been raised by the other side. First of all, I would like to place on record my disappointment at the continuous personal attacks against Members, particularly those that are unsubstantiated, those that do not have the backing of facts, and I refer specifically to the Honourable shadow Minister of Finance in his comments yesterday, which I will quote from the *Hansard* Report this morning, and I quote:

“Madam Speaker, my lawyer friends tell me that the Honourable and learned Attorney-General and Minister of Finance is a much-better politician than he is a lawyer. I am not a lawyer so I am not in a position to judge that.”

I am a lawyer, Madam Speaker, but I am not a position to judge the lawyers' skills of any other lawyer. I leave it to proper authorities to judge the lawyers' skills of fellow lawyers.

HON. A. SAYED KHAIYUM.- Hear, hear.

HON. MEMBER.- Talk about the budget!

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- A former President of NFP was found guilty of professional misconduct by the Independent Legal Services Commission.

HON. DR.. B.C. PRASAD.- It was a compliment.

HON. MEMBER.- You've had your turn.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order, please. As I have mentioned before, there is really no limitation as to the content of the speeches, however, personal attacks, as has been mentioned, really, is not respectable in the Parliament process.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- A Point of Order, Madam Speaker; Standing Order 18 on your powers, I have just heard the honourable Minister go into what sounds like an attack on a former President of the NFP, and Madam Speaker, yesterday, I believe you stopped a Member from referring to Qorvis because they were not here to defend themselves, so that very honourable gentleman who is not here to defend himself.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, I spoke about unsubstantiated accusations. These are public records that I am referring to.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I agree with you, please, continue.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- They are not allegations, they have been proved by the Independent Legal Services Commission (ILSC).

MADAM SPEAKER.- You were quoting, please, continue.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- The immediate past President of NFP was found guilty of unsatisfactory professional conduct by the ILSC in 2013. The current President of NFP against whom in the Fiji Court of Appeal by Counsel for Qarase in the Court of Appeal cast doubts on the competence of the Honourable Member as Qarase's counsel in the High Court as someone who is not familiar with Court matters. This is noted and recorded by the Court of Appeal in its decision, again, I refer to public records.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- A Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, I would urge the Honourable Minister to, please, read the words of the Court of Appeal before she reads what Qorvis has written, about my competence in the Court That is why, Madam Speaker, they did an overturn because they said that the accused was represented by a competent counsel. This is by way of personal explanation as well. I do not know where this is going, it is very dishonourable.

(Laughter and applause)

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- A valid point, Madam Speaker, it is not nice, it is not fair to hurl personal allegations against Members. If it was being done against me, I would stand up and defend myself too.

Did you hear the Honourable and learned Attorney-General stand up and defend himself yesterday, no, and these are not economists who are judging lawyers' skills in these examples. A Honourable Member to initially relay the assessment of his lawyer friends of the lawyer skills of the Honourable and learned Attorney-General, can take those public record examples back to his lawyer friends. The lesson here, Madam Speaker, let us stop these ongoing personal attacks against Members. We are here to concentrate on national issues, issues which the Fijian people have entrusted us to discuss in this House.

(Inaudible Interjection)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, please, continue, Honourable Minister, you have 20 minutes and she will say whatever she likes, there is really no limitation as long as there are no direct personal attacks.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Not very nice, it is not nice.

(Chorus of interjections, laughter and applause)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Please, be more respectful.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- There are two more relevant issues that have been raised in the Honourable Vadei's speech a few minutes ago; one is on the arrears of State leases by the Ministry of Lands on State leases, a few facts which may come in useful in their public dissemination of information.

HON. DR.. B.C. PRASAD.- A point of order, Madam Speaker, I think when Members interject from the other side, they have got to be respectful. They can show their anger outside this House, I am not intimidated by those kind of anger from the other side.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the Honourable Member was not intimidated, so there will be no further interjections, please continue.

(Laughter and applause)

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- On the arrears of State leases, for this year, the Ministry of Lands has a target of collecting \$16 million of arrears on State leases. As at the end of the third quarter of 2015, the Ministry has managed to collect \$12.4 million of that \$16 million, so I take my hat off and I thank the hardworking team on the arrears taskforce for the Ministry of Lands.

On this partner's issue, I will deal with that within my speech. For next year, the Ministry of Lands has been allocated a sum of \$31 million. Some of the pertinent features of my Ministry's budget are as follows: the identification of water sources for our daily sustenance, Madam Speaker, has become a pivotal role of Government...

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- We are allowed to interject Madam Speaker. This is not Facebook. Carry on.

(Laughter)

MADAM SPEAKER.- I guess that was an ice-breaker, not included in your 20 minutes.

HON. MR.. VUNIWAQA.- No, she's not angry.

.... given the economic right of every Fijian to an adequate supply of clean water under our Constitution.

To this end, my Ministry is grateful for the allocation of \$1.23 million for Groundwater Assessment and Development for the year 2015. This is an increase of \$665,000 and shows the importance which Government places on the identification of alternative water sources for those communities that do not have access to Fiji Water Authority's infrastructure or sustainable surface water sources. It means that the Ministry can now target to drill more than 20 boreholes in 2016 for such communities and to ensure that the water reticulation process is completed in the process of development. The increased budget means that the Ministry may now be able to partly fund the reticulation mechanism with other donors or communities facing financial hardships. To drive the projects for identification of water sources and drilling of bore holes in rural communities, a one-off sum of \$2.6million was allocated for the purchase of a new drill this year. This drill is now here in Fiji and is currently being used by the Department of Mineral Resources to carry out its water development projects.

The Ministry is thankful that Government, through the Budget, continues to lay greater emphasis on the environmental monitoring of mines and quarries – giving us a budget of \$120,000, which is an increase of \$100,000 from this year's budget. With this increased Budget, the Ministry will now be able to make fully functional a newly established environmental unit which will work with the Department of Environment, to ensure that Government's aim on environmentally sustainable projects are fulfilled.

An increased allocation of \$12,000 has also been allocated for community development and field support in extractive industries. This allocation will allow us to strengthen our

consultation platform with stakeholders in the mineral resources sector, including with landowner groups.

Madam Speaker, a sum of \$200,000 has been allocated for the regularisation of squatter settlements on State land next year. For this year's Budget, the Ministry of Lands was able to bring security of tenure to approximately 123 Fijian families living in squatter settlements before the end of this year. The first 40 families have received their approval notices from the Honourable Prime Minister earlier this month. For a co-ordinated Government approach, relevant Ministers will be meeting within the next few weeks, to ensure that this initiative is driven in a co-ordinated manner and that optimal results are attained from this Government initiative.

The allocated budget for next year will ensure that the first phase of regularisation continues and at the same time the second phase of the regularisation process is also addressed. That is the matter that was referred to by the Honourable Vadei - the development of squatter settlements to ensure that residents have access to basic amenities like water, sewerage and electricity. The allocation for the second phase is part of the Development of State Land budget of \$2.7million for 2016.

For 2015, development works have started already for squatter settlements Field 40 in Lautoka. These works will conclude in the first quarter of next year. We will begin development of one other squatter settlement in 2016.

Madam Speaker, the regularisation of squatter settlements on State land is something that all Fijians should be proud of. It is an initiative which recognises the differences in livelihoods within our communities and aims to empower and uplift the livelihoods of the less fortunate in society. It is an initiative which accords with basic humanity and Government's tenet of equal opportunity for every Fijian.

To bolster Fiji's capacity in the use of geospatial capabilities in land management and other sectors, an increased allocation for \$600,000 for the acquisition of Satellite Imagery, to replace the outdated and costly Aerial Photography. With the 2015 Budget, the Ministry was able to purchase imagery for Viti Levu and imageries for the rest of Fiji will be purchased with the 2016 Budget. This will open up opportunities for Government and relevant institutions to improve remote sensing in Fiji. This will also allow the Ministry to produce up-to-date small and large scale base maps.

Madam Speaker, in recognising the need to start capital works towards the long overdue projects of modernising our national survey control points, to bring it up to par with international standards. Government has allocated a budget of \$1.18million for 2016. The current Fiji Geodetic Datum (1972) is not compatible with modern technology used by Civil Aviation Authorities, Navigation Organisations and other relevant stakeholders. This is critical work which has been lying dormant since 1984 and I am thankful to Government for recognising the critical need to address this for next year's Budget.

Madam Speaker, in its bid to make services more accessible to the Fijian people, Government has allocated a budget of \$12,100 and \$14,500 respectively for the Central/Eastern and Western Divisions for the decentralisation of services. For 2015, the Ministry has, within the existing office structure, created internal decentralised units in anticipation of creating standalone units in the long term. With this budget for 2016, the Ministry will be able to take further steps to start building up and strengthening these envisioned stand-alone decentralised units in Nausori and one other location in the Western Division.

Madam Speaker, in its effort to manage the Government Land Reform Programme, which includes the Land Bank, the Land Use Division has been allocated an operational budget of \$200,000 for its Land Reform and retain its Land Bank Budget of \$2.5million.

To date, a total of 81 parcels of land have been deposited into the Land Bank. Participation with the Land Bank is completely voluntary. No Land Owning Unit can be forced to deposit their land in the Land Bank, unless consented to by 60 per cent of the members of the LOU.

In 2015, the Land Use Division partnered with a Land Developer to develop 39 Residential Lots at Legalega Subdivision in Nadi, a parcel of land that is deposited with the Land Bank. This development will be completed in 2016 and also pursue the Yako Land Subdivision also in Nadi, another land bank initiative. These developments will provide equitable returns to both the landowners and tenants.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, our work programme for 2016, as recognised in this Budget, brings forth the need to work in collaboration with other Ministries and stakeholders whose roles are closely aligned to our core functions. We will therefore, seek to establish various inter-agency forums, to ensure that there is co-ordination in the implementation of our Capital Projects and Programmes in 2016.

Madam Speaker, I am happy with what the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources has been allocated for 2016 and I am certain that with a concerted effort from the team within the Ministry and with this Budget, the Ministry will be able to realise its aim of attaining best results in its core functions.

To that end, I would like to sincerely thank Mr Tevita Boseiwaqa, my Permanent Secretary and the hardworking team at the Ministry for their commitment to delivering the Ministry's 2015 outputs. I join other speakers in hailing this as a People's Budget – a budget designed to improve the living standards of all Fijians. We are producing a fairer and more equal society at every level and directing our spending priorities to the advancement of every Fijian.

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

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the Honourable Mereseini Vuniwaqa. That brings to the end the contributions from all Members on the Budget presented by the Honourable Minister. I now invite the Honourable Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, thank you very much. I do not intend to be very long this afternoon, primarily for the reason that the response from the other side has been overwhelming in respect of their ignorance about the Budget itself.

Madam Speaker, I remember as a student at Marist Brothers High School, some of us who were engaged in public speaking or mere discussions about various topics, the Brothers who actually had very good ethos and indeed trained us very well used to tell us that when you are debating a particular subject or topic, if someone starts personalising matters, if someone starts going off the topic, if someone starts bringing ethnic and religious vilification, then you know that you have won, because they have nothing else to say on the subject matter.

(Applause)

Madam Speaker, that is precisely what has happened today, in fact since yesterday. Of course, Madam Speaker, I do not know what the ethos was at RKS and QVS, maybe even at Natabua, we have of course a few black sheep from Marist too, and they are probably on the other side.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, before I go into the actual statistics pertaining to the Budget and the figures that are read out, in particular some of the anomalies I think that needs to be cleared out.

I would like to thank the Honourable Radrodro for her comments about acknowledging the fact that we have increased subsidies on outer islands fares. I can also tell her that Fiji Link has reduced the air fares to Vanua Balavu from \$282 to \$213. Of course, it will go down by another six per cent from 1st January and it is also a one way ticket to Vanua Balavu.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge the Honourable Aseri Radrodro for his comments regarding the accountants and I completely agree with him. In fact, that is what we are working on. We have had discussions with some of the accountants, we do need to have an independent body that will assess complaints regarding accountants and indeed various taxations which are very, very critical.

I would also like to clarify another point the Honourable Ratu Tikoca talked about there not being any pork in the farewell for the former His Excellency the President. The Honourable Ratu Matanitobua had (whose people had actually done the ceremony) confirmed with us and in fact, there was pork in it.

Madam Speaker, this is the level of debate we have in the Budget and unfortunately, the entire two days has been replete with this kind of shenanigans. I will also like to say one thing because religion is very quickly flaunted by the other side, we on this side of the House, including from there, we do not wear our religion on our sleeves, just because some people may say "Amen" loudly or yelled out something loudly if they do not do it it does not mean that they are people of God. There is only one thing I would like to say about religion, Madam Speaker, that we, all in this House believe in God, and God believe that all human beings are equal. Wwe are all God's children, Madam Speaker

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes. Yes. ,

It should not be used, not be proselytised to get a point across to score political points nor should it be used as a means to threaten people with violence.

Let me get on to the actual Budget debate, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, on another point about the Civil Service. The Honourable Vadei will know about things, like absenteeism in the Civil Service ...

(Laughter)

... and about standards, if they knew and the public of Fiji have complained about the Civil Service, not just now, but in the past and there is a consolidated effort to improve the services.

The Honourable Leader of NFP seems to forget the events of 1987, 14th May, 25th September, it created mayhem in the Civil Service, many people left but he failed to ignore that. He said the structures were kept in place.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, the point is that, the Civil Service need to be improved and modernised and it needs to be responsive to a modern society.

We have comments made by the Honourable Gavoka talking about in 2000 when the ACP Conference moved to Benin and some say that Fiji has got a bad infrastructure, that was 15 years ago. Why are we comparing Fiji with Benin? Let us compare Fiji with some other countries.

There is a comparable ranking but this goes to show they live in the past. The people of Fiji do not want the infrastructure of 15 years ago, they want the infrastructure of today. They are saying that they will take money from FRA and WAF to make a free university. So, what do we do? Do we tell the people of Nabouwalu, Dreketi, “you cannot have your road”; do we tell the people in Buca Bay “you cannot have your road in Cakaudrove”; do we tell the people in Sawani, Serea, Naitasiri “you cannot have the new road”; do we tell the people in Valley Road in Sigatoka where we get our vegetables “you cannot have your tarsealed road”, do we tell the people in Lomawai, Vunidoli in Tailevu and Nadroga that you cannot have the new bridges, do we tell the people in Rewa, “you cannot reticulate the water system” Is that what they are saying, Madam Speaker, because you do need to invest that type of money, to be able to get the infrastructure to the people of Fiji because for generations we have been behind infrastructure.

I completely agree with the Honourable Vadei. We need to improve the jetties and we need to get all those jetties, wharves and the bridges out. Of course, it has been done. There are 200 bridges that had been identified that is about to fail or going to fail. We need to fix those up. It stops you from accessing markets.

Madam Speaker, the point is this, in respecting the figures ...

(Inaudible Interjection)

Madam Speaker I think I got called traitor.

(Inaudible interjection)

HN. LT. COL I.B. SERUIRATU. Let's just move on.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the other point I want to make is, they are going on about this increased spending to the Military but I am very concerned about the debate we are going to have because if you add Heads 19 and 49, which they have done, the total budget spend, if you add those two, 2015 compared to 2016 has actually reduced by \$3.7 million, even though we gave an increase of \$6 million in allowances to our peacekeepers. They are not serving in Afghanistan but in Golan Heights, Lebanon and Sinai. We are the only blue helmets in Iraq. On one hand, they talk about curtailing terrorism, on the other they say “why are we going to all these countries?” What do they want? Do they know what they want?

HON. R.S. AKBAR. Confused!

Madam Speaker, let me get back to some very basics. The other side needs to have a better understanding of debt matrix because when you incur deficit, nominal debt will increase. To ascertain the sustainability of your debt position, you need to compare it with GDP, Government strongly poised to achieve a 45 per cent debt to GDP target in the medium-term.

Madam Speaker, when you borrow to build, as we continuously said, we are building assets. If you borrow to spend on operational costs then you are having a party. We are not having a party, we are building, Madam Speaker, we are borrowing to build. We are building roads, bridges, we are bringing assets, building airports.

Madam Speaker, unlike the previous governments who were borrowing to also pay for operational expenses. The other side stated the total debt increase from \$3.7 billion to an estimated \$4.4 billion. What the Honourable Member fail to state that this increase is over a four year period, from 2012 to September 2015. They obviously do not understand the difference between flows and stocks. Let me explain that. Debt is a stock figure, Madam Speaker. Debt servicing, which is principal interest payments is a flow figure. A sensible economist will compare the revenue relative to debt servicing.

Honourable Prasad's assertion that every \$3 of Government's revenue, \$1 is of debt servicing is in fact a misrepresentation of the real outlook. In 2014, \$465 million or 19.6 per cent of total revenue accounted for debt servicing, which equates to debt servicing to revenue of 5:1. Perhaps, he needs to brush up on his understanding of debt dynamics and the fundamental debt matrixes. For the information of the Honourable Members Madam Speaker, debt servicing stood at 26.5 per cent of total revenue in 2005. So, there has been a relative decline in terms of debt servicing as a share of revenue; a decline, Madam Speaker, in the share of revenue. The Government obviously is prudent in its borrowing.

