

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

WEDNESDAY, 29TH JULY, 2020

[CORRECTED COPY]

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WEDNESDAY, 29TH JULY, 2020

The Parliament met at 10.01 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Tuesday, 28th July, 2020, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to today's sitting of Parliament. I also welcome all those watching the live broadcast and the live streaming of today's proceedings. I thank everyone for taking an interest in the workings of your Parliament.

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to move his motion.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS (BUDGET AMENDMENT) BILL 2020

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the -

- (a) Telecommunications (Budget Amendment) Bill 2020 be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament;
- (d) Bill must be debate and voted upon by Parliament immediately after the vote on the Consequential Bills for the 2020-2021 Budget tabled on 17th July, 2020; and
- (e) Time for the debate for the Bill be limited to ensure that the Bill is debated and voted upon during this sitting of Parliament.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to speak on his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will be very brief. This Bill essentially relates to a number of policy announcements that were made during the Budget Address on 17th July, 2020, and we look forward to debating these amendments come the right time to do so.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion.

Honourable Members, as no other Member wishes to speak, I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to speak on reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I have no further comments.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to move his motion.

FIJI NATIONAL PROVIDENT FUND (BUDGET AMENDMENT) BILL 2020

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the -

- (a) Fiji National Provident Fund (Budget Amendment) Bill 2020 be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament;
- (d) Bill must be debate and voted upon by Parliament immediately after the vote on the Consequential Bills for the 2020-2021 Budget tabled on 17th July, 2020; and
- (e) Time for the debate for the Bill be limited to ensure that the Bill is debated and voted upon during this sitting of Parliament.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to speak on his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this amendment is part of the Budget announcement that was made in respect of the continuation of the 5 percent contribution by employers and employees till 31st December, 2021. Also, the amendment seeks to bring in a new product for pensioners, to give them a lot more flexibility, in particular those who had retired. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion.

Honourable Members, as no other Member wishes to speak, I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have no further comments to make. Thank you, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

BUSINESS LICENSING (REPEAL) BILL 2020

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the -

- (a) Business Licensing (Repeal) Bill 2020 be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament;
- (d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament immediately after the vote on the Consequential Bills for the 2020-2021 Budget tabled on 17th July, 2020; and
- (e) Time for debate on the Bill be limited to ensure the Bill is debated and voted upon during this sitting of Parliament.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to speak on his motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, this particular Bill goes directly to the Budget announcement itself which is the doing away of business licences altogether. This is the consequential legislative amendment which, in fact, is not an amendment, it is actually repealing of the Business Licensing Act and, indeed, the consequential amendments to all the subsequent laws that has a reference to the Business Licensing Act itself which is actually set out in Section 4.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is all part of the Budget.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion.

As no other Member wishes to speak, I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have no further comments. Thank you, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE 2020-2021 APPROPRIATION BILL 2020

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, pursuant to the resolution of Parliament passed on Monday, 27th July, 2020, the Honourable Attorney-General will be exempted from the speaking time limitations.

I now call upon the Honourable Attorney- General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications, to give his Right of Reply. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I intend to be not too long. I would like to, first of all, begin by thanking on the many ordinary Fijians who had actually contributed to the formulation of this Budget:

- our business leaders;
- the many individuals Fijians who sent in their submissions;
- people on the streets;
- people through *Facebook*;
- our dedicated technocrats and bureaucrats;
- doctors and nurses who also gave the input in respect of the way forward regarding the health systems;
- the Honourable Prime Minister's agreement to put in place a visionary budget through the visionary leadership;
- our Cabinet colleagues; and
- everyone else who have contributed in a very positive manner to the formulation of this particular Budget.

I want to also reiterate because these are extraordinary times as has been highlighted which obviously seems to be in loss for the Opposition, the enormous effort by our people at the frontline - the health workers, doctors, nurses, RFMF personnel, Police, who are now also part and parcel of these new measures we have put in place to try and reignite the economy through the Bula Bubble, the Blue Lanes, in particular which is already working now, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I would like to acknowledge their contribution and their continued assistance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, of course, I would like to also thank those people who have helped in the maintenance of the curfew, downloading of the careFIJI App which I intend to get back to, because these are actually extraordinary times.

The world throughout, every single country in the world has been affected by COVID-19. Every single country in the world, Mr. Speaker, Sir, has had an economic downturn.

Every single country in the world, Mr. Speaker, Sir, has had people losing jobs, have had people being sick at the very least and some people, indeed, dying.

These are enormously challenging times, Mr. Speaker, Sir, so it required a political mindset. They took a very long term view, a long term goal being put in place and, indeed, a position that required a national effort. I have checked, Mr. Speaker, Sir, after the Budget was delivered, I was quite, in a way, buoyed by the comment from the Honourable Leader of Opposition, where he said, and I quote:

“We have to be positive when we talk about the measures that have been announced today (meaning 17th July, 2020 Budget announcement). It is a courageous Budget and it

is up to us to critic it properly and hopefully, the nation can get behind it and go achieve the goal they believe that they can achieve to get the economy back.”

I was quite buoyant by that because I thought, in here we have a new mindset, a new political approach to a once in a hundred year lifetime situation and we will now get on with the business of actually moving the country forward and, indeed, what they always say in the bipartisan manner.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it completely changed and I do not know whether it had to do with the machination within the Party or whatever it was. But from what I heard, unfortunately, I was ill in the past couple of days and I still am to an extent, but from whatever little I saw on television and from what was reported to the media, from what our colleagues told us and the Honourable Prime Minister passed messages to me, it would appear that the past two days became simply moments of ridicule for them, moments to lie, moments to try and undermine, moments to not try and recognise the hard work that has been put in and the philosophical outlook of the way forward. They simply became political point-scoring moments.

But, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I was sitting there and thinking, what is the impact of this? What kind of deleterious effect it is having on the mindset of our people? What kind of rationalisation do they have in their minds? You have newspapers. Honourable Professor Prasad’s paper, going around having headlines, without even a single reference or question to ask whether what he was claiming was correct or not.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the situation we are in. So what type of mindset are we trying to inculcate in the public? It is so superficial, it is so shallow. In fact, it is so deceitful - quoting from the Bible, 666, bringing items, like tinned fish, all of those sorts of things, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is what I call filled with misplaced contempt for what is actually good and what is genuine. That is what it is, it completely ignores what is happening throughout the world.

I remember once, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in Parliament when we were debating, Honourable Professor Prasad in this House had said, “in politics everything is fair”. And I remember at that point in time (you check the *Daily Hansard*) saying, “Not everything is fair.” As they say, in love and war everything is fair”, I believe not so. You must have principles, you must have values. There are certain boundaries and certain lines you do not cross.

You must come to this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and feign. Do not feign empathy for the poor, do not feign your patriotism, intellectual input, credibility by producing some email that he did not read the full content of, they have already put on their *Facebook* page. He did not actually put up all the other emails. Did they read the full content? And this is a Professor in this kind of things.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in one breadth, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition criticises the RBF but in the next sentence, very hurriedly uses their figures to actually backup his own argument. What kind of contradiction is this? It is a paradoxical approach, intellectually dishonest. This is the level of debate that we actually have in Parliament, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, listening to all the newspaper and please, if you can stop having your private conversation. If we look at the way that the *Fiji Times* has been going on about this without any reference to us, those of you who know Bollywood, it reminds me of one 1980s movie where there used to be a character called Kader Khan. He was actually a comedian but he was also an atrocious guy with a very negative role he played. And there is one particular movie in which he was the opposition leader and obviously he was supposed to be the prime minister or the chief minister of that State.

That particular State, Mr. Speaker, Sir, actually had a huge flood. There was people who were dying, the bridges had washed away, et cetera. So, the opposition leader calls his favourite newspaper reporter in and says, “Look, if the prime minister goes to the flood-prone areas by helicopter, your headline should be, ‘people are suffering yet prime minister takes the helicopter’.” If he does not take the helicopter but takes the car or the train, then you must say, “People are waiting and yet he chose to go....”