Madam Speaker, on the point that he raises about overseas borrowing, this needs to be put into perspective. He obviously has a short-term memory. I had highlighted to this Honourable House in August that Government has put in place a strategy of domestic to foreign mix of 70 to 30. This is specifically designed to safeguard against foreign exchange volatility and we remain steadfast in that mix, even though with the \$200 million bond raising.

Madam Speaker, at the moment, we are currently being offered lots of loans but we have been very prudent - World Bank, IMF, ADB, but we have been very prudent in our borrowing and we only borrow to build. Even these loans that we are getting, the interest rate ranges from less than one per cent to three per cent. Also, from a liability management perspective, external project loans have a tenure of 15 to 25 years. Out of \$1.382 billion external debt as at 30th September, 2015, \$837.75 or 61 per cent foreign borrowings were accessed at very concessional rates, Madam Speaker. The successful floatation of the US\$200 million bond at 6.625 per cent, Madam Speaker, is a testimony of the confidence and reliance international investors have on the current administration. It had first the lowest interest rate ever for Fiji, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, over the last five years, Government has been recording operating savings. These basic needs as I have highlighted, I know some Honourable Members on the other side said "credit or *dinau* when the Honourable Minister for Education was speaking.

Madam Speaker, the operational cost is not paid for by borrowing money. We are generating enough revenue to pay for operational costs. We are only borrowing money to build. They need to understand the basics.

So, essentially, Madam Speaker, we are not borrowing to pay for salaries and utility bills. In 2006, Madam Speaker, Government revenue was \$1.4 billion. In 2014, Government revenue was \$2.37 billion - an increase of 70 per cent.

Madam Speaker, essentially, what we have now is the Government savings, which is excess of Operating Revenue over Operating Expenditure, has increased from \$27 million in 2006 to \$573 million.

(Applause)

Madam Speaker, and I will tell you why.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Why?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Because in 2006, the previous government, the Operating to Capital Expenditure mix was 85 to 15. In other words, 85 per cent of the money they spent was spent on operating it, not building. Building was only 15 per cent.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Creating debt.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, now the expenditure mix is 65 to 35 in 2014, and next year, the mix is 60 to 40, Madam Speaker.

(Acclamation)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No truth!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the other side cannot deny that capital investment adds to the productive capacity of the economy, which is evident in the sustained economic growth we have seen in the last five years.

We need to build better roads and bridges, we need to get people quickly to markets, when they are able to essentially, Madam Speaker, have greater efficiency in the transportation sector, there is a level of confidence people build.

(Chorus of interjections)

People go into those other areas. The people of Naitasiri can bring their goods a lot quicker to Suva Market. They gain confidence, they want to develop their land, Madam Speaker. They do not understand that.

(Chorus of Interjections)

Madam Speaker, they need to get their facts right that over the last five years, the Health and Education budgets have increased substantially. They talk about contingent liabilities. The

assertion that contingent liabilities to the tune of \$2.4 billion is a utter lie. It is a lie. I would tell you why.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- FSC is insolvent!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Out of the \$2.5 billion, Madam Speaker, \$1.73 billion or 69 per cent...

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- FSC is insolvent!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... relates to the guarantee of FNPF members' funds.

(Chorus of interjections)

In fact, the explicit liability is \$772 million. Over the last five years, there has been no guarantee calls, signifying that the guarantee given by Government is done in a well-managed and responsible manner, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, FNPF funds is in a very strong position, and a robust position, and thanks to the reforms initiated by the Government. It has already won two international awards....

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Its members' money.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- They have already won two international awards by an independent body, but these people do not want to recognise that at all. It does not fit in with your political agenda.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prasad talked about SLIP. He said, "Or, we got increased SLIP." We did not increase SLIP. We, basically, Madam Speaker, included apartments in the definition of "project" within SLIP. He needs to read that. We have not taken away SLIP. We have said the restriction - there needs to be a restriction on SLIP.

We have said, Madam Speaker, that older hotels cannot get that. We have cut back on the standard allowance, Madam Speaker. However, new hotels, Madam Speaker, can get SLIP, but it needs to be limited. We are focussing on health, we are focussing on being healthy, and that is what we will continue to do.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Bankruptcy and corruption!

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I think it is an insult when the other side says, 'Oh, the low income people do not need anything other than flour, rice, oil, kerosene and tinned fish.'

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is an insult to them. They think they do not need clothes, hardware, they do not need to build a house. They think they do not need sugar, salt, bread, biscuits, onions, garlic, potatoes, fruits and vegetables, dhal, curry powder, noodles, as well as the day to day necessities, women's tampons, toothpastes ...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ...soap, toilet paper, mosquito coils, steel wool, deodorants, et cetera, Madam Speaker. They think they can live on air.

(Chorus of interjections!)

[Laughter and acclamations]

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What a joke, Madam Speaker.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- It's a deceptive Budget.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I have to tell you one thing. On the Honourable shadow Minister's speech, I laughed the loudest and the most. It was entertainment plus, entertainment plus, Madam Speaker.

(Laughter)

(Chorus of interjections)

However, Madam Speaker, unfortunately like a Greek tragedy, it is actually a comical tragedy. It is a comical tragedy, Madam Speaker. They came along, they said "last year, the budget was boring. This year, they are saying "we are trying to pull everything out of a hat - deceptive. They cannot even get that right. They cannot even get that right, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, yesterday I was fortunate enough that I was at Kavanagasau, at a School of 63 students...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Step-down! You're running this country down.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... and all the parents were there.

No matter how much of a gravelly voice comes from the other side, it is not going to deter us from the facts.

(Chorus of interjections and laughter)

Madam Speaker, at Kavanagasau, the ordinary people said to me in Fijian, and I am not going to say it here because I stick to the rules, and I speak in English, but I will translate it. They said, "It looks like the Opposition do not know what they are talking about", and the guy said to me, "Are they deliberately doing it or they do they do not know." That is what they said to me.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Exactly what the lawyers said about you!

(Laughter!)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- In fact, Madam Speaker, I rescued the Opposition. I salute maybe they need some time to digest it, and then they will get to know them, Madam Speaker.

HON. DR. B. PRASAD.- Exactly what the lawyers said about you!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM – Your sources are flawed, my friend.

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the point is this: this Budget is a People's Budget

HON. GOVT MEMBERS.- Yes.

This Budget is a forward-looking Budget. This Budget has been assessed over a period of 18 months. If they were clever enough, some of the papers, some of the questions that were asked by this side of the House, we were setting the platform, but they were so busy trying to poke fire at us at every small thing, they forgot to look at the big picture. We are here to look at the big picture, Madam Speaker.

(Acclamation)

That is why FijiFirst is responsive to the needs of everyday Fijians, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, therefore, I would like to just end with one very simple note, which kind of exemplifies what the Opposition represents. They talk to us and they say, “You must have more accountability, money is being spent without any proper control”, and then when we put things under ‘R’, they say, ‘why are you putting it under ‘R’? That is precisely what ‘R’ does.

(Laughter)

If the Honourable Minister for Agriculture is given \$5 million to build a plant in Kavanagasau, we check whether they have spent the money properly,

(Chorus of Interjections)

The next payment can come, the Honourable Minister of Finance then approves. That is what happens. They need to refer to the Estimates, that explains what the ‘R’ is.

Madam Speaker, I recommend this Budget to this august House.

(Acclamation)

(Chorus of interjections)

(Laughter)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you Honourable Members. Pursuant to Standing Order 99(3), the 2016 Appropriation Bill 2015, (Bill No. 23 of 2015) has now been read a second time and without any question being put, the Bill and the Estimates now stand referred to the Committee of Supply.

We have finished the Second Reading of the Appropriation Bill. Although the business from our *Order Paper* today is concluded as specified in the Resolution of Parliament on Monday 16th November, 2015, we will proceed into the next item of business scheduled for tomorrow.

Now the Parliament will form the Committee of Supply to consider each Head in the Budget Estimates. This process is envisaged to be completed on Thursday evening and then the Committee of Supply will vote on the Schedules and Clauses of the 2016 Appropriation Bill, 2015.

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 the 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 move an amendment, the debate will then be on the Head and the amendment. At the end of the debate, amendment or amendments will be voted on first and then followed by a vote on the Head.

Please be reminded that amendments in the Committee of Supply are limited to those permitted in Standing Order 100(2). This is either an increase, a decrease or remove 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. There are Heads 1– 52 which we need to get through and therefore I will be vigilant and order Members to cease speaking if I feel the rule for the Committee process is being breached.

Honourable Members, I ask for your cooperation.

In Committee:

Head No. 1 – Office of the President

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments. The Parliament will now vote on Head No. 1. The question is that the amount on Head No. 1 – Office of the President be approved? Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Since no one opposes, therefore the Head is agreed to.

HON RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- SEG 1-1-1, how many established staff are being budgeted for? SEG. 3, why is there a separate allocation for Travel - \$77,500 and Overseas Travel - \$100,000? SEG 3- Travel and Telecommunication expenses warrants an approximate \$40,000 increase from 2015 allocation. On SEG 1, Programme 1 and Activity 1, how many established staffs are being budgeted for?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There is a debate on this and Members have to stand up if you have something to contribute and you are proposing an amendment, we would rather that you write that amendment on paper before we can debate on it.

HON RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No, just a question.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are you seeking clarification from Government?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are you aware of what the clarifications are?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, as has been highlighted previously that the staff numbers are no longer the domain of the Ministry of Finance.

Yes, there are general guidelines that have been given, but it is up to the various ministries and the permanent secretaries to work within the budget itself. So they have been allocated \$649,006 and they need to work within that budget. So, whether they employ five people or whether they employ seven people, they need to work within the budget.

In the same way, Madam Chair, as the political parties have been given their budget, they need to appoint their own staff members, that is their domain. Similarly, we have that case with the respective ministries and of course now with the Office of the President. In respect of the travel numbers...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Sorry, Madam Chair, we are still on SEG 1, you have still not answered that. How many?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, I cannot answer that because we give them an envelope of money and it is up to them to select how many staff they want. That is how it is done.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No, that is not done like that, Madam Chair.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, again the Honourable Member has not moved on with the time. We did that last year but unfortunately you were not here so you would not know.

Last year, we similarly if you recall and I know in your time in government that they use to have the numbers here. We no longer do that. The fact is that we have an envelope. When we have the discussions, Madam Chair with the respective ministries, they do come and make some budgetary submissions in terms of increasing numbers, et cetera. But to give them that independence, we allocate them a sum of money and it is up to them to decide, and should be wrong for me to say, well next year from 2016 they will have 15 people, they might actually decide they only want 13 people that is how it works Madam Chair. So that is the clarification and that is the answer.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. I just would like to remind Honourable Members as I had mentioned that today is really restricted to either you want an increase or decrease or removal of the item in the sub-head and that is it. If we are to clarify on all these sub-heads that it is going to take a long time.

You heard the clarification, what is your question. Please stand up.

HON RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Sorry, my apologies, Madam Chair. The reason why we ask, first to determine the next question, so we need that information if it is answered well then we do not need to raise or reduce. That is why it is important that we ask that Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you any other comments?

HON. RO. T.V. KEP.A.- Thank you. In regards to that question as the Honourable Minister of Finance said, they are given an envelope. Are these staff members civil servants or casuals or what in that regard?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, SEG 2, Honourable Leader of the Opposition these are casuals. Casuals do not go into SEG 1, casuals go into SEG 2.

HON. RO T.V. KEP.A.- In that regard, are these Established Staff civil servants?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, any other comments.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you Madam Chair. Still on SEG 1 and also on SEG 2, in terms of the numbers, how does the Honourable Minister of Finance ensure transparency and accountability when we do not have the numbers? When we do not know. How we are going to account for that money when we do not have a number to guide in the recruitment?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I think that is a fair enough question Madam Chair, the reality is that we have merit based appointments. They have to have the staff board meetings and minutes available when the Auditor General does go and carry out its Audit. So, that is the checks and balances and of course they have to go through the Government system because they were paid by Government and that is the guidance.

If you recall Honourable Member that one of the part of the Civil Service Reform is also the review of the salaries. We are looking at whether people's salaries need to be increased, in particular for certain positions as we have stated earlier on when we discussed civil servant salaries. We believe in that certain positions, salaries need to increase and not just specifically in this particular Head, but if you look at, in particular say, Ministry of Agriculture, look at the Medical, if you look at Local Government, Education, there are certain positions in Industry and Trade where we are actually losing people out to the private sector or losing them to regional organisations.

So, there needs to be a general benchmarking in terms of the salary, so this is why I am saying we cannot give the specific amounts but those are the checks and balances. Just for your information, this year, they had 24 positions, unestablished was 15. So, I cannot tell you how much will be for next year.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, just a point of clarification from the Honourable Minister of Finance. This year, they have 24 staff with 15 casuals. Can you also give an organisational structure of what are the hierarchy of positions in there so that we can actually break down into the cost of how much? Are they changing structures as they are going along on what other structures that suits them as we go along? Or next year they might change structure again.

HON. B. SINGH.- The Minister of Finance very quickly answered that question and it seems an irrelevant question, irrelevant now.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Why are you asking that question; are you proposing to increase, decrease or approve what has been apprehend?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, it comes down to transparency. When you budget, or given allocation for a particular budget, we talk about a structure with the post that are there and the hierarchy, then we can establish the amount that is allocated and whether this amount will increase next year, which means the structure will have to change.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Let us not talk about structure. Structure is there of course but let us talk about increase or decrease or retain this budget. Let us be very focused in the debate today.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, this is for clarification to the Honourable Member. If you look at this year's amount, that is there, \$649.6, next year they will be given the same amount. So, there is no change in the overall amount. If you look at 2014, which the estimates shows on page 12, they actually had \$538.7, so 2015 it went up to \$649.6, but the same amount will carry on next year.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Dr Biman Prasad.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, just a quick point. I agree with the Honourable Minister of Finance that there has to be some flexibility with respect to how much people might be paid and there might be other variances on how to keep people but I think it might still be an idea for future budgets that we establish numbers. We have an estimate of what the numbers in a particular Ministry or Department oath to be. The other flexibility I think can come with that allocation as well. Perhaps, for next year I think they might want to consider that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I think we have enough comments and we can now vote Head No. 1, does any member oppose?

Question put.

Head 1 agreed to.

Head 2: Office of the Prime Minister

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Could the Honourable Minister explain why there is a substantive increase of \$1.159,900 in the Travel and Communications budget?

SEG 3, can the Honourable Minister further clarify whether the allocation for overseas travel for the Prime Minister of \$1.5 million will also include all other related travel expenses accommodation, meals, body guards et cetera?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I thank the Honourable Member for that question.

Travel obviously in SEG 3 does relate to internal travel within Fiji, as you know, we probably have the only Prime Minister in Fiji's history who travels so much internally and have been to all corners of Fiji, that takes care of that expense.

Overseas travels for the Prime Minister involves all his expenses pertaining to air fares and various other costs that relate to overseas travel. As you also know the Prime Minister has travelled quite significantly last year and this year. What we have found, Madam Chair, is that because of the travel commitments of the Prime Minister, they had to vire from within, so they get it from various other SEGs. So, in order to have proper transparency, we have actually put in an increase in a realistic amount that sets out at about \$1.5 million set aside for his overseas travel.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 2 of the Office of the Prime Minister be decreased by \$700,000 in respect of overseas travel. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Could you fill that form, please?

We shall debate on that, our proposal and the amendment by Salote Radrodro that Head 2 to be decreased by \$700,000 in respect of SEG 3. SEG 3 is Travel and Communications. That amendment is open for debate, if any.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, does the mover of the motion actually give reasons or do we just speak out regarding it?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- If you like you can question them.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I do not want to trouble the Honourable Member and ask her why, but the Travel Expenses have been allocated because of the travel expenses of the Prime Minister. He is very much in demand, as you know by many countries. Madam Chair, I believe that the amount allocated obviously has been dealt with quite vigorously in terms of ascertaining what would be the actual cost and we believe that the \$1.5 million needs to stay.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Anyone else would like to speak on that amendment?

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Chair, I think one of the reasons for putting up this motion is that, there has been concern that the Prime Minister travels too much and is not in the country, as much as he should be. In fact, it was raised the other day that this is the second year in a row that the Prime Minister is not here to hear the debate of the Budget because the other side, Madam Chair, they make a big fuss when we protest and do not attend things on principle; we do not attend a farewell party and we are accused on all sorts of things. Here, Madam Chair, we are just enabling the Honourable Prime Minister who is elected by the people of this country to be in this country. His Minister of Foreign Affairs can travel everywhere. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other comments?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Chair, let me say that there is a need for our Head of Government to travel. For some meetings, only the Head of Government can attend, not even Ministers, as you know Madam Chair. The one that he is taking right now, as Minister for Sugar, he is attending the ISO in London and then he is the chief guest of the ACP Council of Ministers Meetings on the 24th of this month. From there he goes on to CHOGRAM in Malta, that is the Head of Government. Then into Paris, as Head of the Fiji Delegation to the COP Climate Change Summit. So other meeting Madam Chair, I can assure you and also assure the Honourable Member that it is necessary for the Prime Minister to travel.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other comments?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Honourable Chair, very well said by the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs but we are dealing with administration here, and logistics and figures then where is the detail? Can you just feed us with that please?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Honourable Chair, in a normal budget this, there is really no need for details. I can assure you, other past budgets, no detail for travels, just a lump sum.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- As Minister of Finance, I would like to be questioned, but I fail to see the logic and Honourable Draunidalo is saying that if we reduce the budget, therefore he will travel less. He has got nothing to do with that. What we are trying to do is address a particular issue and that is to see how much money we allocate for a particular expense under a particular SEG. Just by reducing the budget does not mean he will not travel to Heads of Government meetings, they will have to vire from some other SEGs. This creates more transparency. If the money is not utilised, the \$1.5million goes unutilised but the reality is that, by having specific sum then you will see throughout the budget, Madam Chair.

We will give more details and the right amount of allocation, for example the Minister for Health, nearly every year used to overspend the allocation on amount of money allocated for oxygen. This year the amount of money allocated for oxygen has been increased because what they used to do was they vired it from somewhere else. What we are saying to the respective Ministries, you do not vire from somewhere else, you use what has been given to you and we will give you the right amount and that is specifically what is being done here.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, I think the motion was intending to portray was the reduction in the allocation of \$700,000. As compared to last year, it was 1.02, total amount allocated on this SEG, an increase of 1.159 that was provided for in 2016. So we are proposing the motion is just to basically reduce the allocation of 1.52 by \$700,000.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments on the other SEGs of Head 2?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, the last one, we were taken for a ride and we lost all SEGs that we want to actually emphasise. Now, can you please clarify that we are voting only for that particular motion because we have two sets of SEG 4, two sets of SEG 5 and three sets of SEG 10. So we are voting for each SEGs now as we raise it. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We have information on the recommendation for the reduction in SEG 3, but we will go to the votes when we have completed all comments that would be made on the other SEGS. Then we start voting on all each SEG before we vote on the Head.

Any other comments?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes, Madam Chair. SEG 4, would the Honourable Minister explain the purpose of allocating \$180,000 for spare parts and maintenance and whether there is a whole of Government vehicle leasing arrangement in place, and if there is arrangement, does it include the provision of spare parts and maintenance?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, if I could explain that. Obviously, there is Government leasing but there are still some vehicles that are not leased, we have bought. So they are still within the system and that is the allocation being made for that. There are still some vehicles that are actually bought previously.

HON. MEMBER.- In Prime Minister's Office?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, in all over the place.

This is why the spare parts and maintenance is being allocated for that. You will find that in all the Ministries, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture still has some vehicles that are quite old that were bought previously. So we are slowly phasing them out and this is why you will see in most of the Ministries spare parts and maintenance being allocated. Some will have less, some of course will have more because the bigger pool of vehicles that are actually owned.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any comments on any other SEGS?

Thank you, there being none, we will start voting then on SEG 3 that has been proposed?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Sorry Madam Chair, another SEG 4 would the Honourable Minister please detail the scope of the office on the allocation of \$60,000, 2015, this year it was \$40,000?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, as you know, the Prime Minister's Office occupies a very old building. In fact, when it was built in the 70s, it was not built very well for those of you who have been there. Some of the floors have been upgraded, some of the others have not, but as you also know that we are looking at relocating the premises. It does not mean that just because the allocations has been made or the entire sum of the money would be used for that particular SEG. So this is why we have made that allocation, just in case.

There was a case at one stage, where they have found some asbestos like material and that had to be obviously fixed up at some stage. Now they have certain sections where it is leaking, so they need to continue to occupy the building and therefore, in the meantime, the need to be able to pay for the upkeep and maintenance of the particular building.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other comments?

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- On SEG 5 Madam Chair, Could the Honourable Minister explain why there is a dramatic increase of \$100,000 for the expenses of board and committees? The allocation last year was \$1000.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, this essentially is to fund the meeting expenses which are hosted by the Prime Minister, the Permanent Secretary and other Committee meetings organised by the Office of the Prime Minister. This, of course, includes things like stationery and printing, refreshments when you have various Boards and Committees, for example, the Rabi Council, Rotuma Council and the Kioa Council that actually falls within the Office of the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister does host them. These are the kind of expenses that falls within that.

Again, Madam Chair, the point is that some of these expenses, the allocations that were made previously were not adequate enough. So they would try and vire from other areas, and we are giving specific allocations for that so they do not actually go ahead and vire. I think maybe I do not know whether the Public Accounts Committee has looked at that issue but viring from within the particular ministry, in fact for some ministries, it was a more the trend as opposed to the exception, and we want to stop that. We want to say “if we are going to give you \$50,000 for having meetings, you must stay within that, do not try and take if from somewhere else” that is the reason why some of these areas you will see an increase in the allocation.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair, the increase is maybe too much from \$1,000 to \$100,000, why cannot just you level it up to \$50,000?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, do you have the justification for that exact figure to \$50,000?

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- No, Madam Chair, I am just saying here that the increase from \$1,000 straight to \$100,000 is too much. Why cannot we just leave it up to \$50,000 for the time being?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I do not think that I will allow further comments on that because as has been agreed, these figures had been based on the experiences of last year and the number of meetings that have been held. Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, still on that because what the Honourable Nanovo had raised was very important because if we are basing on last year’s amount it was \$1,000. This year’s budgeted allocation is \$100,000 that is the big move but according to the reply from the Honourable Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications has said because of the meetings of other Rabi Councils and other councils that have come under the Prime Minister’s Office but it could have better if those meetings and all those Committees and Boards are specifically detailed and we know and we can ascertain and substantiate the increase that is there and that is the important part.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, I do not think the issue is really relevant because it has been mentioned that it has been based on 2015 Budget Allocation. These figures, and has had been mentioned, there was a lot of virement of funds within their Appropriation Allocation for the Prime Minister’s Office to cater for the increase in the number of meetings.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, just one other point which I also overlooked to mention and draw to the Honourable Member’s attention is if you look at

Programme 1, Activity 2, under the Prime Minister's Office, the Implementation Coordinating Core Office (ICCO) no longer exists.

If you see, some of the amounts that have been there in fact has been shifted to the Prime Minister's Office. The ICCO it was called. There were two functions of it, one of them was to essentially go out to do what we call the Charter work Community Outreach meetings that they had, to go in particular to rural and maritime areas.

The other function it had was the oversight and assessment of the Annual Corporate Plans that the different ministries have and they actually went out to assess that with the respective ministries. That is, you would have heard in my Budget Address that that no longer existed and that function of assessing corporate plans and also looking at capital utilisation has been more rightly moved to National Planning.

This National Planning, as you know, will have the development plans. So rather than having one sitting in Prime Minister's Office, one in National Planning and one somewhere else. To do different assessments, you will find that Permanent Secretaries tend to be writing reports every month. We do not do that. It used to be a centralising agency so this is why IOC has been broken up in that sense so the Charter work, the outreach work has also gone up to Programme 1, Activity 1, thus, you will see some increases that have taken place in there and the other functions of course has gone to National Planning. This is why you see that increase in the amount.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Is there any other comments on any other SEGs?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 10. Can the Honourable Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service Commission and Communications advise why the Small Grants Project allocation of \$7 million is not under Requisition?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, small grants by its very definition is a small grant. So you will see, for example, some of the grants are being given. You may find, for example, the projects may be worth \$20,000 to \$25,000 and these are the small amounts of money that the Prime Minister's Office deals within in providing various community projects.

They are not a large projects as you see most of the expenses that are under "R" are either new expenses incurred or they are large projects that used to be kept under "R". So because of the very nature that you have, for example, may be two water tanks given to a school and may come under the Small Grants Projects, that is why it is not under "R". I can tell you for this year, so far, the utilisation rate of the Small Grants Scheme has been fully committed of \$5.3 million already. We have a balance of \$1.6 million, that is actually going to some water reticulation projects in the Western and the Northern Divisions, that will be almost fully utilised.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, Supplementary to SEG 10, could the Honourable Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communication please explain why the \$200,000 allocation to the NGO Funds for the Education of Needed Children (FENC) has continued to be funded ever since the 2012 Budget for the Prime Minister's Office?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I think the explanation is quite simple in the same way why the Prime Minister's Office got control of the Rabi Council and Kioa Council. The reason why it was with the Prime Minister's Office is because it was the Honourable Prime Minister's own initiative, he started it and these are, Madam Chair, comments before the free education and we are identifying low income people who were given assistance

but now of course we have got tuition fees all paid, free education. Now FENC is identifying poor families, where they give them things like shoes, school books and stationeries for people who cannot afford it.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, a supplementary question to that. Would the Honourable Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communication please assure this House that FENC Annual Reports from 2012 to 2015 are presented to this august House as soon as possible?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I do not know whether this is the time to give such assurances because the point is that, we are voting on the Budget and the amount. Please bring that up and I will of course find out what is happening there, but this is not the time and place to do that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other comments? We shall now vote on the amendment that is before the House. The question is, that Head 2 be decreased by \$700,000 in respect of SEG 3?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, in relation to SEG 10, I move the motion that pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 2, Small Grants Project be taken out of Head 2?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. We now have the correct wording for these amendments. We will vote on two amendments, and the first one is....

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- We have 2.2.1, also to address before the Head is voted for.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are you proposing an amendment?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes, Madam.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You may take the floor.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- The general question, can the Honourable Minister advise how the Cabinet Office will promote the release of Government information in order to make the work of Government more transparent and un extendable as stated in the Supplement for the Estimates as Cabinet updates to the media and public has not been done for a number of years now?

On SEG 4, would the Honourable Minister explain the purpose of allocating \$11,000 for spare parts and maintenance where there is an old Government vehicle leasing arrangement in place, and if this arrangement includes the provision of spare parts and maintenance?

On SEG 7 of the last Head 2, can the Honourable Minister detail the \$100,000 allocation for ex-PMs and its use as it is a recurring feature in this SEG from as far back as the 2007 Budget?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister, please, if you can just clarify what is involved in this process?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I will start with the ex-Prime Ministers' benefits. That has always been there, the benefits that are paid out to the ex-Prime Ministers. As you know, under the particular Act, they get their pensions which they are entitled to. They also, as we draw to the attention of this House some time back, under the various specific law, they are

entitled to various other benefits, say for example, if they, from memory, hire staff, have telephone expenses and send that across, this is what it captures there for the ex-Prime Ministers benefits.

The other point about the spare parts and maintenance again, Madam Chair, is to do with vehicles, if it is in the particular Cabinet Office, that expense would be for that particular vehicle and spare parts as related to that.

The third question which is the first that the Honourable Member is asking, I lost you or you lost me?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Can the Honourable Minister detail the \$100,000 allocation from ex-PMs and its use?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, the first one.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- The first general question; can the Honourable Minister advise how the Cabinet Office will promote the release of Government information in order to make the work of Government more transparent and understandable, as stated in the Supplement to the Estimates as Cabinet updates to the media and the public has not been done for the number of years now?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, as you know, all Cabinet documents are secret, that has always been provided for under the law.

Madam Chair, the Cabinet does release and make press statements on various Cabinet decisions that are made, not all of them. It depends on what Cabinet decides to release at that particular point in time and that information is made available to the members of the public. Of course, the overall law that will be coming into effect, and I know that the Honourable Karavaki has spoken about in the debate about the Code of Conduct, the Accountability and Transparency Commission, that needs to come into effect through a Code of Conduct.

Madam Chair, for the Honourable Members on the other side and just for information, the 1997 Constitution also had a provision for Code of Conduct. The SVT Government neither the short-lived Labour Government nor the SDL Government saw it fit to put in place a Code of Conduct. We are doing that, yes, we have slow on it not because we are not drafting, we are trying to get it right.

We have sought assistance from the UNDP regarding freedom of information and also on the Code of Conduct, and I can assure this House that those two Bills will be tabled in Parliament in February of next year during its first sitting in the new calendar year, so in terms of access to information, Honourable Members, to the public of the Government processes, it will be done through the freedom of information.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

We will now vote on just the two amendments that have been proposed and the first amendment, the question is that, Head 2 be decreased by \$700,000 in respect of SEG 3? Parliament will now vote.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	29

Proposed amendment defeated.

We will move on to the second amendment. The question is, that Head 2, SEG 10, Small Grants Project be left out of Head 2?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	29

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Parliament will now vote on Head No. 2. The question is, that the amount of Head No. 2 for the Office of the Prime Minister be approved. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Chair, before we vote on Head No. 2, there was another general question asked that was not dealt with and that is, if the Honourable Minister could advise how the Cabinet Office will promote the release of Government information?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will not go back to that because it has been voted already, that is only clarification anyway and it was clarified.

Parliament will now vote on Head No. 2. The question is, that the amount of Head No. 2 on the Office of the Prime Minister be approved. Does any Member oppose the motion?

Question put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	14
Not Voted	:	5

Head 2 agreed to.

Head 3 – Office of the Attorney-General

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments, if any. Honourable Bulitavu, you have the floor.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chairperson, it will be painful and it will take long, but we have to go slowly.

On SEG 1-3-1, can the Honourable and learned Attorney General advise why it costs \$3.6 million when previous Budget Estimates clearly and consistently show an underspent in actual expenditure?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, yes that allocation has been made because we have various position that need to be filled, we want to fill them with competent lawyers. We are in search of competent lawyers and as we slowly get them, we do fill up those positions.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other?

HON.J. DULAKIVERATA:- Madam Chairperson, supplementary to SEG 1, what are the allowances of \$55,000 for?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, these allowances are for staff, for example who gets posted to Lautoka and Labasa, we have Attorney General's Offices in those places. So, we have for example, sometimes we pay for the quarters or they may get to higher private residences and we make allowances for them there.

HON.J. DULAKIVERATA:- Madam Chairperson, Standing Order 100 (2), I move without notice that Head 3 - Office of the Attorney General be decreased by \$300,000 in respect of Established staff?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you have any comments on other SEGs?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chairperson, can the Honourable Minister of Finance and the Attorney-General explain the justification of this increase whether there are going to be any additional posts created, and just for the hiring of competent lawyers. I am sure the competent lawyers are already there, and I understand if the same salary will be given to those that are there and to those that will come, if there is no additional post that are to be filled, then there is no justification for this increase.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Just for clarification Honourable Member, there is no increase, the amount of money we are getting this year, is the same amount of money we getting next year, there is no increase.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chairperson, can I clarify that. The Attorney-General explained why there is \$19,000 increase in SEG 2 from 2015 Estimates and how many additional Government Wages Earners would be recipients of this increase?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, there are various positions that need to be filled under General Administration for Government Wage Earners, and whether they are drivers, whether they are more secretaries et cetera, that needs to be done because we are actually expanding. When you hire more lawyers, you need more support staff. So that is why we have a commensurate increase in actual casual or wage earners. So, if you, for example are going to hire another five more lawyers, then you may need at least one person who may need to do the typing et cetera, you are getting more lawyers you may need more drivers, so these are the kind of reasons why we have an increase in the Government Wage Earners.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you that been clarified, any other comments?

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- SEG 4, would the Attorney-General and Minister of Finance explain why there is an increase of \$50,000 on Power Supply for 2016 when the allocation was \$120,000 this year?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, again, the Honourable Member must also realise that you also have the various Government offices that we do operate. For example, you have the increase of various office provisions of the respective Attorney General Offices. Again, like with the other Ministries, Madam Chairperson, we have had instances where you have viring taking place from the different expenditures that have been given for us to be able to meet those expenses, so this is why that increase had been put in place.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.-Any other comments? There being none, thank you. There is only one amendment that has been proposed.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- SEG 5, can the Honourable Attorney-General assure this House that any savings from continuing legal education for the Attorney-General's Annual Conference will abide by the Finance Manual, Part 15?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, again I would like to raise the point we are here to debate figures, I am not here to give any undertakings. We can give undertakings in respect of any of the amounts that are shown in here and then we will discuss with that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you,

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chairperson, I move a motion pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), without notice, the Head 3 – Office of the Attorney-General be decreased by \$100,000 in respect of Continuing Legal Education

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- SEG 5 not SEG 3.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- SEG 5 - any other comment on any other SEGs apart from that.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chairperson, SEG 5 – what is the difference in expenditures for drafting of law allocated for \$500,000 and Legal Expert Expenses allocated for \$400,000?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, drafting of laws as it states is drafting of laws, we hope to get more expert legal drafts people within the chambers as we highlighted previously that we will be getting lot more Bills next year. Some of the areas are very specialised and there is an allocation made for that specifically.

Legal Expert Expenses, there are obviously sometimes that we have complicated transaction that do take place, and we need for example outside lawyers to have that input, for example do complicated contracts and we need people in the Solicitor General's Office who are able to deal with that, that is why those expenses are actually separated to show one is specifically for drafting, and the other one is for the staff legal expenses, you will actually see similarly in the DPP's Office allocation. You will see that they have an expense specifically for legal consultants, so for example if they want to bring a QC from outside the country, then they are actually funded from that particular SEG in that allocation made under that SEG.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any other comments.

HON. RATU. K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, I move a motion pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice the Head 3, Office of the Attorney be decreased by \$300,000 in respect of Legal Experts expenses

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. While that proposal for an amendment is being written down on the form. Are there any other comments?