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Is she getting exasperated? Control yourself! Check your heart beat!

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I will say the story again.

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You are not the speaker!

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would please, request if they stop telling me to sit down. The Standing Orders have been put in place.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will repeat the story. The opposition leader said, “If the Prime Minister travels to flood-prone area by helicopter your headline must be ‘Prime Minister travels by helicopter and people are suffering on the ground - expensive ride’.” If he chooses not to go by helicopter but goes by car then you write, ‘People are suffering and waiting for him, why did he not take the helicopter?’” Precisely, what Honourable Professor Prasad in the *Fiji Times* had conspired to do. Precisely what he has done!

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wanted to say this before I get on to the nuts and bolts of the Budget Debate itself. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition talked a lot about why we did not take views of Mick Beddoes and Savenaca Narube.

One of things that I have to take my hat off to Savenaca Narube for is that, he actually prepared an alternative budget, what have you done? What have you done? You had the opportunity, you have more people, more resources but you did not do any alternative budget because you are scared. You are scared and you do not know what to say. You do not know what to cut and what to increase.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at least he had the gumption to do it and obviously revealed his own frailties by doing an alternative budget. But the fact of the matter is, you have never done one. You have never done the budget, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the point of the matter is that, there is intellectual dishonesty. Let me give you few examples.

Mick Beddoes suggested (I do not know whoever wrote the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's speech whether he told you about this or not) that civil servants should only work three days a week and, therefore, they should be paid only three days a week. So, what is going to happen to the nurses, the doctors, et cetera? Therefore, it would have cut the civil servants pay by 40 percent. I want all the civil servants to listen to this.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Savenaca Narube said we should increase VAT to 12 percent. We should impose an additional 20 percent company tax surcharge, increase personal income tax, increase duty on motor vehicles and cut the civil servants' salaries. And yet, they are holding their submissions up, as some kind of alternative to this Budget?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, no country is raising taxes. When you do not have the ability to pay tax, why raise tax? What are you trying to do? Are you trying to undermine confidence when people are losing jobs? Do you want to increase corporate taxes when companies are now losing business? Is this is the alternative? These are questions, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that need to be asked.

We have not cut civil servants' salaries. We are the largest employer in Fiji. If we cut civil servants' salaries, we are sucking out and even if we did 10 percent, at least, \$120 million to \$130 million from the economy. They will not be able to spend that money, therefore, you will not have consumption. When you do not have consumption, you will pay VAT. They look after other people.

Yes, we have made some adjustments in terms of overtime, they understand that. In fact, those of you who are driven so much by social media, if you look at the social media, people watching the Budget Address, the moment we announced that there will not be any civil servants' pay cuts, literally people all dropped off because the civil servants were waiting to see if there will be a pay cut or not. They thought there would be one, but there was not one. And since then, we received many congratulations of people saying, "thank you".

But, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a bigger picture. Just because the economy slowed down in the private sector it does not mean that civil servants do not have to deliver services. The nurses have to work; the doctors have to work; medical assistants have to work; the Police and the Military all have to work; they have to provide services.

With this new announcement of the cuts that we have made, they need to become less bureaucratic and become more efficient. So we need them, and we are paying them. They will be the one (key stakeholders) to drive the impetus we have given to the private sector. And this, the Opposition came in here saying that we should have listened to the people for the civil servants' pay cut.

Honourable Professor Prasad, again, wrote an article on his web page in the *Fiji Times*, yet he denied it!

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You know the truth.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You know, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I know the truth, that is why I am saying it. Unfortunately, you do not! You do not know the truth.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the point with Honourable Professor Prasad is this, and I will get to your obsequiousness, he is so busy, first of all, trying to be so obsequious to the Opposition, which means smarmy (if you know the meaning of that).

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, so eager to roll over and, please, so eager!

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So eager!

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This morning round about 3.00 a.m., I was trying to actually put together my notes, thinking of what of I am going to say. And I realised all the contradictions that kept on coming from the Opposition which kind of reminded me of my young son who is actually directing and I used to do a lot of points before, and I came up with a point for you, Honourable Professor Prasad. It goes like this, “He will obfuscate, he will procrastinate, with no values or principles. The truth, he will swindle, lest his ego dwindle.” That is for you.

(Laughter)

That is for you, Honourable Prasad, because your ego gets in the way, and I find it quite actually an affront. I find it an affront, that even the two Honourable Members from his Party who are behind him claim theirs is a legendary Party.

Honourable Tikoduadua, who I have been extremely restrained with because I treated him as a friend, I still thought of him as a friend, obviously, he does not with me.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, he produced an email that I sent to the Honourable Prime Minister, and I have got other emails to that. He did not have the courtesy (I understand the Honourable Jone Usamate talked about it) of reading the rest of the email. I know they put it on their web page, there is no conspiracy.

In fact, there is an email that says that if he used those base figures, we would have showed a growth in 2008, when the whole world knew that we did not grow in 2008. Honourable Professor Prasad, understands that. In 2008, if we had used those figures, we would not have grown. This is the level of obsequious there, they are trying to obfuscate issues. The reason why you are yelling is because you have been caught out. You are an intellectually dishonest Politician!

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have read the whole thing, he has not read it.

The point of the matter is, we have an Opposition, since the pronouncement of the Budget, I think we went into a big spin because of the enormous changes that were actually put out, and they did not know how to handle it. This is why the quality and the level of contribution has been so abysmal over the past few days.

The Honourable Professor Prasad is trying to spin the numbers. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition tried to, again, spin the numbers, pick and choose as he likes, tried to undermine institutions and here we are, we have international monetary agencies believing in our economic growth, believing in our economic strength and economic management of our finances and are willing to give us loans as we highlighted at concessionary rates at zero percent, at 1.5 percent.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the problem with him. If they did not believe we had capacity, they would not have done so. He just stands and yells things, and that is the problem. He does not want to actually dig up the truth. With that, we have, in fact, more money being lent to us but we have said "No".

Of course, the fact of the matter is, your debt to GDP ratio will go up because your GDP has come down, and anyone knows that. If your tourism numbers go down, your GDP output will go down. Obviously, therefore, your debt to GDP ratio will go up. If your tourism numbers fall, you do not have revenue, therefore, you do not have much operating revenue to work from. This is like teaching basic economics and we have to stand here and teach these people.

You know this is the problem, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I have said this in Parliament before. When Honourable Professor Prasad tends to interject so much, he knows he is caught out and as I have said previously, the more he yells, the more soft ground he is on.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality of the matter is this, we have said that we need to change the mindset. We have said the entire philosophy of this Budget, that we need to prepare ourselves when the borders open. We cannot react to situations.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We need to be proactive. We cannot be caught with our pants down, Honourable Professor Prasad. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, Sir, if you look at all the measures that have been announced, firstly, in respect of:

- unemployment benefits of \$100 million;
- the increase for social welfare;
- the police and the law and order situation;
- the increase for agriculture; and
- capacity building within the Ministry of Health, these are not simply just reacting but prepositioning ourselves.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have been given the opportunity, I should say, to be able to start off with a clean slate. So, we have looked at the entire tariff system - 1,600 line items. Again, they are saying, it is white goods.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is an obfuscation. I have got a list of all the things here that we have zero-rated or reduced. They are saying it is only for white goods, but also there is fruits, vegetables, pasta, potatoes, dried condiments, soup broth, salmon, sardines, washing detergent, toothbrush,

blankets, linen, exercise books, liquid soap, combs, baby walkers, lens and spectacles have been zero-rated completely, as well as life jackets.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in fact, we have been working with all our counterparts, including the private sector. If you look at the revised list as we have announced, things like undergarments, pantyhose, men's vests, children's vests, all zero-rated.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, all of these things we have been working on in the past few days. Is he telling me or are you telling me that you do not need underpants, or you do not need the other goods, or washing detergent or toothpaste or you do not even need toothbrush? This is the kind of obfuscation that is taking place. He is sitting there gleefully, gleaming to himself. This is the shameful act, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I take exception to that.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- In the same way, Mr. Speaker, Sir, everyone knows that the global bonds mature this year, and he knows that too. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the funds are already secured. We have been having debts from the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL), from the Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT), from National Bank of Fiji (NBF), and he knows that. You see, because you have been obsequious, you need to be obsequious to him, that is his problem, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the fact of the matter is that, we have the global bond repayment this year. That is what he knows - juggling of figures, say \$100 million which I said to the Fiji Chamber of Commerce gathering on Saturday. Here we are, Mr. Speaker, going out to the outside world trying to put our best foot forward. They are recognising what we are saying and they recognise what we have done. Yet, these people, for political gain, want to portray Fiji in a bad light. That is what they want to do. They want our ratings to come down.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- See, look at him! Hear what he said.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Not just Fiji, just you. What an idiotic thing to say. Thank you very much for that actually. Thank you very much for that encapsulates the entire thinking of the Opposition, including you, which is personalised. Everything is personalised.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the fact of the matter is, we have many countries that have taken these measures and we are in a very good position to be able to take these measures.

We have been told that the ease of doing business in Fiji is pretty bad, with all these bureaucracy we have now removed business licences and stamp duties are gone. I do not know how

many of them actually spoke about that, how many have actually mentioned the fact that now tariff rates are basically 5 percent across, which will reduce corruption and introduce efficiency.

How many of them talked about how, rather than trying to monitor that, we can now look at the standard of goods coming in. They did not talk about that. How many of them talked about the fact that ordinary Fijians can now get \$30,000 housing grant.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- None!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We have had so many queries. The Honourable Minister for Housing and Community Development will also tell you that. They did not mention that at all. They did not mention the fact that we are trying to preposition private sector investment so it can create jobs. They did not mention any of that. And they have the audacity to come and say here that they are trying to do this for Fiji, they are trying to tell us facts, what a load of baloney!

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the fact of the matter is this, we have a number of measures that we put in place. We have a number of prepositioning policies that have been put in place. We have also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, try to engender within the economy a taxation regime that has reduced significantly many of the taxes.

We looked at, for example, ECAL and the rationale for that. We have reduced it from 10 percent to 5 percent. We still need ECAL.

We have all of the 40 villages to relocate to higher grounds and we need the funding for that. We need renewable energy, we need to have roads and they need to be addressed because they have been washed away by encroaching waters, inundation of waters with the rising sea levels.

We have removed STT, Mr. Speaker, Sir. All of these benefits have been put in place because there are long-term strategic thinking, Mr. Speaker, Sir. We have slashed departure tax by \$100. We have, Mr. Speaker, Sir, allocated \$60 million to Fiji Airways so that they can come up with packages. I just spoke to Fiji Airways last night, already over 140 hotels and properties have decided to work with Fiji Airways to come up with this package.

When we tell them that we need to have inclusive rates included, they said ‘No, you do not have the right attitude’, all newspapers talk about that. However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we need to change the ball game and people know that.

I understand someone said, “Oh, we’ve only given money to tourism”. Mr. Speaker, Sir, no, but, I think the Honourable Bulitavu may have said that (I am not sure). Does he know how many people along the Coral Coast, in the Mamanucas, in the Yasawas and in Vanua Levu who are directly engaged in work in the tourism sector? How many people who have performed *meke*, people who sing in the bands that are engaged in the tourism sector? Did they talk about the 150 percent rebate that we said? Anyone who hires a Meke Group, a Band, et cetera, gets 150 percent tax deduction. They did not mention that.

We are talking about real people, and these are real people, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Yet, they fail to mention that. Yet, they fail to highlight that and they try to obscure and say, “only in tourism”.

Tourism contributes 40 percent towards our GDP, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The fact of the matter is that, we have half-baked approaches from the Opposition in respect of this. I just want to very quickly once again highlight the increases that we have in the Budget.

On health, we have budget increase from \$347.5 million to \$394 million, an increase of \$46 million. We are hiring an additional 223 intern nurses who will become fulltime nurses; 40 midwives; 105 medical interns and fulltime medical officers; CWM Maternity Hospital, Labasa Hospital Upgrade (\$3,000,000), an increase of \$4,000,000; purchase of Biomedical Equipment (\$25,000,000) and COVID-19 Contingency Fund.

On Police, an increase in the budget to \$200 million, up by \$37.3 million and is for Phase II Reform and Restructure Completion, which includes the regularisation of special constables, recruitment of 30 civilians, filling of 394 vacant positions, including 257 promotions, 127 new recruits, completion of the Police Stations in Nakasi, Nadi, Lautoka, and Nalawa Police Stations.

On education, Free Education, I think, someone from the other side tried to give wrong figures. Free education still continues, yet they say that we are not doing anything for the poor.

We now have electricity bills being paid up to 31st March next year, for those who earn less than \$30,000. The extension of water disconnection policy is in place and they say that we are not doing anything for the poor and ordinary people.

The suspension of TELS loans so that those people who are on TELS loans do not have to do their repayments and they can continue to work.

On social welfare assistance, an increase of \$14.4 million. We have the DFAT now working with the Department of Social Welfare to put in place an IT system so as to ensure that our social welfare recipients are paid on time, that we have proper data, et cetera.

Construction of the Barefoot College, Mr. Speaker, Unemployment Benefit as I had highlighted, \$100 million with \$5 million, is going towards the reskilling and retraining of people, many people will change their jobs, all of these things are there for the ordinary Fijians.

On communications, Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, Online Business and Construction Licensing System will take place and should be completed in the next nine months or so.

All of these is prepositioning Fiji and prepositioning our economy, Mr. Speaker, Sir. All of these also, at the same time, is all about looking after ordinary Fijians. So the fact of the matter is, on Wednesday I had rung the Secretary-General to Parliament saying that we would like to offer a Budget Session to the Opposition and we got a message the next day saying that five of them will turn up, and we had said 1 o'clock.

We waited till 20 minutes to 2.00 p.m. or 10 minutes to 2.00 p.m. actually. Then we were initially told that they were coming, they were on their way, but at 10 minutes to 2.00 p.m., we were told that they were not coming any more. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is the prerogative of the Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua, who I understand is now the timekeeper of everyone. You should make a note of that, who turned up late and who did not.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, but what really actually caught my attention was, the civil servants who were there actually could not believe it. They were all geared up, these people have been away for many nights and were there to talk about the Budget. They had people from FRCS, the Ministry of Economy waiting, about 15 of them, and when I told them, "The Opposition is coming", they waited for 40 minutes or 50 minutes. And then when the Opposition was not coming, there was the look of, you know, disgust on their faces, that here, they are working hard and these people decided not to turn up. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the kind of message that they are sending.

In the same way, Mr. Speaker, Sir, just to show the calibre of reporting, I wanted to highlight *Fiji Times*. I have a set of questions yesterday, not about Budget issues but Honourable Qereqeretabua has said something like, “Did you come in late for the Budget? Can you comment on that?” This is the level of questions that we get from the good old *Fiji Times*, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

The last point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, Sir, all of these things we are doing is trying to preposition Fiji. The Honourable Prime Minister launched the careFIJI App a few weeks back. The careFIJI App, Mr. Speaker, Sir, was given to us by Singapore, it is the same source code that Australia uses. About a week and a half ago, on the *7.30 Report*, the Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, in a very proud manner stated that 40 percent of Australians have that App on their phones and the reason why he said that in a proud manner was because, it was one of the highest rates of upload of that App. But it goes to show that the contact tracing abilities to digital means is one of the better ways of doing contact tracing. I bet that none of you Honourable Members of the Opposition actually have your contact tracing App on careFIJI App.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Very poor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality of the matter is this. Let me reiterate that they have their favourite law firm. One of their lawyers writing an opinion piece in the *Fiji Times* saying, “Oh, because there is no privacy laws in Fiji, et cetera, we should not have the careFiji App.” You give more information to *Google*, *WhatsApp*, *Viber* and every other single App than you will ever give with this particular App.