HON. RATU. I D. TIKOCA.- SEG 5 Supplementary. What is the Constitutional Service Commission? There is no such legal term, only a Constitutional Offices Commission. The motion is to amend this allocation.

Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 3, Office of the Attorney General be decreased by \$50,000 in respect of Constitutional Service Commission. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- While that is being regularised, any other comments?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I would like to actually speak on that. I would like to thank the Honourable Member for drawing our attention to the typographical error. It is actually the Constitutional Offices Commission. As you will find, there is one way of getting the allocation to Lautoka, then we will send it to Ba to the Local Government. So this is actually Constitutional Offices Commission.

As you know Madam Chair, in this year's Budget, there was no specific allocation made for the Constitutional Offices Commission. Therefore, we are now setting up a separate expense for Constitution Office Commission. The funding and whatever of the running of the meetings of the Constitutional Offices Commission was in fact funded through the Solicitor General's Office and we have to draw to a demarcation, we have that.

Madam Chair, if the Honourable Members still wants to go ahead with his amendment, he can but I also like to move an amendment. My amendment is that for that to actually read "Constitutional Offices Commission". That will be silly, you do not know the allocation.

(Laughter)

You said to decrease it by \$50,000 and there is no allocation there.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, SEG 6, can the Honourable and learned Attorney General please advise as to why the Legal Commission allocation of \$5 million is under Requisition?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Honourable Member. Madam Chair, you will find that all allocations to the various statutory bodies of Commissions is under "R" for example, the Land Transport Authority (LTA), and Honourable Radrodro would know that if you are allocated \$15 million for the running of the LTA, there is an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is signed between the line Ministry and LTA in which it says they have to do xyz, and upon the various disbursements, et cetera, they need to provide their acquittals and every quarter the money is released. That is why it is under "R".

We simply do not give them the full amount of money, and in this particular case it is \$5 million. They do not get \$5 million. They get it every quarter so it is their job to ensure that they

provide their acquittals and then we give them the money. It is the same for LTA , FIRCA, Legal Aid Commission and various other agencies that we give money to.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair, still on SEG 6, Supplement to the Honourable Minister of Finance. The Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) has continued to be funded from public money since 2013 Budget from the 2015 Budget Estimates and had ceased being under Requisition. Can the Honourable and learned Attorney General pursuant in this House that Annual Reports for MIDA from inception until now are tabled in this House with urgency?

The motion, in addition to that, the motion text is to amend this allocation. Pursuant to Standing Order 100(2) I move without notice that Head 3, Office of the Attorney General be decreased by \$200,000 in respect of the Constitutional Services Commission.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any further comments.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, perhaps, it is a statement for clarification there. The allocation of \$450,000 for Law Revision which is in SEG 7, it seems like an overlap with the allocation in SEG 5 for drafting of laws, estimated at \$500,000 and a clarification needed on the legal expatriate expenses, estimated at \$400,000. Can the Honourable and learned Attorney General please advise the House as to the differences in these three allocations?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I have explained the first two, which is the Legal experts and the drafting.

The Law Reform Commission is a separate expense that looks at the existing laws and they make recommendations regarding any possible amendments to existing laws. It does not come from Government *per se*. You might recall Honourable Member that a few years ago, the Law Reform Commission provided a proposal to amend, for example, laws pertaining to the Penal Code, including things like prostitution, they make various amendments in terms of paedophilia, and as you know, many of those recommendations were in fact included in the Crimes Decree. The Law Reform Commission work also carries out the consolidation of the Laws of Fiji. It should be up-to-date right up to 31st December, 2015.

Madam Chair, I would also like to inform this august House that the Law Reform Commission at the moment is actually carrying out (and we are glad to say that we have teamed up with Lexes Nexus) since 1985, which is after 30 years, the Laws of Fiji will be consolidated. That we hope to table in Parliament in February in a lot more and usual friendly manner, it will be under the subject heading and it will also be available on line. It will make a lot easier and hopefully we can have all the laws consolidated and put here on this desk, on this table here in front of the Secretary-General. So the Law Reform Commission's work also carries out the consolidation of the Laws of Fiji and it will be up-to-date right up to 31st December, 2015.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, SEG 7 - Supplementary. Can the Honourable and learned Attorney General please advise the House, what the review of Land Lease arrangement allocation of \$200,000 is as neither was it mentioned in the Budget Address nor was it made clear in the Budget Estimates?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I did announce it in the Budget Address. We had allocated as you know, half a million dollars and you will see that in Head 50, where the

Honourable Prime Minister had also made an announcement, the Honourable Minister for Lands had also alluded to it and the Honourable Minister for Agriculture also for example people who cannot pay for their leases, they are actually in abject poverty and they will be booted out of the land that they are leasing. So Government has made an allocation, together with iTLTB, to be able to see how we can assist these people and providing a way of funding for that.

This particular issue of reviewing of land lease arrangements covers that particular legal aspect to look at it and how we can sort out if there are any legal issues.

Madam Chair, also, there are number of legal issues that have arisen, where for example *iTaukei* landowners have said that iTLTB in the past or currently some of the officers for example in Vanua Levu or in the West (that is where most of these things occur) where some iTLTB officers actually go off and say that the consent has been obtained and this is the Agreement to Lease.

We need to address this issue, and this is nothing to do with Civil. Civil is totally different, it is agriculture. This is to do with administrative decisions that have been made by iTLTB that may not have necessarily been legally correct and that is why they need to be addressed.

As you would know Honourable Bulitavu, because you have more qualifications with some of the other Members sitting next to you, these are some of the real issues that are faced by the landowners and on the other flip side also, we have found issues where sometimes iTLTB officers in particular, in the Western and Northern Divisions get possible tenants or prospective tenants to apply for the same land about 50 to 60 times and collect the fees, and then carry them along for the next two to three years and get them to have a conflict. This is what this allocation is for, to try to resolve those issues. It then creates certainty both the landowners side and also for the prospective lessees.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- SEG 7 – Supplementary, Madam Chair. Can the Honourable and learned Attorney-General advise as to why the legal aspects of Climate Change allocation of \$50,000 under Requisition sits here, rather than in the Strategic Planning Office in the Ministry of Finance, that is now supposed to coordinate all aspects of Climate Change for Government as stated in the Budget Address?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, honourable Member. As the name suggests, it is legal aspects, the National Planning essentially is going to coordinate all matters pertaining to Climate Change mitigation and also the reporting of it. There are certain legal aspects that arise, and as you can see, it is a very low amount that has been allocated.

We recently had, for example, discussions with the Ambassador from Netherlands where, for example, countries like Bangladesh have a lot of their land that is very flat. With the sea level rise only a few inches, like in Bangladesh's case, 17 per cent of the land will go under water. Similarly, we have Tuvalu and Kiribati. Now, one of those countries has bought freehold land in Vanua Levu, and what they are saying is, for example, that if they go under water, we have said that they can come and stay in Fiji, but there are obviously various legal aspects to it. What happens to things like citizenship? What happens to things like territoriality if half of your country is under water? What will happen to your economic zone, do you exist as a nation? This is a very small amount. We are looking at working with different countries that specialise in this, and in fact, some of the issues that we have identified, they have not thought about it

themselves. We are trying to create therefore, in Fiji a Centre, not Centre as in physically centre, but in terms of the thought processes related to the legal issues of Climate Change. That is what this allocation is for.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further clarifications needed? No? Thank you. We will now vote on the amendments that have been proposed.

Parliament will vote on the amendments in the name of Honourable Dulakiverata. The question is, that Head 3-1-1 be decreased by \$300,000 in respect of SEG 1?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	:	14
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	5

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Second amendment. Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Ratu Kiliviliame Kiliraki.

The question is, that Head 3 be decreased by \$300,000 in respect of SEG 3(1)(1), Part 5?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:-	4

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will now move on to the next one. Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo. The question is, that Head 3 be decreased by \$200,000 in respect of SEG 6?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	4

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will move on to the last of the amendments. Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca. The question is, that Head 3 be decreased by \$100,000 in respect of SEG 5.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	-	15
Noes	-	29
Not Voted	-	4

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 3. The question is, that the amount of Head 3, Office of the Attorney-General be approved?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- We need to touch on SEG 5, SEG 6, and SEG 10 of Head 3-2-1. The one we have just touched on is Head 3-1-1.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There has been a clarification now. We had completed the discussions on Head 3-1-1, and we will now go onto Head 3-2-1, of the same Head - Attorney-General's.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, as long as the Honourable Members are on the same page, I assume that that has already taken for granted in Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5, that is Constitutional Offices Commission. That can be read as Constitutional Offices Commission and not Constitutional Services Commission. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do you have any comments on Head 3-2-1?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes, Madam Chair, on SEG 5. We note the provision of \$100,000 for Consultancy for both 2015 and 2016, with \$200,000 allocation in 2014. Can the Honourable Minister indicate what measures have been taken to ensure technical competency within the organisation or locally? The Supplement that goes with that was, 'The budget provision for Consultancy fully utilised in 2015'. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. The Consultancy is actually there because, if for example, there is an airplane crash. In Fiji, we do not have people within the Ministry of Civil Aviation, let alone many in the private sector, who can actually carry out a proper assessment of an aircraft crash. This is why that allocation is made specifically. We are hoping that it never gets utilised. If it gets utilised, that means there has been a crash.

We had an incident about two or three years ago, I stand to be corrected on the exact year, but there was one plane that had winged off and hit one of its wings. We had to hire someone to find out exactly what had happened. That person needs to be independent, and we need to pay them for that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further clarification?

HON. J. DULAKIVEERATA.- Madam Chair, SEG 6, we note the increase in Domestic Air Services Subsidy, bringing to a total of \$21.9 million. Can the Honourable and learned

Attorney-General advise how taxpayers will be able to assess how their funds are being utilised to help citizens of this non-commercially viable routes, in terms of flight regularity and numbers of passengers assisted?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, if I can understand the question, you want details on the subsidy?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There was a question that was asked of me some months back about the subsidy. I think Honourable Radrodro had asked the question, and we had answered that question in respect of which were the airlines, how they are subsidised and what this will go towards.

I also had highlighted earlier on in the Budget Address that the airfares of some of that has also come down, so that is how it works. We call for tenders at the beginning of every year and we have, as you can see, we have allocated more money so it provides a better pricing for them.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you any further clarification? Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, SEG 10 still on Head 3.2.1 in the Budget Estimates. The question is, Madam Chair, just to clarify to the Honourable Minister in the Budget Estimates the details of expenditure does not list the details relating TO SEG 10 that is why it is not there – page 23 is not there. Yet in the Appropriate Authority 2016 Statement on page 3 of the Estimates it list the schedule that the \$18 million marketing support to Fiji Airways will sit under 3.2.1, SEG 10 – Civil Aviation under Requisition. Concurrently, the \$18 million marketing support for Fiji Airways (it is at Head 50 under 51.1.10).

Can the Honourable and learned Attorney General tell this House which is the accurate reflection of this \$18 million allocation? Does it sit under Civil Aviation or under Head 50? There is a confusion that is why you were confused when I started with SEG 10.

I also move Madam Chair, that pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 3 - Office of the Auditor General be decreased by \$18 million in respect of marketing support for Fiji Airways?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, if I can just get clarification. Honourable Member, you were saying in the Estimate Supplement it appears on page?

HON. M. BULITAVU.- Page 3 of the Estimates.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, which book?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Page 3 of the Estimates.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I can clarify that as far as the proper Estimates is concerned and just for the Honourable Member this is the Budget Estimates. This is the book that we are voting on, this one. Now in this book, which is the actual Estimate that we are voting on does not have the SEG 10 and it has the \$18 million in Head 50, so we cannot be voting on Head 50 now because we are dealing with Head 3.

(Chorus of Interjections)

Alright, that is incorrect, page 3 is incorrect it should not read “3.2.1.10”, it should read “Head 50.” But the vote is on Head 3 which does not have the \$10 million but for clarification yes, thank you very much Honourable Bulitavu for pointing that out. *Vinaka*.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other programmes on Programme 3.2.1 Head 3. No further comments, Parliament will now vote on Head No 3, the question is, that the amount of Head No. 3 Office of the Attorney General be approved does any Member oppose the motion?

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	14
Not voted	:	4
Abstain	:	1

Head 3 agreed to.

Head No. 4 – Ministry of Finance.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Head 4, the floor is now open for comments.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, I have a few clarifications and perhaps the Honourable Minister may want to clarify this. SEG 1 in the 2014 Revised Estimates, there is a complement of 29 Established Staff in the General Administration activity. It was estimated to cost taxpayers about \$525,000 it actually went up to \$1.07 million, this increased to an estimate of approximately about \$1.14 million in 2015 and now in 2016, it is estimated to drop to approximately \$998. I am just wondering what is happening there, whether the staff doubled and then reduced, and whether that is the right allocation?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I can assure the House that the drop in the allocation will in no way undermine the workings of the Ministry of Finance.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any further clarifications?

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- On Personal Emoluments, Madam Chair, there is a slight increase from \$1.14 million in 2015 to \$998 in 2016. I am just wondering, in light of the Public Service Reform and obviously the Ministry of Finance will also go under reform. I mean are you envisioning some savings there, that is, why or?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Not necessarily, Madam Chair, this is again the re-alignment. In fact, the Ministry of Finance is one of those ministries that will need a lot of reforms.

As we have already seen, as we had highlighted in the Budget Address we had, for example, the Fiji Procurement Office needs to be completely revamped. We had some Australian consultants, they were here recently. They have done up their reports, there are a number of other processes, including audit that needs to be fixed up. We have a number of people who do not necessarily have all the qualifications that have been in some of these divisions within the Ministry of Finance. So, there will be a major reform.

What we believe at the moment is that the amount of money sufficient to be able to run the ministry. So, in fact the budget allocation overall and in the ministry is proper, it has

decreased from at least in SEG 1, but you see Honourable Member, in SEGs 6 & 10, it has increased regarding the grants that are going to be given to FIRCA.

The reason for that, if I could jump ahead of myself is the fact that we are giving them some money. As you know, we are going to connect a lot of supermarket cash registers directly with FIRCA, and that is very critical.

We need to have real live data, real live sales that FIRCA knows, in particular the supermarkets because all of us in this House I think agree on one thing, that we want to be able to control the price of food and that they should not be over speculation and over pricing on food, which will also help just to do that, and monitor the pricing on that too. So that is why that additional grant money has been allocated to FIRCA, to upgrade their IT systems.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Just following up, if the Honourable Minister could also explain FIRCA's modernisation project, which was last year, I think about \$30 million investment over three years funds were used; \$5 million of which was provided last year; \$10 million this year, I think there was also donor assistance stated last year to fund the balance that was supposed to be secured. I am just wondering if that was secured and what is happening now in terms of the whole project?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I do not have that information now because I am here to debate Head 26, regarding the allocation but I can give the questions put to me next year that can give you all the specific details regarding that, but there is an IT upgrade.

We did get assistance from World Bank/IMF, regarding the actual consultant. So sometimes what they do is, they put the cost of the consultancies in aid-in-kind so they did provide that and we had someone out there that was running that. You know you have ASYCUDA (Automated System for Customs Data), where you have online customs clearance, that has already been partially implemented. That needs to be done, of course there is a lot of costs related to that.

If you see Honourable Member, the capital grant under SEG 10 to FIRCA has been increased by \$5 million, as opposed to this year, they have \$5 million, so another \$5 million and so they are taking \$10 million to cater for both the IT upgrade, the existing work that has been carried out and also we want to be able to have full online lodgement, not just by individuals themselves but also businesses and that is the work in progress.

The additional \$5 million is obviously to also cater for the other new initiatives that we put in place, where we are getting the cash registers to be connected to FIRCA.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further questions on Activity 1?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- SEG 6 – Supplement. Can the Honourable Minister confirm if the capital grant injection of \$10 million for this year to include the technology to connect cash registers to FIRCA is based on a feasibility study assessment and whether they have factored in the indirect cost to their stakeholders, and more importantly to the convenience of customers?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the objective of this is to essentially address two issues. One of that is we know, in particular supermarkets that have cash registers

that are therefore. official records and a couple others are probably unofficial. So, the sales from that do not get captured by the official Government statistics or official FIRCA statistics.

World Bank did a study, as a question asked off me, I think it was in August this year, where they estimated that nearly 33 per cent of our GDP was in the black. In other words about \$2-odd billion is in the black and therefore, the overall loss revenue in tax revenue is about \$700 million, of which about \$250 odd million is lost in VAT.

So, if you see in the budget announcement we made, we have been very conservative. We have not factored in the \$250 million, we have only factored in \$120 million. So, we have been very conservative in that. The reason why we are putting this in is to be able to capture all the cash registers, to be able to ensure that the VAT refunds do get passed out and the VAT collection does get passed on to the consumers. It is in no way going to affect the consumers. It is simply a connection to the cash register. It is like you use your ATM, the banks do all sorts of things at the back that you do not know about it. That is part and parcel of being a good taxpayer, the business houses need to do that so it would not be of any cost to the consumers itself. To the business, that is a part of the cost of running on the business. We have obviously taken the initiative to not ask the businesses to invest in that capital expenditure. We are actually putting it in ourselves.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- SEG 6, Madam Chair, supplementary question. Can the Honourable Minister elucidate on the envisaged returns by way of revenue that this technology will bring?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- SEG 6, Madam Chair, what the Honourable Member looks at is the operating grant, the technology grant Madam Chair, is in SEG 10.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, SEG 6, Supplementary, would the Honourable Minister please assure the House that FIRCA will table updated Annual Reports to this House as FIRCA's website only has Annual Reports up to 2012 and simply to ensure that they too are accountable for public funds?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, FRCA is accountable to public funds.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further clarification on Activity 1?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Just a clarification, Madam Chair. I thank the Honourable Minister of Finance for clarifying those cash registers. The different models of cash registers we have, just to clarify whether there will be a standard cash register that will be used by all the supermarkets or that technology will be connected to the cash registers that they have and at whose cost that will be done?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I have already answered the question.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, the question has already been answered.

There being no further clarification on 411, I think we need a break. Let us break for afternoon tea and we will return at 5.15 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.48 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 5.20 p.m.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you Honourable Member, we will resume from where we left off. We will now look at Programme 1 Activity 2. Do you have any comments on Activity 2. Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chair, SEG 1, in the 2014 Revised Estimates, a complement of 43 established staff in the Accounting and Financial Services division. Activity was estimated to cost taxpayers \$635,000 but it eventually cost around \$1.07 million. This ballooned in 2015 to an estimate of approximately \$1.15 million and remains that figure for 2016. Did the staffing number of established staff doubled then reduced or is this related to those forced retirements of those public servants over 55?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the numbers show that there is an increase this year of over \$117,500 to the budget that was implemented or allocated for this year at \$1036.8. 2014 shows it was \$1078.9, so I do not see a ballooning between 2014 and 2015. There is an increase between 2015 and 2016 of over \$117,000.

HON. P. SINGH.- (Inaudible)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- From 2014 of \$1078.9, I see no ballooning, in fact there was a decrease. What is the question?

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chair, it is SEG 1. In the 2014 Revised Estimate, a complement of 43 staff in the accounting and financial services division. Activity was estimated to cost taxpayers \$635,000 but it eventually cost \$1.07 million. So, in 2015 it sort of ballooned to an estimate of approximately \$1.15 million and it remains that figure for 2016. Did the established staff increase, doubled then reduced or is this related to force retirements, public servants over 55 years?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member I have answered the question.

MADAM CHAIR.- Honourable Members any other comments on the Activity 2?

Let us move on to Activity 3. Honourable Vadei.

HON. A.T.VADEI.- Can the Honourable Minister advise why the grant to the Fiji Service After-Care Fund ballooned from \$5.8 million in 2014, it was then under Requisition to \$8.4 million in 2015 for 6,351 recipients and now with a slight increase to \$8.8 million in 2015 for current recipient numbers 6768 but is not under Requisition?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, these amounts are actually paid to individuals. It cannot be under "R", it is not a capital project. It is for individuals, like people who receive pension, it is not under R, so Madam Chair, for the aid and care of ex-servicemen, it covers wives, widows, children and other dependants who served in World War II, Malayan Campaign and on Christmas Island.

In November 2007, Madam Chair, the After-Care Fund was amended to include the beneficiaries who also served in the active service operations, meaning any peacekeeping, peace

observer or peace enforcement missions undertaken with the United Nations or any other Multi Force or RFMF sanctioned Mission. It includes also people, for example who may have served in Timor-Leste.

Now what it does, apart from their monthly allowances, special grants are also provided to the beneficiaries such as for spectacles, dentures, medication, wheelchair, crutches, walking stick, hearing aid, Ventolin and medical fees. The children of the beneficiaries also receive payments for school items, so these are the areas. This is why it actually expanded from the 6.8 to 8.3. We have got more people now. Obviously, these people do need to be looked after, they have served their country in various shapes and forms and the beneficiaries are also the recipients, that is why it has increased.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any further comments?

Let us move on to Activity 3, thank you.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you Madam Chair. I think similar issues again with respect to staff complements and budgets, varying quite significantly from 2014. I will leave that SEG 1 and SEG 3. I think what is of concern is SEG 4. In 2014, \$15,000 was allocated for stationery and printing. In 2015, \$27,000 was allocated and in 2016, it is kind of estimated to remain the same. Why we are concerned, Madam Chair, and the reason why I am bringing this is, we were told that this year that only 75 copies of *Budget Estimates* and supplements were printed, I mean obviously a lot of people are interested in receiving these documents because they do their own analysis. I remember, when I was at the University, we used to go and purchase it for our own analysis from the Government Printery. So what I would like to suggest, I probably would do a motion, Madam Chair.

Pursuant to Standing Order 100 (2) I move without notice that Head 4 be increased by \$20,000 in respect of stationery and printing because that will allow us to have few more copies printed that the people would have access to and especially us as Members of Parliament, we need some spare copies as well.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, maybe before the Honourable Member puts the motion, if I can clarify to him, the 75 that was the initial printing because in the interest of time, we did the first batch of printing. Others always get printed because the various Government Ministries get it. But for the first time, the entire budget, all the documents (these three documents including the speech) is now on the website. In fact, we went live on the website in the evening of the Friday the day it was delivered. So people if they do want to download (we also want to be environmentally conscious) for free, they can download it, you do not even have to pay for that. If the university, for example wants to print it, they can print it and I think we need to be sending that message, we did print more than 75. We believe the amount of money is adequate that is being allocated. Well, for next year we will see, but as far as this year is concerned, we printed more than 75, 150 copies were printed this year. But what I am saying is that for the first batch to get it ready in time for everyone that is very critical to get it, they got their hard copies and then it was on the website. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further comments?

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- In that case Madam Chair, I will not move that motion, given that the Minister has given assurance that that should be enough for us to have several more copies and I did not know that they printed some more after the 75 copies.

SEG 7, Madam Chair, includes an estimated sum of \$250,000 grant assistance from the EU, for EDF 11 and that is for the technical cooperation facility. Would this grant not being more appropriate with the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA Unit) placed under Programme 6, Strategic Planning Office. This office is probably now charged with coordinating those. Let the Honourable Minister respond and perhaps move a motion to that effect.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, we also have people from the Ministry of Finance who do attend this technical cooperation meetings. Strategic planning does come in with respect of these meetings, in terms of development programmes but this has actually served well. The technical people who deal with the overseas development plans and organisations have this particular facility in here. We will leave it at the moment, it is fine for it to sit there, whether it changes with the reforms that is going to take place in the Ministry of Finance, we will see but for the time being, it is okay to have it here.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Kiliraki were you upstanding? Thank you.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- SEG 8, Madam Chair, can the Honourable Minister explain why the New Zealand aid audit software and support components is not listed in the details of expenditure, as it appears in the *Budget Estimates*, Appropriations Authority 2016, what is the Schedule? Like the EDF11, as listed?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, if I understand your question correctly, the audit software and support New Zealand Aid is in Programme 1, Activity 5, which is on page 31, SEG 7.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There have been no other comments on Activity 3, we will move on to Activity 4. No comments on Activity 4, we will move on to Activity 5.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Activity 5, Internal Audit and Good Governance. SEG 1, in the 2014 Revised Estimates, they have complement of 36 established staff in the internal audit and good governance. Activity was estimated to cost taxpayers \$733,000 and it eventually actually cost approximately \$1.14 million. In the 2016 Estimates, it increased to \$1.22 million. This unit is important for the Public Accounts Committee that they currently chair and from experience, I believe they need strengthening to reduce and avoid wastage of taxes and very recent audits for the Ministry of Finance are quite concerning.

That suggested motion is to amend this allocation, Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 100 (2), I move without notice that Head 4 be increased by \$500,000, in respect of the established staff. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- This is Activity 5, SEG 1. Any further comments while we are writing that amendment on Activity 5?

What is the question please, Honourable Ratu Kiliraki?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Can the Honourable Minister explain why the New Zealand Aid audit software and support components listed in the details of expenditure as it appears in the Budget Estimates Appropriations Authority 2016 schedule, like the EEU, EDF 11 as listed?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I am lost because the audit software and support New Zealand Aid is in SEG 7 on page 31. Programme 1 Activity 5 in SEG 7, it is listed there. So, Honourable Member what is the question? We are voting on the Estimates.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. I have been told to carry on, so we will move on to Activity 6.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, in the 2014 Estimates, a complement of 16 Established Staff in the Finance Management Reform Activity was estimated to cost taxpayers \$519,000 and it eventually or actually cost approximately \$506,600.

In 2015, it costs \$528,000 and for the 2016 Estimates, it increases to \$695,000. Is it sufficient, given that the FMIS starts with the preparation of whole of the Government Financial Statement and Annual Report that Parliament does not have full access to as yet?

Madam Chair, I would like to move a motion pursuant to Standing Order 100 (2), that Head 4 be increased by \$250,000, in respect of Established Staff.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Which Programme and Activity?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Programme 1.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Program 1 Activity 6?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.-Activity 6.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, if I can respond and perhaps the Honourable Member may want to change his motion. Honourable Member, if you can see the amount has increased as you had noted from \$528,000 to \$695,000. So obviously that takes care of some increment maybe in staffing numbers also in getting the right people who will be paying the right amount of money for those particular positions.

However, we simply cannot allocate money to a particular Programme and Activity because we think it is important. We cannot just go and park money there, if we do not have the rights structure in place, if we do not have right process. We are, as I have said in the Budget announcement, reviewing the entire processes and in particular, areas such as procurement and management side of things. We are particularly concerned, if I can highlight to you, Honourable Members, if you look at SEG 5, you have an annual Maintenance Fee of \$1.2 million. The Ministry of Finance entered to a contract in 2004 for this FMIS Programme. I think this Australian company, hardly comes to Fiji, we simply pay these \$1.2 million on an annual basis and that is most unfortunate that we had entered into this IT type contracts without looking at the actual value that they are going to give us and we are concerned about that. That is an expenditure that we do want to review and we are getting our IT team to look at, but unfortunately, we are in a binding contract which we cannot break.

So, these are some of the areas of reform we are looking at. There are obviously other software that is now upgraded that can give a lot more real time data that requires less people to monitor it and indeed it can help us produce reports a lot more quicker.

So, I would urge you, Honourable Member, unless if you have already done your motion then I will stop talking.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, is there any other comments?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, SEG 5. Could the Honourable Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communication advise us as to why the Estimated Annual Maintenance Fee of \$1.2 million for 2014 to 2016, and it is not under Requisition grew from \$750,000 in 2010 where it was under Requisition?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, you lost me again, can you please repeat your question?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes, can the Honourable Minister advise as to why the estimated annual maintenance fee of \$1.2 million for 2014 to 2016 and is not under Requisition grew from \$750,000 in 2010 where it was under Requisition?

HON. A.SAYED-KHAIYUM.- As I had mentioned, Honourable Member that this is the fee that is paid under a particular contract, so there is no getting out of it. This was signed in 2004 with the company called Info Global who are still the owners of source codes and actually they own the source codes.

The current arrangement will ensure the continued usage of the FMIS in all ministries and departments across Fiji and its support service by Info Global. The maintenance fee is also a capacity limit of 300 concurrent users (this is one of the limitations) until to date the Government Fiji has not exceeded this limit to incur extra fees.

Apart from annual maintenance support services, the Ministry of Finance engages the Info Global consultants to undertake changes to the system as part of streamlining the exercise. If I can just go one step ahead also Honourable Member, you will see that there is an FMIS costs of \$200,000. Now this cost is again to ensure the enforcement of internal controls, tackle potential red flag areas in the current process, accommodates the intention to move to the adoption of full accrual basis of accounting, to start recognising assets and books, and they also want to design a process that looks at things from a Fijian perspective rather than trying to accommodate everything that is done overseas.

Essentially, what has happened is most of these programmes, Madam Chair, that were bought previously, some of them were bought off the shelves and then what actually happened then they were sort of made to tweak, so they tweaked it to the Fijian conditions, that always cost a lot more money as supposed to trying to develop a software that is critically and specifically aimed at the Fijian systems, in the way the things are done in the Fijian jurisdiction. So there are some of the costs that are associated with that and the reasons why it is not under "R" is because we have paid that in any case.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, are there any other clarification on Activity 6?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, Activity 7, SEG 1. Can the Honourable Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications explain whether the current staffing complement of the Assets Management Unit is sufficient for their pivotal

function, given that the Trade and Manufacturing Accounts, State-owned entities and Commercial Statutory Authority teams have not holistically managed to ensure consistently positive returns on public funds?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I think the Honourable Member who ever wrote that for him is a bit confused about internal public funds. Madam Chair, I can say that the amount of money that has been allocated for this particular unit is currently sufficient for the staff. There are currently five projects staff engaged in the national fixed assets register project. The staff include 2 Senior Account Officers, 1 Account Officer and 2 Clerical Officers.

They have so far, Madam Chair, completed accounting for 27 Government Agencies and are left with 29 and we believe at the moment that is enough. Again, I want to highlight to the Honourable Members in particular from the other side, the Ministry of Finance will also go through a major reshuffle to look at how we can improve the services, both in terms of internal and external controls that need to be put in place.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, are there any further comments on that?

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair, in regards to SEG 7, would the Honourable Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications please explain the nature of special expenditure of \$131,000 for project staff of the National Fixed Asset Register Team and why it is still continuing expense under SEG 7?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- These are project staff, Honourable Member.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Are there any further comments? There being none, we have some amendments that we need to put to the vote:

First, that Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Ratu Tikoca and the question is that, Head 4 be increased by \$500,000 in respect of 4-1-5, SEG 1.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	4

Proposed amendment defeated.

We will move on the next one and that is, that the Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of Honourable Dulakiverata. The question is that, Head 4 be increased by \$250,000 in respect of 4-1-6, SEG 1.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	4

Proposed amendment defeated.

Thank you very much, Honourable Members, we will now move on to the next Programme 3, Fiji Procurement Office, Activity 1. Do you have any comments?

HON. A.T. VADEI.- In SEG 1, in 2014, the Procurement Office had a staffing complement of 39 established staff, which cost \$1.12 million of public funds. In 2015 and 2016, SEG 1 estimates only grew slightly to \$1.14 million. Given the central importance of this Unit, as stated in the Budget Speech, in the SEG 1, is that allocation sufficient?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, Madam Chair, in fact the Honourable Member would note that in the Budget Address we did say that this particular Office does need a lot of review, it does need to be reformed. We already got the Australians who have given us a report. Many things we already knew, but we need to streamline this to also have a lot more accountability. We have people, for example, who have gone from the Fiji Procurement Office with civil servants from other departments to go as far away as Japan, Italy and various other places to see whether the equipment is suitable or not. This kind of things cannot happen and this is precisely one of the things that the Fiji Procurement Office has done. So in fact when they argued they be given too much money. The process is not about how much money they get but that is about what processes they put in place, and that is very critical so this is why we are reviewing the processes. We may need to increase the staff but at the moment we could say that, and without the report being completed, we may need to reduce the staff but increase the vigilance over the processes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further comments?

HON. M. BULITAVU.- On SEG 4, would the Honourable Minister explain the purpose of allocating \$13,000 for spare parts and maintenance, and whether the whole of Government Vehicle Leasing Arrangement with Vision Group includes the provision of spare parts and maintenance?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I have answered this question previously and it applies across to all the Government departments and ministries because there are still some vehicles that are still owned by Government.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, can the Honourable Minister explain if there should be an allocation in special expenditure and assistance from the Australian Government as stated in the Budget Address for this pivotal role of centralising the coordination of all capital construction through a specialised division?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are you referring to Programme 3, Fiji Procurement Office Activity 1?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes, Programme 3, SEG 7, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There is no SEG 7, we are only up to SEG 5. I will move on in case you are looking at something else.

We will move on to Programme 6 - the Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning Office, Programme 6 Activity 1. Do you have any comments?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, SEG 7, would the Honourable Minister clarify what the \$200,000 Climate Change Policy allocation is for, given that there were many National Climate Change Consultations conducted by Foreign Affairs this year, in addition to Fiji's current change of policy, dated 2012, as well as Fiji's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) submitted to the UNFCCC on 5th November, 2015.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, this Climate Change Policy of \$200,000 obviously is a policy regarding Climate Change and is not set in stone. We do not need to develop the policy but there are still a lot of areas of climate change that need to be understood and also needs to be fully formulated. For example, the impact of climate change on Food Security, the Impact of Climate Change, for example, in agricultural practices, the Impact of Climate Change, for example, in drought. All of these areas need a well-coordinated policy that sits not only with one particular department, that is why it is being put in National Planning. We need to be able to talk to Agriculture, Maritime and the Ministry for Rural Development, and all of that, combined together, that allocation has been made specifically for that particular policy development.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, a supplementary question: would the Honourable Minister clarify whether the Northern Development Programme allocation of \$1.5 million now sits under SEG 10 for Capital Grants and Transfers, when the 2015 Budget is set under SEG 7 as Special Expenditure?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I think the point here is that, we are putting it specifically under Capital Grants, whether it should sit under the Special SEG 7 or SEG 10. I think it is basically semantics in that sense, but the point is, it is kept under "R" and I can give you a background on the actual allocation regarding the Northern Development Programme. It is obviously they are there to increase the participation of the people of the Northern Division in economic development and support the developments of micro, small and medium enterprises, raise the level of investment, economic production and increase the volume of trade and generating and implementing employment opportunities.