All it simply does, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a concerted, political effort to undermine an effort to get people to come to Fiji. When an Australian or Kiwi....

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Let me just explain.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You don’t know what you are talking about. Please, keep quiet.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- When an Australian or a Kiwi or any other traveller now in the world actually look at whether to travel to a country or not, they look at your health capacity now. If we get a vaccine, of course, that is a different story. They look at whether everyone in Fiji is vaccinated or not. They look at your health capacity.

One of the critical issues in the COVID-19 pandemic is your ability to contact trace. So if, for example, you are in a room full of people for more than 15 minutes, two days later (as you are assuming) I had COVID-19. They will ask me, “who were you in the room with for the past few days”, so we can immediately get in touch with them so we can tell them, “please come in, we can check you for your symptoms.” That is how you stop it from spreading to the community.

No one in the human capacity can remember every single person they met. All that contact tracing does is that the phone is here, my Bluetooth at the moment is bouncing off the Honourable

Prime Minister's Bluetooth and all it does is records his number, that is all. It does not say where we met, it does not say we were holding hands or not, it does not say we were in a hotel room, under a mango tree or wherever.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You see, this is the kind of symptoms they will ask for.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This is the kind of cynicism when Apple Store have approved this, yet they are saying that. For me, this is a direct affront to the people of Fiji, it is a direct affront to the tourism workers in Fiji. Here we are trying hard so they will have confidence. They are saying, "Okay, Fiji has got contact tracing App, if I do go there, if there is a community outbreak, they can get in touch with me really quickly."

People watch your numbers. At the moment, our upload is only about 50,000; it is very low. We need to increase it. If we go out into the market, if you want to fill up the hotels in Taveuni, if you want to fill up the hotels in Savusavu, people will say, "has Fiji got a contact tracing App or not?"

University studies have proven that digital contact tracing is the best way to do it and once you get the number, it rolls off every 28 days, it falls off. It is only for the past 28 days. Mr. Speaker, Sir, assuming that I get COVID-19, then they will send me a PIN number, I have to agree to give my number. It will go simply to the Ministry of Health dashboard, there is a group of people there, all they will get is the numbers.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No name - where you met them, were you holding their hands or kissing them, they will not know. They will simply tell you what the number was, they will call that number and say, "excuse me, you have been in contact with someone who has just had COVID-19, can you please come in and get yourself checked?" When an Australian tourist or New Zealand tourist is looking at that, they will say, "This place is a safe place to go." That is all there.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, Sir, they are undermining it. Their supporters are undermining it, those savvy people. Suppose they are savvy on social media. This is the level of contribution by the Opposition. I just want to make a few very broad-based statements.

The fact of the matter is, I just wish, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that you actually stuck to your words, your first reaction. Even your new vice-President from Ra rang me up the next day on 18th July, 2020, may be this was before he became vice-President and said, "Very good Budget." Please, do not remove him but he said it was a very good Budget.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if the Honourable Leader of the Opposition actually had stuck to his words, we would have been having a completely different approach. The Fijian people would have actually understood that this Parliament actually want this country to move along. We need to get people back into their jobs. We need to get the tourists back in. We need the garment factories to work. We need businesses to do their business. We need the private sector to invest.

They did not talk about the fact we are giving all these incentives to the private sector, do substitution of loss, get various tax exemptions! Let me tell you, you are burying your heads in the

sand. There is a huge private sector positive reaction to this Budget. Huge! And, in fact, in the next few weeks, we will be commissioning a number of new projects. That is the reality.

It would have been wonderful if the Opposition actually took that line. You could have done your political point scoring later. You have not even mentioned the stamp duty removal, bane on our lives for years. No one mentioned that!

When Honourable Professor Prasad and other Honourable Members talked about being honest, where is the honesty in that?

(Hon. Professor B.C. Prasad interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- As I have said, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think this actually applies to many people. Even the sugarcane guaranteed price, they went on about that. They ran the article without even checking with us. Anyone who knows about the sugar industry knows that sugarcane payments are made up of four payments. The fourth payment is in the wash-up, which falls into the next financial year.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I talk about the budget for that financial year, that is the level of transparency we have for this financial year, for the three payments, it will be \$70, and obviously the fourth payment is the wash-up payment. How simple is that, Mr. Speaker, Sir?

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, he rubbed his hands with grease and said, "Oh, now, I can go and get the sugarcane farmers' vote." Suddenly, the ruck and if you pull from underneath this thing ...

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would stop addressing Honourable Professor Prasad and just wanted to say to the Fijian people that this Budget, under the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister, is a way forward to get us out of this pandemic situation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, no one knows, except God, what is going to happen with this pandemic next week. No one knows whether we are going to get our fourth phase, fifth phase, or whether someone would come up with a vaccine in three weeks' time. No one knows!

Until such time, we have to put our best foot forward. Until such time, we cannot be sitting around fiddling our thumbs, making all sorts of comments and assertions and doomsday speech, 666 and all of that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and not be proactive.

We have to, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I understand, in all of these, someone also brought the Qoliqoli Bill. Mr. Speaker, Sir, what an utter nonsense! In this situation, when we can spur up investment, when we are trying to actually spur draw a drive confidence, bringing in all these disruptive type of policies.

Honourable Professor Prasad, of course, obsequious again, will not say anything about it because he has got this culture of being obsequious.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality of the matter is that, we have put a best way forward, we are being proactive, we are going to look after those people who need assistance, unemployment benefits; we have to look after people of social welfare, we are going to look after people who need health services, we are going to look after law and order, we are going to provide impetus for the agricultural sector.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the same time, we are going to try and boost investment through private sector by developing relationships with the private sector, providing an open transparent system by reviewing the tariff headers, by putting in place various tax incentives and also at the same time, empowering ordinary Fijians.

Further, by giving them new forms of assistance, for example, housing grants, giving them access to other types of services and amenities and making it easier for them to do business; no more business licence. That is what we have done, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The feedback that we have got, is that, we are on a good track and we must be focused and need to be positive. I urge the Fijian people not to listen to the Opposition, do not believe the analysis by *Fiji Times*, this is just a smear propaganda campaign, but focus on the ground reality. That is what we need people to understand.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the fact of the matter is that, we have now a Budget to debate through Committee. If you look at it, all the figures that we put in place, have been thought out very well and thought out very hard, we have been frugal as much as possible, but we also have been strategic in respect of where we carry out the investments. I would like to once again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank numerous people who have actually helped us, both from the private sector, people in the Ministry of Economy and people from FRCS. The one person specifically I want to mention because tariff reduction was a huge and massive exercise which is still being carried out is Shalini Kumar from FRCS – 1,600 line items have been reduced. Till last night, they were working.

The young people, the young civil servants, the economists, et cetera, are very excited about this Budget. In the feedback, they are saying that this is really good, we are on a good path and they have chagrin for all of you who have been critical of it.

I want to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for his ability to understand the vision, to drive that vision and think outside the box, Honourable Pio Tikoduadua. You can die a thousand deaths for a leader like him than to follow for one minute the kind of treacherous politics that you profess and even for one minute, I will never join you.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the fact of the matter is that, we are now on a path of recovery and we pray to God that we get this COVID-19 behind us, we will be able to reposition ourselves well, let us be positive, let us help each other and get rid of negativity. Of course, there will be challenges and of course there could be another third fourth wave, but if we are positive, if we unite as a nation, speak as nation, think as a nation, and not be divided along the lines that you are talking about, then we will be in a much better position than where we are.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with those comments, I would like to now conclude my Right of Reply. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I thank the Honourable Minister for Economy for his Right of Reply.