In 2015, 60,000 businesses have been established due to competency-based economically through the formation of enterprise trainings, 120 enterprises received grant equity assistance, 26 existing enterprises were assisted to extend their businesses. The actual usage to-date, Honourable Member, is \$1.2 million.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- On SEG 10, Madam Chair, can the Honourable and learned Minister detail the percentage of expenditure to-date for the 2015 allocation of \$1.5 million, for the Northern Development Programme?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, this SEG, the Expenditure is \$1.2 million. So far the \$1.5 million, that would be in mathematical terms, the percentage is about 75 per cent if not more of the actual usage. So there are two more months left, the RIE (Requisition to Incur expenditure) is actually closing in a few days' time.

HON. M. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, there is a supplementary to that. I thank the Honourable Minister for clarifying the percentage of expenditure. Can the Honourable Minister advise whether this \$1.5 million allocation is best pegged under Strategic Planning Office or whether it is more appropriate if it is placed under Head 18, Programme 2, Activity 3, under the Rural Development Services and the Commissioner Northern specifically to manage that?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the Commissioner Northern's Office is very much involved in this but it is obviously through a centralised co-ordinated effort through National Planning.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no further comment, we will move on to Bureau of Statistics, Head 4-7-1. Any comments on Programme 4-7-1?

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Chair, obviously the Bureau of Statistics received an increase in allocation and that is welcomed. Our concern is with respect to the allocation, really is SEG 7, which talks about Employment and Unemployment, Labour Force Survey, Population Demography and Survey on Population Census Data and Analysis, I think these are all very useful allocations but can the Honourable Minister advise the outcomes of some of these, for example, the Employment Labour Force Survey. Statistics is there, the timeline when these can be released appropriately to the public and that has been a concern for us with respect to the timeliness and the way in which the Bureau is able to deliver the reports and release the data.

I think the question with respect to staffing increase and SEG 1 is also important and as I said, we welcome and we also question whether the Bureau actually has the appropriate capacity and number of staff to be able to deal with these surveys, clean the data and produce the reports in a timely manner. I know there has been a problem in the past years as well, but I think if you are allocating more budget, we should be able to give some indications as to how and when these things can be put out.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, of course, we all want these statistics to be put out as soon as possible but we do not want to get in the way of the Government Statistician to hurry him along without the data actually being correct, but what we have done, Madam Chair, we have given them more money to recruit more people. It is very critical and the Honourable Prasad is correct. On the Bureau of Statistics in particular, in fact, I had a conversation with the Government Statistician and he said since 1987, the Bureau of Statistics had not really been in the way that it used to be. There used to be a lot of international cooperation that failed after 1987, so we are trying now to re-establish that. Recently, just last week, we had a couple or a few people from the Bureau of Statistics going on various training courses overseas, including Australia and some other countries.

There is a couple that are going off to India. The Indians have very good expertise in statistics, so we are trying to develop those capacities within the Bureau of Statistics and it is very critical for Fiji to be able to make sound decisions, to have that data available to us. Also, there have been issues regarding the collation of data from various business houses in Fiji. Many of them actually do not respond so we have had discussions with the Bureau of Statistics saying, "Maybe, you need to change your forms, if your forms are like one feet long and you want to fill them every month", they may not actually do it. So, how can you make some user-friendly forms the respondent will actually feel good and do not see there is a hindrance to their day to day business. We need to look at things like maybe online, filling out of forms and makes it a lot easier so these are the kinds of changes that are taking place but we hope to be able to get these surveys done quickly, but as accurately as possible.

Also, Madam Chair, for the information of the House, we also will be carrying out the National Census and I believe that is actually set down for 2017, if I am not mistaken, and there is

some preparatory work that needs to be done for that. I stand to be corrected on the actual year, but that is just around the corner for the National Census that needs to take place.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any further comment on Programme 7, Activity 1? None? We'll move on to activity. That's it. Thank you very much, Parliament will now vote on Head 4. The question is that the amount for the Ministry of Finance be approved? Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Mixture of replies)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No Opposition? Thank you. The head is therefore agreed to.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM- *Vinaka*, Thank you

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You changed your mind? You oppose? The Parliament will vote then. If you oppose, you need to say yes. Thank you, we will vote then. More interesting to vote anyway.

Parliament will now vote on Head 4. The question is, that the amount for the Ministry of Finance be approved? Does any Member oppose the motion?

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	30
Noes	:	14
Not Voted	:	4

Head 4 agreed to.

Head 5 - Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs, the floor is now open for any comments, Head 5?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- SEG 4 – Would the Honourable Minister explain what the incidental cost alone of \$12,500 is for, and explain why there has been an increase in its allocation for next year? For 2015, it was \$7,500.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- My apologies, Honourable Member, if you could, please repeat your question?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Thank you, would the Honourable Minister explain what the incidental cost of \$12,500 is for, and explain why there has been an increase in its allocation for next year. For this year, 2015, it is \$7,500.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Chair, this is to do with some of the outreach work that the Government, through this particular Ministry, undertakes

and these are some of the incidences that come about, for example, it could be meals, it could be various other expenses that may come about because of that, again we found that there was virement being undertaken through other different SEGs. So, we give them a specific amount of \$12,500 which does not break the bank at all for incidentals.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any further comment?

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Chair, on SEG 6, could the Honourable Minister explain why there is a substantive increase of approximately more than \$9,000 for the *iTaukei* Affairs Board? For, 2015, it was for \$337,794 million.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- As announced in the Budget Address, this is essential to cater for the staffing salaries, because some of the staff were not being paid the right amount, and I understand there may be an increase in some of the staffing numbers.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further comment?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, supplementary to SEG 6, could the Honourable Minister advice on the progress of expenditure for the Provincial Council with the allocation of \$1 million for 2015?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, we are here to vote on the amount that is stated there, we are not here to vote on the progress. The amount that has been allocated for Provincial Councils, we believe is adequate enough to cater for the Provincial Councils allocation. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further questions. Let us move on to Activity 2.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Still on Activity 1, Madam Chair, SEG 7.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Chair, on SEG 6, there are two motions that we had considered. Pursuant to Standing Orders 100(2);

- (i) I move without notice that Head 5 be decreased by \$1 million in respect of the *iTaukei* Affairs Board; and
- (ii) I move without notice that Head 5 be increased by \$1 million in respect of Provincial Councils.

So *iTaukei* Affairs Board is the first motion, and the Provincial Council is the second motion.

Madam Chair, before we move on from SEG 6, I just wanted to ask the Honourable Minister of Finance as to how the Ministry is monitoring on the performance of the *Turaga ni Koro* and *Mata ni Tikina*, in terms of impact on rural communities that they serve?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, there is always how things are done in the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs, they have got their various instructions on how things are done that they look at. They look at, for example, in the same way if you look at how the Advisory Councils are performing, they look at how they link up with their community members and their willingness to be able to engage with the community members and that, Madam Chair, is

something that is internal, and carried out by the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs and, of course, the *iTaukei* Affairs Board also does have through the Provincial Councils, work through and look at the performance of the *Turaga ni Koros* and the *Mata ni Tikinas*. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- On SEG 7, Madam Chair, as I have said in my Budget reply, the pace at which development is going and the need for the *iTaukei* people to capture or collect the information they have now, before this information will be destroyed by the wave of development that is coming. We really need to speed up the verification process so I suggest, Madam Chair, that pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 5 be increased by \$500,000 in respect to Cultural Mapping Verification to speed up the Programme.

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

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. We have three amendments that have been filled up. Any further questions on Head 5-1-1? None, thank you. Let us move on to Activity 2.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, on SEG 7, can the Honourable Minister inform the House whether the NLC has carried out the extensive verification process for the computerization of the *Vola ni Kawa Bula* (VKB) which is apparently going to be completed in 2016, as stated in the Budget?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You want a change in the Budget or you want clarification?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Clarification, there is a motion after the response from the Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sir, your question is?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Can you, please, inform the House whether the NLC has carried out an Extensive Verification Process for the computerisation of the *Vola ni Kawa Bula* (VKB) which is apparently going to be completed in 2016, as stated in the Budget Estimate?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Yes, when you say 'Computerisation', in fact, part of it is also digitisation so the actual records are being digitised and through a particular software that has been specifically written to be able to have that software available to TLTB, to have that available for the equal distribution of land lease moneys. In the process of digitisation, there is a verification process that is built into that, which obviously once that is done, then you need to be able to ensure that the data that has been put into the digitisation process needs to be accurate. I think that is very important.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Definitely. Madam Chair, I have a motion, pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 5 be increased by \$500,000 in respect of the computerisation of VKB.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, no, that is SEG 7, Programme 1 Activity 2.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- On SEG 7, Madam Chair, in regards to Adjudicating Customary Title Disputes which has been allocated \$30,000, the current turnover per year, the NLC is delivering about 17 rulings a year with the amount of disputes that are pending. I think the amount should be increased by another \$20,000, that budget is for land disputes and rulings to be attended and delivered so that customary land disputes are minimised and rulings delivered.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- So that is a proposed amendment. Thank you, while that is being filled we move on to Activity 2. Any comments on Activity 2? If there is none, we will move on to Activity 3.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, can we go back to SEG 7, Activity 2? This is very important, on Leadership Awareness and Implementation, this has been given \$100,000. The problem here, Madam Chair, ...

HON. MEMBER.- What problem?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- You know, you listen to the Logic Office.

There are two divisions, one deals with the Vanua Leadership Training, which is based at the FAB and the other Programme is called, 'Veivakararamataki' which is based at NLC. The one at FAB is called, 'Vuli ni Veiliutaki Vakaturaga'. Therefore, which one are we going to do? It is better for this to be allocated to NLC, because NLC knows which conflicting clans are there, which ones to prioritise for leadership programing skills and all that?

At FAB, the other arm, it is really useless. So, I suggest if that could be brought under NLC for the Programme to be run by NLC, rather than FAB?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- That will have to come in the form of a Motion if we want to change it. Right now, we will just have a look at it.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Can I do that, Madam Chair?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No, this is not for that kind of motion. This motion is only for the Budget, increase or decrease, but during the year, if that can be brought up.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Very well, Madam.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, Madam Chair, just a point of clarification. The Standing Orders talks about the changing of the amounts, and not the movement of the allocations between the SEGs, and I think that is what the Honourable Member is proposing and therefore our point is that the Standing Orders does not allow for that. I stand to be corrected on that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- That is exactly what I have told the Honourable Member, it cannot be accommodated now.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Next year?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- It will have to come by way of a substantive motion during Parliament

Any further comments on Activity 2? If not, let us move on to Activity 3.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Activity 3- SEG 5, Madam Chair, I have a motion. Pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 5 be decreased by \$20,000 in respect of *iTaukei* Roadshow.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- If you decrease by \$20,000, you are deleting the whole thing.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Be decreased by \$20,000.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- It is \$20,000 there.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Yes, resulting in deleting, removing the *iTaukei* Roadshow by \$20,000.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, you can fill up the slip.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, Madam Chair. I feel compelled to just speak on that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Sure.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, we have the other side always talking about how the ordinary Fijians need to get access to information, and here they are wanting to get rid of the entire roadshow that gives information to ordinary Fijians, as to how the whole system works. And, here they are, Madam Speaker, where a lot of people have got their ordinary day to day complaints that they are able to express through this Roadshow, and it is rather unfortunate that we have this particular motion.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, I just want to clarify why we opted for what we have just proposed. The reason being is, for us to go down to even visiting our own Village, we need a permit from Police. You people are using Government money to actually go out and do your propaganda, that is why.

(Laughter)

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The truth!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- You are trying to ruin us, but you will never succeed.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The truth hurts!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No, no, you will never succeed.

(Chorus of interjections)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, honourable Members, voting time.

The first one, that Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Roko Tupou Draunidalo. The question is, that Head 5 be increased by \$1 million in respect of Provincial Councils?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	14
Noes	:	28
Not Voted	:	6

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Second, Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Roko Tupou Draunidalo, and the question is, that Head 5 be decreased by \$1 million in respect of *iTaukei* Affairs Board, SEG 6?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	14
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	5

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thirdly, Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Mosese Bulitavu. The question is, that Head 5, SEG 7 be increased by \$500,000 in respect of the Cultural Mapping?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	14
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	5

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The next one, Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Mosese Bulitavu, and the question is, that Head 5, SEG 7 be increased by \$20,000 in respect of Adjudicating Customary Title.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	14
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	5

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The next one, Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Aseri Radrodro, and the question is, that Head 5 be increased by \$500,000 in respect of SEG 7, Computerisation of the VKB?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	14
Noes	:	29
Not voted	:	5

Proposed amendment defeated.

Lastly, Parliament voted on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Ratu Kiliraki. The question is, that Head 5 be decreased by \$20,000 in respect of *iTaukei* Road Shows.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	13
Noes	:	29
Note voted	:	6

Proposed amendment defeated.

Parliament will now vote on Head No. 5 – the question is that the amount on Head No. 5- Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs be approved? Does any Member oppose the motion?

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	13
Abstain	:	1
Not voted	:	5

Head 5 agreed to.

Head No. 6 – Ministry of Defence, National Security and Immigration

MADAM CHAIR.- Head No. 6 is now open for debate.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair, in regards to that Head on SEG 1, would like the Honourable Minister to explain why there is a need for a fringe benefit stats allocation of \$10,000?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- This is tax payable to FIRCA for use of Government mobile phones. The Ministry has a total of seven mobile phones that are used by executive management and senior managers, an additional plan that is part of the group network used by essential, established and unestablished staff.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you Madam Chair. I ask the Honourable Minister, in the interest of transparency, if he could just briefly explain what this *National Security White Paper* is, and based on its allocations for 2015 and 2016, SEG 7, when do we expect this *National Security White Paper* to be ready? Supplementary to that Honourable Minister, will the process be made more public, given that public funds are being used?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- The first part of the White Paper is the national security strategy which I mentioned in Parliament about two months back. The National Security Strategy has been passed by the Security Council and it has gone to the Solicitor General's office for vetting the legal framework in there. We are still waiting for that paper to come and then after that, it will be given to the public and everyone is to have a look at it and comment on the National Security Defence Strategy. After that, then the development of the White Paper - the Police White Paper, the Defence White Paper and the Immigration White Paper which should be completed. After the draft White Paper, it should be a Green Paper which is the draft and after that there should be consultation with the general public and also the Embassies and all stakeholders, USP, the UNDP for their comments before we finalise the White Paper which should be completed in May 2016.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, any further comments on Activity 1. Thank you and let us move on to Programme 2 – Department of Immigration – Activity 1.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Why are the Fiji Day Celebrations for 2016 pegged at \$100,000 and supplementary to that is the Fiji Day Celebrations for 2016, Honourable Minister, inclusive of the new flag and Coat of Arms?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- The Fiji Day celebration is normally celebrated in Suva and also other parts of the country where we delegate Ministers to go and attend. That is the normal budget, which is about \$100,000 and as years go by normally the price increases with the erecting of tents and all that. For the new flag and the Coat of Arms, there is no discussion about that yet, it is not being finalised. I think once that is finalised then we can do something about it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any further comment?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Would the Honourable Minister detail the scope of work on the completion of the National War Memorial and War Museum that has an allocation of \$1 million. In addition to that, I am asking also, will you be able to brief Parliament or to us here as to whether this includes the movement of the remains of our brave warriors who are still buried in Bita Paka War Cemetery, Papua New Guinea?

HON. CAPT. T. L. NATUVA.- I thank the Honourable Member for the question but the scope of work is more technical I think it is coming from the engineers' point of view. I do not have the scope of work with me but if you can see the budget on the formation of the fence, the

\$1 million being provided will not complete as you can see on 2017 there in the bracket is another \$1 million to complete. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any more questions on Activity 1. Thank you, we will move on to Department of Immigration Activity 1.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- On SEG 4, why is there an increase in allocation for detention centre expenses from \$75,000 in 2015, increased to \$125,000 in 2016?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Is that Head 6 – Department of Immigration?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Sorry, SEG 4 – Head 6.2.1 Department of Immigration. The question again is, why there is an increase in allocation for Detention Centre expenses from \$75,000 in 2015 increased to \$125,000 in 2016 and the supplement to that.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Before, we used to have only one detention centre in Suva. This year, we have two detention centres, one in Nadi and one in Suva. This is a safe house to house the foreigners seeking asylum, victims of human trafficking and illegal immigrants. The allocation will meet the purchase of supplies for the detainees whilst they are in the safe house. Before, it used to be one, now we have two. Those that we had in Nadi before used to stay in the hotels in the previous years.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, the same question, just supplementary to that - whether this allocation is enough for those who will be kept at the detention centres, whether there are human rights and kept in proper conditions, whether this allocation will provide the best facilities for them, awaiting whatever will be done with them? Or you want more?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- I think we have enough.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, on SEG 6-2-1-5 under the Passports allocation. There is about \$600,000 allocated for 2016, how many passports are expected to be printed from this allocation?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Chair, 146,000 passports.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any more questions?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, there is a new expenditure line on the Department of Immigration – Head 6-2-1-9 which is Integrated Passport Issuance System of \$750,000 under “R”. Can the Honourable Minister inform us what is this new expenditure line about?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- I think I had explained this during my speech. This is the decentralising of the services by the Immigration Department in the issuance of passports in Lautoka for the West and Labasa in the North. .