Honourable Members, pursuant to Standing Order 99(3), the 2020-2021 Appropriation Bill, 2020 (Bill No.13 of 2020) has been read a second time and without any question being put, the Bill and the Estimates now stand referred to the Committee of Supply.

Honourable Members, on that note, we will adjourn for morning tea.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.00 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.30 a.m.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

Committee of Supply Process

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now resolve into Committee of Supply to consider each Head in the Budget Estimates. It is envisaged that at the end of this process, the Committee of Supply will then vote on the Schedules and Clauses of the 2020-2021 Appropriation Bill 2020.

For the information of Honourable Members, during the Committee stage, I will sit at the Table with the Secretary-General and Members will refer to me as Mr. Chairman. The Mace will also be placed on the lower bracket, signifying that Parliament is in Committee.

Honourable Members, the Secretary-General will announce each Head separately. Members may then speak on that Head and you may speak more than once on each Head. Honourable Members, please take note that in some of the Heads, there will be several programmes and activities listed. I remind Honourable Members that we will deal with these progressively and that we will not regress to the programmes and activities that we have covered or have been covered.

Honourable Members, as you may all be aware you may also move amendments to the estimates under the respective Heads. If a Member moves an amendment, debate will then be on the Head and the amendment as well. At the end of the debate, the amendment will be voted on first followed by a vote on the Head.

Honourable Members, for ease of process during the Committee of Supply, the amendment slips have been placed at your tables. Honourable Members, amendments are limited to those permitted under Standing Order 100(2), being an increase, decrease or removal of the item or sub-head from the Head being debated. There are Heads 1 to 50 which we need to get through, therefore, I will seek your full cooperation.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE 2020-2021 APPROPRIATION BILL, 2020

In Committee:

Head 1 – Office of the President

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, can I just get your attention. Before we move to Head 1 can I seek clarification from the Honourable Minister with respect to the abstract of expenditure by the standard group because I think in all the Heads, we are going to talk about established staff and wages so I thought if we get that clarification now it might be easier so we may not raise that in each of the Head. If that is alright with you, I want to raise that question.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Could you repeat the question?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- What I was saying is if I could seek clarification from the Honourable Minister about the actual abstract of expenditure and especially with respect to salaries and wages because every Head has a reduction so the total reduction from the last Budget to this one

is by about \$51 million across the board. So the question is, is that \$51 million in my view just the 5 percent FNPF reduction right across the board?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Not all the Heads have been decreased. You will see as I mentioned, some of the Heads have actually increased, Social Welfare and Agriculture, et cetera. The way you can do that is to look at a comparison, say Programme 1-1-1(1), you can see what the 2018-2019 was for the revised figure was and then the change then you got the new estimate.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- What I was saying is there a reduction right across the board. So, I said for us instead of us asking in each Head you know why there would be a reduction or increase. If we understand right from the beginning why this is the reduction in \$51 million then we will not have any questions in other Heads.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- But it is not as simple as that. The point is that there are some Ministries which have an increase in staff so not the same salaried staff numbers are maintained. For example, with the Police who have an additional allocation in respect of the staffing numbers, obviously FNPF goes along with it. The meal allowance, et cetera, goes along with it. So, similarly for example if you look at some of the expenditures in SEG 1 in some of the Ministries, there were positions that were previously unfilled.

So, whilst there are vacancies, you know I cannot tell you off-hand exactly how many of those positions are new or old. But what I can tell you is that, as you know the way that the Budgets now work is that we give the allocation to the Ministry or a particular Head and they make their own adjustments.

Previously, they had Person to Post (PP), you had to go and get approval for this position, this funding. Now, there is lot more flexibility so, for example, generally when the Ministry wants to come along and wants to, for example, increase the expenditure for personnel, they will try and justify that. But it does not necessarily stop them if they have been given like \$10 million, for example, staff expenditure, instead of having 50 positions, it does not stop them from having 65 or it does not stop them from having 45. Please, note that the Ministries actually do go through a restructure.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So overall, we are not expecting any kind of reduction in the number of civil servants?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, I mean, overall, as you said there is no specific job losses. There are certain positions, for example, sometimes when you have a contract which may not be renewed for various reasons. Someone is not performing and the Ministry may decide not to fill in that position because it is no longer required or sometimes there may be, for example, certain positions are actually subsumed into each other, so the salary may actually increase and therefore their Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) increases. So, you cannot apply a general rule, you cannot make those kind of assumptions.

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

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, sorry my apologies. May I also seek a clarification from the Honourable Minister for Economy, a similar query to Honourable Professor Prasad. In his Budget Announcement, he had stated the issue of overtime. So instead of paying overtime as stated at paragraph 4 on Page 1116 of the *Daily Hansard*, I noticed that even much under the different Heads that overtime is still budgeted, almost under every Head there is allocation for overtime even though in his Budget Address, he had stated that they will be removed. So can you please just provide a clarification instead of us going through every single Head and addressing the overtime amounts allocated? Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So the way it operates is that, its overtime, she get days off in lieu of overtime. You still have to pay them, then, but it is in lieu of that, so for example, if I am going to work say on a Sunday, normal circumstances if I work on Sunday, I get paid double time, and then I will still come back to work on Monday. So I may get double time and I work on Monday. Now, what we are saying is that, in lieu of you working on both days, you can take that time off, but you still have to get paid for it. No one goes unpaid, you still get paid for it. So that is why you actually have overtime, this is what is in the allocation.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- All right, I think we will move on. We will stick to the Programme as it is, and we can go through those clarifications later on.

Programme 1-1, any comments?

HON. MAJOR GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Chairman, a clarification, please? On Personal Emoluments, there is a reduction. Does that mean staff have been laid off or previously overstated?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, as you would know that we announced there is a 10 percent reduction in the Heads of different agencies, so the Official Secretary's salary is coming down by 10 percent, plus there is an alignment of filled positions against the payroll of \$62,000. So, no.

HON. MAJOR GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On SEG 4, the estimate was \$483,400, that actually shows an actual and expenditure of \$788.7 million. Was that an overspending of more than \$300,000 on that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry Sir. Could you please repeat that, what are you referring to?

HON. MAJOR GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- SEG 4. The 2018-2019 estimate was \$483,400.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, sorry. The 2019-2020 is \$404,800 and there has been an increase of \$5,500. No, sorry, 2019-2020 is \$404,800 and there has been an increase of \$5,500 so it has gone up to \$410,000.

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- The changes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sir, it has increased.

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Yes, it is an increase. Was that an over-expenditure?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- For example, we got fuel and oil. So, fuel and oil, there has been an increase of about \$3,457. In the 2019-2020 revised estimates, \$56,543, now we have added another \$3,477 and also there has been an increase of \$10,000 for the electricity supply. These include, of course, the State House, the compound fencing lights, quarters, et cetera in Suva and Lautoka. That is right, there is a slight increase.

Some of the areas within that SEG and please, I hope the Members understand it, within the SEGs itself, you can have decreases and you can also have increases. So, for example, the upkeep of Government House, there has been a reduction of \$8,000 within SEG 4 itself. Spare Parts and

Maintenance has decreased by \$112. Incidentals has decreased by \$4,400, but the power supply has gone up to \$10,000 so overall, the net effect is \$5,500. That is all.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a clarification in addition to the earlier question by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. The actuals on SEG 4 and 5 on Programme 1, Activity 1 as per the details of expenditure. The actuals showed \$788,000 and \$782,000 in the previous years against the budget that was set at that time which is in line with what has been set now as around \$400,000. Could we have an explanation whether there was an overspending that was done in 2018-2019 and secondly, the effectiveness in carrying out the roles in the Office of the President with a reduced amount of \$400,000. Will it not be compromised?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I will take the second question first. No, it will not compromise the operations of the Office of the President. We have had very deep discussions with them. Everyone understands the need to tighten their belts, \$788,000 actuals of 2018-2019 obviously relates to the actual expenditure itself. There would have been, for example, sometimes you have one-off payments for various things that could be in respect of expenditures within SEG 4. So, for example, you know things like incidentals could have gone up because as you know the Government House is also being renovated so there are various issues that may be linked to that and that is why. But, most certainly the allocation of SEG 4 of \$410,300 does not affect the operations of the Office of the President.

In fact, if you see overall, there has also been an allocation in SEG 5, for example, an allocation of service medals of \$50,000. That has been put in place given the 50th celebrations and various things going forward. So we normally procure this, the Office of the President procures that, an increase of \$50,000, so overall there has been increased allocations in different areas but overall it has decreased.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote on Head 1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, on Programme 1-1-(4) - Upkeep of Government House Ground (\$180,000), can we get a clarification on this figure that has been allocated?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Member, once we have voted on a Head, we do not regress; that is the normal procedure. We will move on.

Question put.

Head 1 agreed to.

Head 2 - Office of the Prime Minister

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Mr. Chairman, on Programme 1-1(6) - Fiji Mahogany Trust (\$250,000), we are requesting for an increase of \$250,000. The \$250,000 as it is, is the fee for administration of the Trust itself, the landowners. The extra \$250,000 that I am proposing is for a revolving fund to enable some of the landowners to go into value adding small businesses.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification from the Honourable Prime Minister on Programme 1-1(3), there is an allocation of \$350,000 for Overseas Travel. Does the Honourable Prime Minister expect to travel in this financial year given the closure of the international borders?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Honourable Professor Prasad should know that as we have said, we do not know what can happen. We have reduced the Prime Minister's expenditure for travelling by a substantial amount, at least over a million dollars. Now, it has gone down to \$350,000. So, if for example, the borders do open and there is a vaccine, he will travel because there is a need for him and that is why we are putting through \$350,000. We cannot say, are you expected to travel? The allocation is there, if there is a need for it, then he can travel.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes, because I saw a huge reduction and that is why I asked him.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Obviously, because of the health risks. You should know that, going to basics in economics again.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- *Areh yaar!*

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- *Bezzati nahi karo apne aap ke!*

MR. CHAIRMAN.- There has been a request for an amendment by the Honourable Mitieli Bulanauca. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That Head 2-1-1(6) - Fiji Mahogany Trust (\$250,000) be increased by \$250,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 1, SEG 6.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Sir, the explanation behind that proposal is that, we are thankful for the \$250,000 as it is, the administration of the Trust itself - doing well. The extra \$250,000 that I am proposing is to enable this Trust and the Revolving Fund to help our landowners, 14 Stations in Fiji, to go into value-adding small businesses and get more production, et cetera. Thank you, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I would like to hear him.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, if I can explain again, the \$250,000 as is, that is all right, I am thankful for that. The extra \$250,000 that we are requesting in this proposal of up to \$500,000 is to help the Trust to help the landowners, 14 Stations throughout Fiji, to go into small value-adding businesses.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, if I can just clarify what the Fund is actually for. It is, I quote:

“An annual grant as per the signed MOU between the Office of the Prime Minister and the Fiji Mahogany Trust to facilitate the transformation of the Fiji Mahogany Trust to support the business to start up the mahogany landowners to transition towards undertaking commercial harvesting ventures.

The funding is actually expended on the following: Meeting with beneficiaries, site visits, trainings, pilot project setup, registration of Trust and Board Training, Landowner Board of Trust Trustee fees, meal allowance, Trustee fees, travel expenses, travel allowance, sitting allowance, logistics of meeting, logistics for accommodation and subcommittee meetings and other operational matters.”

That is what that funding is for. So far, Honourable Member, the \$250,000 has been sufficient in respect of meeting all those costs that specifically that MOU is actually signed for. That is what it is for, so therefore we do not see a need to increase that. We have discussed, of course, with the Office of the Prime Minister and, of course, discuss also with the various Trustees of the Mahogany Trust. So that suffices for the purpose for which this Trust has actually got funds allocated for it. Thank you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I wish to speak in support of the motion. This \$250,000 is normal, it has been coming year after year and the motion is asking for a further amount to assist the indigenous landowners. We heard and the Honourable Minister for Forestry has confirmed that the landowners will be involved in the harvesting. This is a very, very expensive and difficult thing to do. Unlike Fiji Pine, where harvesting is easy, mahogany has been planted on very, very difficult terrain and you cannot expect the native landowners to do that quite easily.

What will happen, if Government does not assist them, is that third parties will use their licence, the third parties will come in and exploit them. So it is important for Government to assist them in the harvesting. It is very, very difficult and, Mr. Chairman, take it from here, this is from the former Chairman of Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited. It is very, very difficult because of the terrain, compared to Fiji Trust, to harvest the mahogany. So they are entitled to some help from the Government and I support the motion on that.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Mr. Chairman, this \$250,000 has been under-utilised over the many years. They must learn to utilise the current \$250,000 before they ask for any more. They are far behind audit and submission of reports, and we have put them on notice. In fact, my Permanent Secretary has put them on notice. He has called them for meetings a number of times to explain to them but they have not been turning up.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on to Programme 1-2. Yes, Honourable Professor Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, can I, please, request clarification on SEG 5? There is (\$20,000) allocation for Media Expenses, it has been reduced from \$40,000.

Last year, if you recall, Mr. Chairman, we queried the \$10,000 allocation under the previous SEG for Advertising, and we were told that the allocation is to cater for advertising positions, et cetera. Can the Honourable Minister, please, update on this expense, whether Qorvis from the Ministry of Information is not paid to do that or is this for some separate media company allocation?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Professor Prasad, I thought you would know this by now. If you look at most of the Ministries, they actually have media expenses. It is not about Qorvis only, stop being obsessed with Qorvis.

It is to do with, for example, when you have media outreach, when the Honourable Prime Minister is going somewhere and we have to take the people from the Department of Information, to cover their expenses, those are the types of expenses that come from that.

Also, for example, previously when the Honourable Prime Minister would go for overseas visits and they are very important visits, we have media expenses that will link to that, so they are separately accounted for. It gives a better accountability from that.

So for this media, if you look at Qorivs (I know you are interested), look at Communications. Overall, there is media PR work that they do for Government, but this is specifically to the Honourable Prime Minister's Office. So there are media expenses for different Ministries.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Leawere, yours is the same?

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Yes, Mr. Chairman, it is on Programme 1-2-10 (Head 2-1-2-10).

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

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Programme 1-2. We were just looking at Activity 1, now it is Activity 2.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-2.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Then I reserve my comments when we go to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will now vote on the amendment for Programme 1-1(6) on the amendment by Honourable Bulanauca:

That Head 2-1-1(6) - Fiji Mahogany Trust (\$250,000) be increased by \$250,000.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will now vote on Head 2 - Office of the Prime Minister.

Question put.

Head 2 agreed to.

Head 3 - Office of the Attorney-General

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The floor is now open for any comments on Programme 1-1.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Mr. Chairman, I seek clarification in relation to Head 3-1-1(5) for Film Censorship Expenses (\$12,000). What is that for, so that I can decide whether to increase or remove it?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir. The Film Censorship as the Honourable Nawaikula would know that it basically censors films and these are for the payment of the allowances.

We have seven members in the Film Censor Board and they basically get allowances paid for themselves, and obviously on the number of films, this year the production has decreased. You will see not many new films coming on board, but these people, essentially, get paid for viewing movies

and they pay them an allowance and they give the rating. There is also then an appeals board to it too which, if they meet (which they rarely do) then that is the expenses.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Professor Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a clarification from the Honourable Attorney-General under SEG 5. Last year, there was \$150,000 allocation for Fiji Intellectual Property Office (FIPO) and I remember you saying that FIPO's job was to bring some kind of legislation, if you can highlight as to the progress or the reduction because the work has already been done.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Essentially, the reason why we reduced it is because of past expenditure, there has not been much of an update on FIPO. But we have, in respect of the Bills, presented a couple of Bills to the Parliament, which are actually before the Committees.