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- On Head 6-2-1-7, Madam Chair, in regards to Deportation whether that amount of \$40,000 is enough for deporting those who have been illegally entering our country or whether there has been an increase on that \$40,000 allocation for the deportation?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- I think that is enough because another batch will be arriving, about 150,000 in December this year, so that would be enough.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further questions?

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	25
Noes	:	15
Not Voted	:	8

Head No. 6 agreed to.

Head No. 7 - Ministry for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, since we have a new Minister, now let me congratulate him on his appointment before I ask this question.

To make matters a little bit more efficient, Madam Chair, let me ask a question on SEG 1 and a Supplementary question ON SEG 5 and then probably move a motion under SEG 5. I can see that the Personal Emoluments has increased from \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million and that is probably understandable. But I also see an allocation of \$65,000 for the Wages Council for 2015, it was there for 2015, it is also there for 2016. I do not think the Wages Council met. Can the Honourable Minister tell us when or if the Wages Council - there is no point in allocating expenditure when you do not do anything. Why are there no projections for the Wages Council for 2017 and 2018?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Chair, the budget that is before us only covers a period 2015 to 2016. I have no projections for 2017 and 2018. So that resolves that issue and the other queries, the Wages Council, I have not got the programmes for convening the Wages Council for 2016 with me now.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Supplementary question on SEG 5, Madam Chair. I think this is an important question, given that the Honourable Minister has just come back from Geneva and the fact that as a country we bought some more time to address the ILO concerns. Does the estimated allocation for expenses of ILO Convention set at \$172,500, does that go far enough to cater for the recent ILO outcomes in Geneva, the preparation for Fiji to receive the ILO Tripartite Forum and further consultations on the legislation that we passed? In that regard, Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 7 be increased by \$200,000 in respect of expenses of the ILO Convention?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further comments?

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair, SEG 9. To the Honourable Minister, what kind of specific programmes on Strengthening Employment Mediation Services would be spent on the \$50,000 allocation?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- We have specific programmes to go out for mediation in our effort to reduce the cases before our arbitrations and basically that has been allocated for that particular effort.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further comments? There being no further comments, we will move on to Activity 3, any comments on Activity 3?

HON. A.T.VADEI.- Madam Chair, in SEG 7, with the increased allocation of \$5 million in 2016, where is the allocation for preventative measures for OHS infringements?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Chair, the amount of \$5 million looks after the workers compensation and also the preventative measures.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, last supplementary question to SEG 7, can the Honourable Minister assure this House that the backlog of 1,876 cases of compensation claims and death payments will be cleared in 2016?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Chair, can I have the question again, please.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Question again, please.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Definitely.

(Laughter)

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, can the Honourable Minister assure this House that the backlog of 1, 876 of compensation claims and death payments will be cleared in 2016?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Your information is quite different from the information that I have gathered from the Ministry on that amount, but I cannot give you the exact information on any predictions.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Can the outstanding cases of compensation claims and death payments be all cleared in 2016?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Chair, I cannot say that, it will depend on the consultation and the process.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The Honourable Minister is obviously new in the role. There was a question asked earlier on about the OHS. Just for clarification sake, the training Honourable Vadei had asked. SEG 5 in Programme 1 Activity 3, because we do not want you to come back and say, "the Minister gave us wrong information." You said about OHS, the training is in SEG 5, Programme 1, Activity 3 - \$40,000 is there.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further questions?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Just a little bit on that again Madam Chairperson. On workmen's compensation, the Honourable Minister of Finance had talked about this. This in regards to the delays of payments, most of the time there is not enough funding but there is an increase by \$2.5 million last year, to this year, it will be \$5 million. From \$2.5 million to \$5 million, whether that is sufficient to cater for the delays?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Bultavu, it is not for the delays *per se*. It is because now, you may recall we passed a law where the amounts now payable under workers compensation has doubled and in fact, in the cases of actual accidents it is more than doubled, on death now. So, this accounts for that, but it has got nothing to do with delays *per se*. There was in fact about four to five years ago, the Honourable Prime Minister had brought in a Doctor from RFMF and some military officers to fast track because when we came in, there were about three to four thousand cases that were pending. So those cases, in fact have now have been reduced to a whole lesser number but the amount actually is specifically for the increased amount that is now payable under each claim.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- In that regards, when the rulings are delivered, but the payments are not done because the amount has being used up, whether that will be factored in there.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That was a long time ago, it does not happen anymore.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further comments? Activity 4.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chair, Head 7, Activity 1, SEG 7. Would the Honourable Minister please advise whether the foreign employment service allocation also intends to carry out independent research on how financially and socially impactful this programme is, given the international media reports of horror stories of foreign workers in UAE?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you have any comments to make on that Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- We are only limited to Australia and New Zealand.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any more questions on Activity 4? There being none, we have one amendment proposed. Parliament, will vote and the amendment is in the name of Honourable Dr. Biman Prasad. The question....

HON. J. DUALKIVERATA.- Supplementary question to SEG 7, Madam Chair. Can the Honourable Minister please detail how many Fiji citizens are projected to benefit from the Foreign Employment Services (FES) allocation of \$816,000?

Madam Chair, I would like to amend the allocation under Standing Order 100(2). I move without notice that Head 7 be increased by \$300,000 in respect of Foreign Employment Service.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any further questions or clarifications on Activity 4?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chair, supplement SEG 7, can the Honourable Minister please detail how many Fiji citizens are projected to benefit from the Attachment Allowance of \$742,000?

The motion to that, Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 7 be increased by \$300,000, in respect of the Attachment Allowance.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There are two amendments being processed. Any comments?

We have three proposed amendments on the table. First the Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of Honourable Dr. Biman Prasad. The question is, that Head 7 be increased by \$200,000 in respect of Head 7, Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 7 - Mediation Services and Employment Relations Tribunal?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	:	16
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	3

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Dulakiverata. The question is, that Head 7 be increased by \$300,000 in respect of SEG 7.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	4

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Lastly, Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Ratu Kiliraki. The question is, that Head 7 be increased by \$300,000 in respect of 7-1-4, SEG 7 – the Attachment Allowance?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	27
Not Voted	:	6

Proposed amendment is defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- 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.

Question put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	16
Not Voted	:	3

Head 7 agreed to.

Head 8 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Head 8 is now open for debate.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, on SEG 7, would the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs please advise on the tangible returns on the everyday taxpayers from the injection of public funds, to the tune of about \$1.6 million for the PIDF?

Suggesting a motion, Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 8 be decreased by \$250,000, in respect of PIDF Operations.

The second one, pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 8 be decreased by \$150,000, in respect of the PIDF Meeting.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do we have any comments on those?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Since the motion has been moved, I do not think that I should be able to answer that question.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any more comments to Head 8, Programme 1, Activity 1?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, I would like to move a motion under Standing Order 100(2) without notice that Head 8 be decreased by \$100,000 in respect of Parking Facility at PIDF Secretariat?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you want to explain why you are proposing the reduction?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a new item all together and for a car park it is too expensive.

(Laughter)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are there any further questions or clarifications?

We will now move onto to Activity 2. Any comments on Activity 2 – Policy and Administration? We will move onto Activity 3.

HON. ROKO T.T.S DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs please advise whether the allocation of \$7.2 million for Rental – Office and Residential Building and \$3.3 million for Running Expenses – Rented and Government Owned Properties for ten earmarked overseas missions adequately anticipates the sale of our missions abroad, should that be realised in 2016?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Draunidalo, which SEG are you talking about?

HON. ROKO. T.T.S DRAUNIDALO.- Head 8, Programme 1, Activity 3, SEG 4.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I can assure the Honourable learned Member that we need this allocation till the sale of the properties.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further questions?

HON. A.T. VADEL.- Can the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs advise on the purpose of the allocation of \$100,000 for the Official Working Group on Deep Sea Mining and its benefit to ordinary Fijians? Head 8-1-3-8-7.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Thank you, Madam Chair. This working group meet to look at the possibility of having minerals down in the seabeds.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Chair. Can the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs inform us whether the \$300,000 for the Refurbishment of Overseas Missions allocated in SEG 8 is related to any of the ten earmarked overseas missions, prior to being sold in 2016?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Yes, Madam Chair.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, I just want to ask a question in regards to SEG 4. As you know, Madam Chair, I spoke on this issue during my Budget contribution. The increase in rent as already been anticipated here to \$3.3 million. If the property is going to be sold so the new landlord will have to decide what the rental should be? Madam Chair, can the \$3.3 million be broken down or explained on what basis that is based on?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, if I could answer the question for the Honourable Minister because it falls within the Ministry of Finance in the sale. The Honourable Member would know that is the running expenses that your are referring to. Running expenses is different to rental which is \$7.2 million. Running is \$3.3 which is the upkeep of the properties, different to rental.

So there are currently certain premises that we have our overseas mission that we do not own, so we have to pay rental. For example, in Brazil, South Africa and various other places. We own properties, for example, in United Kingdom, Brussels, New Zealand and Australia. It is being announced that the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) is the one that is looking at expanding its portfolio and they want to own assets offshore and obviously Government will be a very secure tenant for them, they will become the landlord. As part of the sale process, we will also be facilitating any additional rental. The rental is one of those negotiations that we are having at what rate and percentage of the sale value will be the rental and that is part of the negotiation?

Obviously, FNPF will try and drive the maximum and we will obviously try and ensure that we have a particular process in place to have increments over the years. There are certain conditions of the state of some of the properties actually is not very good. Cabinet has just approved a sale buy-back, what they call in the Australian Capital Territory. The Australian Capital Territory Government is buying back properties in Australia that has asbestos. One of our properties in Australia has got asbestos, so what the Australian Capital Territory is doing is buying back all those buildings from those people, fix it up and you can buy it back from them. So these are the kinds of processes that we have, some of the buildings, for example, in UK is recently being done up but obviously can do a lot of more work in it. It is about four levels – it is a terrace property. So there needs to be a bit of investment in those properties to bring it up to speed. That is the process that is involved. If, for example, if any sale does take place in the middle of the year, we will factor in the sale price and the rental within the Sale Purchase Agreement to make sure that there is no shortfall in any rental nor does it affect the budget.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any further comments?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, the Honourable Minister of Finance is explaining some of the options. The options are not theirs, the options are for the new landlords and also the rental will not necessarily be based on the sale price, it will depend on the market. You can buy the property very cheap, but if the market is getting you good rental, good for you. We do not know what other markets in all these places and they need to be established.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, we have some amendments to vote for.

The first one, Parliament will vote on the amendments in the name of the Honourable Dulakiverata. The question is, that Head 8 be decreased by \$100,000 in respect of Head 8-1-2-8 - Parking Facility at PIDF Secretariat.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	4

Proposed amendment defeated.

On the second one, Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Ratu Tikoca. The question is, that Head 8-1-1-7 be decreased by \$250,000 in respect of PIDF Operations.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	13
Noes	:	28
Not Voted	:	7

Proposed amendment defeated.

Lastly, Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of Honourable Ratu Tikoca. The question is, that Head 8-1-1-7 be decreased by \$150,000 in respect of PIDF Meeting.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	16
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	3

Proposed amendment is defeated.

The Parliament will now vote on Head No. 8 and the question is that the amount for Head No. 8, Ministry of Foreign Affairs be approved. Does any Member oppose the motion?

Question put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	16
Not Voted	:	3

Head 8 agreed to.

Head No. 9 - Office of the Auditor General.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Chair, this is a very important Office, a Constitutional Office. In many Commonwealth countries, the tradition is that the Auditor-General's budget is entered and voted separately but we do not have that process. On Head 9-1-1 - Contract Auditing Fees of \$280,000. I am just wondering whether that is sufficient to cater for the kind of work that the Auditor General's Office might need through these contracted auditors.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is what they wanted.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further comments on Activity 1?

Question put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	28
Noes	:	13
Not Voted	:	7

Head 9 agreed to.

Head No. 10 - Fijian Elections Office

MADAM CHAIR.- There is only one item under Activity 1.

HON. M. BULITAVU.- Madam Chair, just a general question. Can the Honourable Minister explain why there is no breakdown on how the funds are allocated for the Elections Office and why, as a Constitutional Institution, it does not do so but it is under requisition?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, like all the bodies you will see with the Human Rights and Anti-Discriminatory Commission, the Parliament of Fiji and the various other bodies, they will all have one line items. They are an independent body, they will come and make their submissions and then we will give them the one line item and then they spend according to the way that this is under "R". They have to give their quarterly applications based on that, then they have to provide the acquittals and the money is given to them. It is an independent body, we cannot tell them how to spend it specifically but when they come and make their submissions like the Parliament did, like the Anti-Discrimination and Rights Commission, they all give one line items.

MADAM CHAIR.- Any further comments?

HON. S. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chair, just a comment, obviously we see that the Elections Office in this manner as adopting a continuous approach rather than the periodic approach that used to be there before. But we have an allocation of \$6.4 million for 2016, especially for the training of staff. It is different when its actual preparation, where you have to train all the mass number of workers. Can the Honourable Minister explain as to how many workers or staff are going to be trained under the \$6.4 million? Apart from that, what are the other activities where this money will be used on?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Chair, far from me to be able to say how many staff they will train. They will obviously try and train staff, as you know, the Fijian Elections Office now has an expanded role. For example, it does conduct the elections for trade union organisations and any other organisation that wants it to conduct elections, and there is a building of capacity. You will also see there is a slight reduction to the budget they are receiving this year, of about \$700,000. But as the Honourable Karavaki would know, as the former Supervisor of Elections, come closer to Elections, in particular 2017, the amount of money that they will want allocated will increase so rather than doing everything last minute, because as you know that the Elections can be held any time from March 2018 to September 2018 as per the Constitution. The Elections can be held after a minimum period of three and a half years, to a maximum period of four years. So if there is less activity, there is more building of capacity within the staff, but they will have an increased budget in 2017, and of course, 2018.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you Madam Chair. I just want to go back to this issue of the funds being under Requisition. Just ask the Honourable Minister if he could explain why it seems, Madam Chairperson, in this arrangement that Constitutional Offices (this is one) have to get some sort of approval for things every now and again, every quarterly from holder of Executive Office, which is separate under the Constitution. And in the case of Parliament, there are two Constitution Offices there, there is your Office and Office of the Secretary-General. Again, separation of powers that should just be given to you to use, after you have made your submission to the Honourable Minister of Finance, the Honourable Minister of Finance under the Constitution has to provide you with the money and then it is left at your

discretion. Obviously, you will be required acquittals and the like by the Public Accounts Committee in the Auditor General's Report, that is where you account to, Madam Chairperson. I put that question to the Honourable Minister.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, none of these organisations have any issues with the acquittals that they provide. I think acquittals are obviously a good way to go or have we in any way held back the monies that they have required? Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you any further comments? Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chairperson, I think this is very important whether the Honourable Minister of Finance would be in a position to tell us the allocation, because we just had the General Elections, we have no Municipal elections yet, we had few Trade Unions elections, whether he can breakdown his allocation on the activities that will be done by the Elections Office, whether he has the base on the current elections that has taken place for the Trade Union, what was the cost?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You will see it in the Annual Report.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any more clarifications?

Question put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	16
Not Voted	:	3

Head 10 agreed to.

Head 11 – Judiciary

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, on Head 11-1-1, would the Honourable Minister advise as to why the allocation of \$7 million for the Extension of Lautoka High Court, as allocated in 2015 Budget, is once again allocated for the same amount in 2016?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you Honourable Member for that question. As I highlighted in the Budget Address, the number of capital projects that did not get off the ground primarily because of lack of planning by the different departments. Although some I can tell, some preliminary work has been carried out this year, which is for example, the OHS Vetting for the Lautoka High Court by the National Occupational Health Service, they paid \$286, the four sets of architectural drawings for the new Lautoka High Court to the National Fire Authority and there is a company that is looking at the engineering prospects for that. So, Madam Chairperson, that \$7 million has not been used because the building has not started. Some preliminary works

have been done and we hope that this much needed Court House for Lautoka, the expansion will start next year.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any further comments?

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I just wanted to ask a general question of the Honourable Minister. The funds to the Judiciary and by the way, thank you very much for the upgrade in Lautoka Courts, I will be one of the beneficiaries as Counsel. Whether the funds given to the Judiciary is held under requisition, and if it is not, what is the difference between this and the other Constitutional Office in terms of separation of powers, and did you say earlier that Parliament had requested that it be under Requisition and that is why it is like that?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I did not say they requested, I said they do not have a problem.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- No, I was asking.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, for the Judiciary, we see Head 11-1-1-8 is the only one under "R", everything else, the running of the Court System is not under "R". The only thing that is under "R" are the capital construction, so if someone is going to put up a \$7million structure, we need to know that the money, when they provide the acquittals, contracts, down payment is monitored. Everything else in Judiciary is not under "R" - they have the money.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any more comments? Activity 2?