As you know regarding trademarks, the patents and also the Madrid system that is before the Sector Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence; the signing of the three treaties regarding WIPO matters. Once those treaties are then sort of ratified by us, then it will actually spur on a bit of growth in terms of the work in there.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I give the floor to the Honourable Nawaikula to move his motion.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My motion is that, the sum of \$12,000 in 3-1-1 (5), be removed totally. That is the allocation for the Film Censorship Expenses. I am asking for that to be taken out.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We all heard that motion.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I want to talk on the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I am asking that this amount should be taken out totally, because I feel that the Film Censorship Board is totally useless. Why is it useless? I think this is an archaic process from another time. We see our children watching pornography in schools. The secondary school boys watching pornography, sometimes inviting school girls to watch it. So I am asking; what is the use of the film censorship? Yet, they are concentrating themselves on film, people who go to the movies. It should have changed now. If it is film and internet censorship then it will be useful. So this is something that is useless, it is not doing anything because it is not stopping children from watching violence and pornography in their phones, so useless, please go out unless you change.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Prime Minister?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Mr. Chairman, there is a whole lot of difference between this film censorship and what he is trying to achieve here.

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Listen!.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Order, order!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- The censorship that he is talking about is his responsibility. We are talking about movies in theatres, not the one on this. This is his, the parents

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Well, that has nothing to do with this.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, just to clarify, the Honourable Member again, the fact of the matter is, it is a very dichotomous approach. What he is saying is, therefore, because there are people or young children who may be accessing pornography on their phones because their parents cannot control them or do not have any control on them, do not block it.

I remember when I was in a high school, certain kids used to bring penthouse to school, and that depended on the parents. So you cannot say, therefore, no one then argued and said, "Because the kids are bringing penthouse or playboy to school, therefore, we should not have film censorship." That is really with due respect in the scenic logic.

So essentially, there are many children who, for example, do not have a smart phone and they would go to the cinemas to watch movies and we do not want them to watch movies that they should not be watching. That is why we have a Film Censorship Board. Not every child has a phone. Many children you know all are lucky to have phones, not all the children have phones or smart phones for that matter. We still have to regulate the cinemas and cinemas are more readily available. It does not make logical sense for you to say that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 2-1, Honourable Anare Jale.

HON. A. JALE.- Mr. Chairman, I would like to move a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, you have the floor.

HON. A. JALE.- Thank you. I would like to propose an increase to Head 3 to be increased by \$330,000 in Head 3-2-1(6). This is in respect to Domestic Air Services Subsidy. The amount of \$330,000 was reduced in the 2019-2020 Budget Estimates. My motion is just to restore that amount because there is really a need in the domestic air services in Fiji.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The floor is open for comments on that motion.

HON. A. JALE.- I think when I spoke in Parliament on my response to the 2020-2021 Budget Estimates, I raised an issue about some airports in some maritime provinces have not been serviced for quite a while. The airports are there, the people are not been served by air services. The Government has proposed a reduction to that allocation which was allocated in the 2019-2020 Budget Estimates.

My recommendation is that the amount that is recommended to be reduced be restored because there is a need for air services to service those airports that have not been serviced for years.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Are there any further comments? Honourable Professor Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, this is not on the motion, are we still on the motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, we are still on the motion.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Alright, after the motion, I have a clarification.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman., Sir, in fact the allocation being increased by \$541 is slightly more. It has \$1,529,459 in the 2019-2020 Budget Estimates. Now it is \$1,530,000. It is increased by \$541 because of the utilisation. As you know that we call for tenders, so there are only two domestic operators in Fiji which is Fiji Link and Northern Air and they essentially bid for the routes.

Now, you cannot go and force people to fly to different routes. The routes we currently subsidise are:

- Nausori-Vanuabalavu-Nausori,
- Nausori-Lakeba-Nausori,
- Nausori-Koro-Nausori,
- Nausori-Kadavu-Nausori,
- Nausori-Gau-Nausori,
- Nausori-Cicia-Nausori; and
- Nadi-Rotuma-Nadi.

Those are the routes that are currently subsidised.

Of course, we call for tenders every year, so based on these and whoever won the tender. So some of them, like *Northern Airways* has one, the more attractive in terms of pricing for us then *Fiji Link* and they have the right aircraft, et cetera. So then we pay the doubts accordingly and the money is fully utilised.

In respect to any new routes, again, there has to be a demand for it, the airlines actually have to be willing to fly to those destinations also. So that is what it is for. One of the reasons why, of course, that we do provide the subsidy because very soon Rotuma will become financially viable and we are hoping that Rotuma will actually come off the subsidy scheme because we now have an ATR72 that flies.

However, with the smaller routes, where there is very few people the reality of the matter is most of these planes actually cannot go to full capacity because they have to carry the fuel and there is no fuel back to where they actually land. So when you have a heavy load with the fuel, we carry less people because of the weight. So, as a result of that, we cannot have a maximum return on the seats that you actually fly so we subsidise it.

It makes them slightly bit more viable for them to actually fly so the airfare that you actually pay is in fact, if they want to fly a commercial flight you probably be paying three or four times more, depending on the routes. So we come in and then we say “alright, they will say to us if you pay us this much per seat, we will then fly to this destination.” That is what we are doing. In the same way you have the inter-island shipping Government input into that area, but it has not decreased.

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

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Chairman, with that explanation, probably the mover of the motion would like to be given a chance whether that is sufficient or he wants to withdraw.

HON. A. JALE.- I think the explanation is clear and I need to withdraw the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Professor Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is just a clarification generally on this Head from the Honourable Attorney-General. The Freedom of Information Act was passed in 2018 and because there is a provision for the Accountability and Transparency Commission and as per the Constitution, I do not see any allocation under your office or under the Ministry of Justice. Can you explain what is happening there; when is the Act coming into force?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Professor Prasad, as you would know linked to that was that other laws in respect to declaration of personnel interest, et cetera, which actually lapsed because the Committee did not ...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ...repeal the Code of Conduct Bill.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, because that was also linked to that. If you look at the Transparency Commission, you will see that is in the Independent Commission. It does not sit with the Attorney-General's Office. This is on Page 60. It should be in the moderate sum of \$20,000 only but you may recall two Budgets ago we had separated it. So, it is an independent body.

So, once you have the Code of Conduct, et cetera, all up in running, then we will be able to have this Commission actually up in running.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So, what you are saying without the Code of Conduct Bill...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Absolutely. So, Parliament needs to do its work.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Well, I hope the Committee which is looking at the Code of Conduct Bill should take notes of the fact that the Freedom of Information Act was approved in 2018. You know it almost like two years now and we have not done anything after that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- For your information also you know you need an independent body. You cannot actually have a Government body doing it. So, because therefore, one is in relation to Government activities, the Transparency Commission is always linked into the Code of Conduct.

Those Bills probably need to be revived but given the workload of the Committees, we are quite happy to revive these Bills, re-table them in Parliament because as you do after the sitting of each term of Parliament, all the Bills actually lapsed. So, we can bring it in if everyone agrees or all the Committee actually catch up with the work they are doing.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I think, Mr. Chairman, we should bring the Code of Conduct Bill as soon as possible, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I will take it in this order. Honourable Bulitavu, you have the floor this time. Do not give it away to anyone.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Just a point of clarification, *vinaka vakalevu*, Mr. Chairman. On SEG 6, Grant for Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF), if you can clarify whether the Labasa Airport upgrade is included in that grant, Mr. Chairman.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Just for clarification. This is for CAAF, it is not for AFL. Essentially, CAAF is the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF) which is a regulatory body. So, they certify the plane, they certify the engineer, they certify the airport, et cetera. The way that CAAF gets its money as you would recall in the previous allocations, we have been given them very little money, they had quite a bit of money sitting in Trust Accounts and that is underutilised, we said they need to use that.