Let us move on to Activity 3. Any comments?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 4?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 5?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 5?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 6?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 7?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 8?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 9?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

Question put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	27
Noes	:	15
Not Voted	:	6

Head 11 agreed to.

Head 12 – Parliament

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Chairperson, I acknowledge the explanation by the Honourable Minister of Finance on why the \$9.9million is under SEG 6, but I would like to enquire whether there is going to be any Annual Reports tabled for 2014? I would like to move a motion under Standing Order 100(2), and I move without notice that Head 12 be increased by \$2million in respect of SEG 6.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments while waiting?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Just on a point of clarification, would the Honourable Minister explain why the total amount of Parliament Budget allocation sits under SEG 6 – Operating Grants and Transfers? The total number on the table is on page 74.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, because that is what we do when we have a lump sum payment to Parliament. And, you will see that, for example, over the page under Independent Commission, there are also under SEG 6, that is Operating Grants Transfers; grant that is transferred across.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any further comments?

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Chair, I am going to ask the same question with regards to the requisition part. Why again is this held under Requisition? I am sorry, Honourable Minister, it is not about whether they do not object to it but why is it done at all, especially where Constitutional Offices are involved. I think it is just the appearance of them not having to answer to a holder of an Executive Office - the appearance of it. It may in fact be done, and we assume in fact that is done, but it is the appearance issue.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, it does not compromise the independence of those offices.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other comments?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chair, there are no details of this in certain areas, we have expressed our concerns that we are not being properly equipped to be Parliamentarians, especially in constituency programmes. We are not asking for more money for our salary, just to do our work properly, visits and things like that. I believe submissions were made on that basis, it is covered in here, because there is very little details on this. We do not really know what is here for Parliament in 2016.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the amount has been allocated and is being given to Parliament. If you wish to know how they going to spend the money you need to speak to the Secretary-General to Parliament. I also do not think it is fair to ask the Secretary General to Parliament just because she is here as to how she is going to spend it. This is a one line item that has been allocated to Secretary General to Parliament, if you want to ask her, you ask her later in the same way that we should not be putting her in a difficult position, when for example, the Chairperson of Human Rights Anti-Discrimination Commission is not here, the Deputy Commissioner of FICAC is not here and other independent bodies are not present here. I do not think it is fair to put her on the spot. An allocation has been made, we are voting on the amount that has been allocated. As to how that money will be spent by her, that is her prerogative and that is something for you to talk to her about later, not now.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, can the Honourable Minister in the allocation, there is a deferred allocation of \$6.3 million – Aid-in-kind assistance to the Parliament but it also says “Government institutions in 2016”. We are not sure under that \$6.3 million, how much is coming to Parliament. I mean it is important for us as Members of Parliament to understand, we have had serious issues about budgetary allocation for the running of political party officers and some of those issues remain unresolved. We would like to know exactly what, out of the \$6.3 million, is coming to the Parliament from the Minister?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, as the script there says, this programme is still in design phase. So DFAT is working actually with Parliament as to how that \$6.3 million will be spent. It may well be that it may all go to Parliament, it may well be that 10 per cent may go, we are not sure. But in any case, from what we understand DFAT’s position is that if it does go to any other institution, it must have some form of linkage with Parliament. So it is there to strengthen Parliament’s position. So, if you look at it, you are looking at \$9.9 million plus \$6.3 million that is the Parliamentary budgetary allocation.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Just a final one, Madam Chair. It is just a question from a Member of Parliament to another Member of Parliament, whether the Honourable Minister of Finance is satisfied whether this allocation is sufficient for Parliament?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- For now, it is.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chair, just according to memory of the Budget Address, there was an allocation mentioned about the sitting allowance - I cannot see it here. Could the Honourable Minister can explain where the sitting allowance sits?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is within the lump sum amount. Like I said, we do not do the breakdown but when we had discussions with the Secretary-General to Parliament, we had discussions about an increase in sitting allowance and that has been factored into the amount. The issue arose that there will be more Committee meetings because we expect to have a very high level agenda of a lot of Bills, so the different Committees will need to sit more and that is why there has been a bit of allocation made there. As to how the Secretary-General to Parliament will allocate those funding, that is really up to her at the end of the day.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Chair, in regards to the Presidential Address, there will be some legislation put to Parliament in 2016. I am just asking the Honourable Minister whether the funds is available to cater for the work of the Committees and the travel in this regard.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, if you can just please clarify what as the Presidential Address got to do with the Committee allowances?

HON. A.T. VADEI.- I am sorry, Madam Chair. Regarding the number of legislations that will be put or tabled in Parliament in 2016, the Committees and the Members of Parliament will be involved and the travel and support that will cover the legislation in terms of the logistics, whether the allowance allocated to us is enough for 2016.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I have already answered the question Honourable Member that we believe we have discussions with the Secretary-General to Parliament that it is enough.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, I have the little bit of trouble with respect to this whole issue of sitting allowance, I just want to have some clarification because my understanding is that the Decree before the first sitting of the Parliament actually determines the salaries and the sitting allowances. So, how are we increasing the sitting allowance without a change in the Decree and whether we have had that discussion? We are talking about a total review of the remuneration and sitting allowances, so I would suggest that we do that instead of increasing just the sitting allowance now. I am not sure whether we can do that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the matter is very simple. The Honourable Dr. Biman Prasad is very accurate in saying that in the Decree, the allocation has been made for sitting allowances, not necessarily an increase in the amount of the sitting allowance but it is for more sitting days. That is what it is for because you will have more Bills, and you need to sit more. But again you are right. You may not have realised it that you are right again unknowingly that the Decree actually has a cap on how much sitting allowance you can get.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- \$15,000.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- \$15,000, you know that very well.

So, it is \$15,000 but we have given this increase in the allocation for more sitting days in anticipation that the Emoluments Committee will actually come with a recommendation to remove that cap because we need to sit more. So we are anticipating that you will be able to sit more and the Emoluments Committee will make their recommendation, so we are thinking three steps ahead.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any further comments? We have an amendment. Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Salote Radrodoro and the question is, Head 12 be increased by \$2 million in respect of SEG 6.

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	:	14
Noes	:	28
Not Voted	:	6

Proposed amendment is defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, the Parliament will now vote on Head No. 12. The question is, that Head 12, Parliament be approved. Does any Member oppose the Motion?

Head 12 - Parliament

Question put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	:	28
Noes	:	16
Not Voted	:	4

Head 12 agreed to.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, we were due for break at 7.30pm, but we have only three more Heads to go. Let us finish it, and then we will break and have refreshments.

Head 13 – Independent Commissions

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, in regards to SEG 6, I move a motion without notice that Head 13 be increased by \$2 million in respect of Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. While the form is being filled, do you have any comments to make, by anyone?

HON. B. SINGH.- Madam Chairperson, can I ask the Honourable Salote Radrodro if she could explain why she wants an increase in the allocation? She has not deliberated on that.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Chairperson, I notice that in SEG 6, \$1.1 million is given, and it is under Requisition to the Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission. The fact that we are just transitioning into a new democracy, after a long period of nine years under Military rule. We know there had been many cases of human rights abuse, so this is an opportunity that we give them more resources so they are able to do their work properly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the honourable Salote Radrodro, and the question is, that Head 13 be increased by \$2 million in respect of SEG 6?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast

Ayes	:	16
Noes	:	28
Not Voted	:	4

Proposed amendment defeated.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Chairperson, on SEG 6, in regards to the Public Service Commission, and I move a motion without notice that Head 13 be reduced by \$2 million in respect of their reduced role in terms of the new Public Service Commission?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Can I say something, Madam Chairperson? I just need to say, I know honourable Radrodro is going to move the motion in any case, but just for the public's attention if they are watching. As I had mentioned quite clearly in the Budget Address, the Public Service Commission as it was run is now being demarcated between the specific Commission itself, which is the Commission, that is why it is under an independent body, and the Ministry of Civil Service, and the reason why the Commission is given \$5.5 million is because the salaries for the Permanent Secretaries will come from there. So, you want to reduce the salaries of the Permanent Secretaries?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Alright, very good. Thank you.

(Laughter)

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- You must use the locals and not pay more for the expatriates.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- How do you know they are expatriates? It might be you, you might apply.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, that was an oversight. I will withdraw that because of the Permanent Secretary's salaries are also included under that Head. Thank you, Madam Chair.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Chair, in terms of SEG 6, if the PSC is going to be abolished by the end of December, will the Minister convene a Special Sitting of Parliament to amend Sections 125 and 126 of the Constitution, which provides for a Public Service Commission, and not a Ministry of Civil Service as the Budget Estimate captures under Head 17.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Draunidalo should not just simply read stuff. I had just said that the PSC continues. The Public Service Commission is in place. A new Ministry of Civil Service has been created, not at the expense of abolishing PSC. PSC is still there, that is why it is there. In that amount of money is the Salaries and the Operational cost of PSC, which is very little. That is what it is for. The Public Service Commission acts independently now, that is why it is there.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, on SEG 6, in 2015 an allocation of \$635,070 was under Requisition for the Accountability and Transparency Commission. The same amount has been allocated for 2016, also under Requisition. Can the Honourable Minister inform the House whether the allocation made for this year has been used? If not, why? What guarantee is there, that the Commission will be set up and fully utilised of the allocated amount for next year?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, honourable Member. As I have already answered this question previously, it has not been utilised. The Honourable Member knows that, because we do not have the law in place. As I have mentioned probably about half an hour ago, we are tabling the actual Bill in the February session, which will then help create the law, which is the Code of Conduct, and then it will get up and running. So, we have made the allocation in anticipation.

Similarly, as Freedom of Information. You will see that \$100,000 has been allocated there. There is also the FOI Bill will also be tabled together with the Code of Conduct in the February session. It will go to the Committee stage, and then will go through the process, then at the end of it, we create these two bodies and the laws will be in place.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Radrodro?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, can I ask the Honourable Minister of Finance? Can I raise this now because according to the Appropriation Bill, it is on Head No. 17, it is listed under Public Service Commission but Head 17 according to the Estimate is the Ministry of Civil Service and in the Bill - Head No. 17 which reads Public Service Commission and the amount is the same \$5.8 according to the Bill. But it does not agree with this one, so can you just explain why it is reading like that in the Bill maybe, I am taking us forward, the Bill and the Estimate.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sure, Madam Chair, we are voting on the Heads. If there is a correction to be made to the Bill we will make it when we come to the Bill but at the moment, the Head reads that Head 13 has Independent Commissions and the Ministry of Civil Service is on Head 17.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON- Thank you, there being no other comments, the Parliament will now vote on Head No. 13 and the question is that, the amount of Head No. 13 - Independent Commissions be approved. Does any Member oppose the motion?

There being an opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	14
Not voted	:	5

Head 13 agreed to.

Head 14 – Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Madam Chair.- Thank you, Head No. 14 – Programme 1, Activity 1 is open for debate. Do you have any comments on Activity 1?

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Chair, first I thought I would ask my colleagues that we should not ask this question but perhaps we should. On SEG 5 - \$750,000 allocated for consultancy Queens Council from abroad, can the Honourable Minister advise on the return on investment to taxpayers and what this Silica coming to prosecute?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the Criminal Justice System cannot be based on return on investment that will be quite tragic to say, “we’ll let us have that kind of lawyer or let us pay them less or let us have a court system that is not fully equipped because the return on investment is low”. The criminal justice system cannot be judged on that basis.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, you may rise to raise your concern. No, thank you.

Therefore, there being no other comments, the Parliament will now vote on Head 14. The question is, that the amount of Head No. 14 – Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions be approved? Does any Member oppose the motion? There being opposition, Parliament will vote.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	28
Noes	:	15
Not voted	:	5

Head 14 agreed to.

Head 15 – Ministry of Justice

MADAM CHAIR.- Head No. 15 – Ministry of Justice is open for debate. Activity 1, any comments?

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you, Madam Chair, SEG 7, would the Honourable Minister please explain what the \$100,000 allocation is for anti-corruption activities and whether this in any way touches on FICAC's jurisdiction, whether it is duplication or separate jurisdiction?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Honourable Member, for your question. Through you, Honourable Chair, no, it does not have anything to do with FICAC. It is because Fiji has ratified the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and UNCAT is where state parties have to ratify it. So, it is not an independent commission that ratifies UNCAT because as you know, all UN Conventions have to be signed by the parties.

Fiji has been invited to also, for example, attend to peer reviews of other countries, it takes account of the fact that we go out to do peer reviews. We also, some years back, used to get people to come and peer review us in terms of our compliance with UNCAT. So, this is what it takes care of, for example, if there is any initiative on general public awareness that government need to be involved in because of some inter-regional or you have the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), then this is what this money takes care of. We recently had one of the staff from the Solicitor-General's office who does anti-corruption matters, had to go to Russia for UNODC meeting and that is where the funding comes from.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, do you have any other comments on Activity 1 – Administration. There being none, let us have a look at Activity 1 – General Administration for Fiji Correction Services, do you have any comments? Activity 2 – Penal Institution.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Activity 1, Madam, 15.2.1 SEG 7, could the Honourable Minister, please, explain this new Activity under SEG 7 which did not appear in the 2015 Budget for Stand By Arrangement for Rapid Deployment of Peacekeeping Missions and its allocation under Requisition of \$105,000 for the Correction Services? I also move to amend through this allocation, Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Orders 100(2), I move without notice that Head 15 be decreased by \$105,650 in respect to, I am sorry, Madam, just the question that I asked earlier in regards to the new allocation, no motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Chair, this allocation, yes, it was not made available this year. This is an undertaking that Fiji gave at the UN because the UN obviously sees Fijians as good peacekeepers and that they have put in a request that our security agencies may be called up for some rapid deployment to peacekeeping missions so they have asked our RFMF, the Police and the Prisons Department. So, that money is there in the event that we do get asked and that is, for example, for training et cetera, before they go off in the event that we do get requested that is what it is for. So, again Honourable Members, it is not like we do not make an allocation and if we do get asked then we have to steal from somewhere else within the Ministry.

HON. A. M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chair, 15.2.18 on allocation for Construction of K9 Dog Unit. I would like to request the Honourable Minister to advise whether this allocation is enough to complete the construction of this unit in this next year.

HON. A. SAYED-KAIYUM.- K9 Dog Unit. Yes, Honourable Member, this is the request put in by the Prisons. A lot of these things obviously, the request comes from the Ministries themselves or the agencies and they believe that this is enough.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Chair, I would like to move two motions. The first motion is with Head 15, Activity 1, and that is pursuant to Standing Orders 100(2).

I move without notice that Head 15 be decreased by \$100,000 in respect of Anti-Corruption activities and the second motion, I move, Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 100(2) and this is Head 15-2-1, I move without notice that Head 15 be decreased by \$105,650 in respect of Anti-Corruption Activities and the reason that I move the two motions is again, these two amounts of money, I know one is on stand-by but it is again going to UN activities. The UN already owes this country so much money, so much money it owes this country. I do not know why this poor country and the poor taxpayers, why we are subsidising that big body? It is not for us to subsidise and, Madam Chair, already we have spent too much money there and UN needs to pay Fiji, not the other way round.

Any further comments on this issue?

Activity 2 on the institutions; any comments on that 2?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chair, SEG 5, there is \$150,000 allocation for training for 2016; would the Honourable Minister, please, clarify the specifics of this training allocation?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is a training for the penal institutions or the Fiji Correction Service, Madam Chair.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Chair, on SEG 7, can the Honourable Minister, please, assure this House that Annual Report for the Fiji Corrections Service will be tabled in Parliament with urgency so that taxpayers can assess the impact of the Yellow Ribbon Projects and the Rehabilitation Programmes allocation over the past years, particularly in the lives of the prisoners themselves.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Chair, I can tell you, the rate of recidivism in Fiji has decreased because of these programmes.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- The question is on the Annual Report?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Would you like to reply to the question on the Annual Report?

HON. A. SAYED- KHAIYUM.- No, I am not going to comment on that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. We have two amendments proposed. The first one - Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Draunidalo. The question is that, Head 15 be decreased by \$105,650 in respect of Standby Arrangement for Rapid Deployment to Peacekeeping Missions. Does anyone oppose?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	16
Noes	:	28
Not Voted	:	4

Proposed amendment defeated.

The second one is, Parliament will vote on the amendment in the name of the Honourable Tupou Draunidalo. The question is that, Head 15 be decreased by \$100,000 in respect of Anti-Corruption activities, does anyone oppose?

Question on proposed amendment put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	29
Not Voted	:	4

Proposed amendment defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of Head 15. which we will now vote for.

The Parliament will now vote on Head No. 15, the question is that, the amount of Head No. 15 - Ministry of Justice be approved, does any Member oppose the motion? There being some opposition, Parliament will vote on this motion.

Question put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	29
Noes	:	16
Not Voted	:	3

Head 15 agreed to.

Thank you, Honourable Members, we have now concluded voting on Heads 1 to 15, as set out in the timetable agreed to by the Whips, and 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.

The Parliament adjourned at 8.02 p.m.