But the other way that CAAF actually makes money is that, every time a tourist pays departure tax, certain percentage of it goes to CAAF and certain percentage goes to AFL. So, obviously because no one has been flying, CAAF has no revenue. This is why we made the allocation of \$2.5 million to help pay for the wages, we cannot pay for the running of CAAF, it is very important. Even with all these domestic planes that are flying that is what it is for. It is not only to do with the upgrade of the airport. That comes under AFL.

Now, we normally give grants to AFL if we feel if there is a need for AFL to invest in that area and they need some additional funding. So, you can see this year in this Budget we have not given them any additional grants. So, AFL will address this issue from its normal expenditure items.

Obviously, AFL is also under a lot of strain, given the fact that AFL has forgiven the rent for all its tenants for the past three or four months, so there will be some budget restraints, but we ought to pick up the capital works in the future.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Chairman, for the information of the Honourable Minister, given that the Labasa Airport has been closed for renovation and upgrade, the only airport available now is at Savusavu. The twin otters are coming to Savusavu (17 seaters) and probably, if there could be an arrangement made with the service providers to provide shuttle transport from Labasa to Savusavu and Savusavu to Labasa. That is a request from those passengers coming from Labasa right to Savusavu.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sure. I think the capital works at AFL in Labasa Airport will continue and as you know, we had talked about night landing too. There were some issues with the ATR, they did not like certain approaches, so Fiji Link decided to fly smaller aircrafts for night landing, so that is some of the work in progress.

But certainly the issue that you raised about providing shuttle services, we can talk to the Northern Air and Fiji Link and see what they are doing regarding that.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes, thank you Mr. Chairman, on SEG 6, there is an allocation of \$95,000 for membership of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), which is an important body which we should belong to, but generally in terms of your budgeting, given the situation we face, what is Government doing in terms of our levy for all the organisations we belong to globally? And I am not asking specifically about ICAO, but the whole budget. You know where I am coming from. We are members of many bodies. Are we re-negotiating our fees?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Most of these organisations do not back up on their fees, so ICAO fees is \$95,000 per subscription which is a set fee, but no one has said that. For example, in respect of bilateral loans, the World Bank has said that they will give a holiday to people to do the repayments

until December. That is in respect of bilateral loans. This is actually driven by World Bank, but even the UN and various other agencies, IMO, we still are paying our subscription fees.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Have we approached them for some relief?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- All our embassies talk to all of them but the fact of the matter is, no one has decided to reduce any of their fees. We cannot be the only one because

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- You are getting moratorium on the loans and all that, so one would believe that with a reduction in activities, we should be asking for lower fees.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Many of the international organisations, because of the unilateralism taking place by USA in particular, they are withdrawing from WHO, for example, they made an announcement on that. So there is a huge threat to multilateralism as we speak, so many of these agencies are scrambling for funds.

The UN as you know, we have discussed in Parliament, want us to pay their rent, so there is no way that the UN is going to say, 'do not pay the subscription fee'. We are currently now in negotiations, we have got the requirements for them and we are going out to tender very soon to put up a UN House, where we will actually bear the cost for their rental. That is unfortunately the reality of multilateral agencies at the moment.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you have the floor.

HON. MAJOR GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. I have a general question for the Honourable Attorney General. It covers some of the items under Head 3-1-1(5) on Fiji Intellectual Property Office, Drafting of Laws, Legal Experts Expenses, and the Fiji Law Reform Commission under Head 3-1-1(7).

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You are going back.

HON. MAJOR GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Oh, is that going back?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We are on Programme 2 now. Honourable Radrodro and then Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can we get a clarification on Programme 2-1 (7) - Aircraft Accident Investigation? This amount has been reduced, I think from the previous year of \$240,000. Is this relating to some ongoing aircraft investigation? What is this allocation for?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It has been reduced by \$2,299, so it is not that significant. We have rounded it off to \$240,000. We always make an allocation just in case there is an accident. We have to have this money ready. God forbid, if tomorrow an aircraft crashes, we have to fly in experts. Generally we do not have experts in Fiji, so it is to pay for that. It is always there.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Professor Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You reduced the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF) budget from \$1.5 million to \$700,000 last year. Now you are increasing it to \$2.5 million. What is the reason because I know in 2018 they actually made a loss?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We have just explained it, but you did not listen.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I did not hear that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Professor Prasad, I just explained it. Essentially, what we said was that CAAF, for a number of years, had been getting grants even though they had quite a lot of healthy build-up in the trust account which they had piled up over a number of years, so we asked CAAF to use those fundings or the money they had as term deposits and use that.

Then, of course, CAAF also gets revenue from departure fees, so because no departure fees is being paid and nor do we envisage getting any departure fees in the immediate future, CAAF still has to pay for its operations. They have staff et cetera, so that is why we have made an allocation of \$2.5 million.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is just that they made a loss and last year you reduced it from \$1.5 million to \$700,000. Now, that sort of did not add, that is why I asked why you were increasing it to \$250,000.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Professor Prasad, again, I want to highlight to you that you are looking at a balance sheet loss.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It does not mean that there is a loss per se in their ability to pay for their operations. That is my point.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is the problem; with too little information he is trying to say that they made a loss.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, no, but you increased it. I mean, it is a very legitimate question so do not trivialise it.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is a trivial question.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is not.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The point is that \$2.5 million is necessary for their operational cost.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes.

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

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, thank you. Just a clarification on the same SEG on Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO). Honourable Minister, can you just update us on the status of that? I understand they were winding down given the duplication in functions with other offices regarding aircraft safety. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, I mean that is basically our subscription fees. We do not actually, frankly have much confidence in PASO. They have had a number of issues but because as a regional island State we are a member of PASO. In fact, many of the functions of PASO can actually be performed by CAAF and Airports Fiji Limited (AFL). We have offered, and in fact we have had discussions with the World Bank to have a sub-regional ICAO office in Fiji because Fiji actually has the capacity to provide many of the services than PASO. But that is the subscription fees.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will now move on to Honourable Nawaikula. You have already spoken on this so we are going to vote on this. We vote that the \$12,000 be left out of Head 3 in respect of Programme 1-1(5).

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Now, we vote on Head 3.

Question put.

Head 3 agreed to.

Head 4 – Ministry of Economy

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The floor is now open for any comments. Programme 1-1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification on Programme 1-1 (6) - FRCS Operating Grant (\$40,000,000). Can you clarify the work that they do and the work that they are expected to do? I think there has been a reduction from the previous year's Budget allocation. Can we just get that clarification on this operating grant?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, do you want to know what FRCS does?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The work that they do and the reduction in this budget allocation.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I think we all know what they do. They essentially collect taxes, they monitor compliance and of course they also control the border, the customs. Overall I can go to the specifics of it of course. In respect of the decrease in the grant, we have already spoken to FRCS, there is a reduction of approximately \$5.2 million from the revised estimate.

The FRCS also has a current savings of about \$30 million in a term deposit which matures in this coming financial year. So, if there is any shortfall they can use some of that for the operational expenses, but we do not expect it to be used quite significantly because if you look at the reduction in the expenditure, it is from \$45 million to \$40 million.

There are a number of operational matters that FRCS would not have to deal with anymore, as they have an entire unit to deal with stamp duty collection. Now, there is no more stamp duties to be collected so a lot of the staff, we understand, will be retrained or there are areas if they do need them or if their current contracts come to an end then they will not necessarily continue with FRCS. With the efficiencies that are being built in, we expect the operational cost of FRCS to also come down significantly.

The VAT monitoring, as you know the VAT implementation, has been deferred for another year so that also gives them the ability to recoup. Our position has always been with FRCS. We still believe there is a lot of room for improvement in efficiency and the manner in which they deal with the tax agents, who are to be seen as their customers. We hope that with the new Board (and we have a lot of confidence in the new Board) it will bring about a cultural change.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Professor Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Just in relation to that Mr. Chairman, can the Honourable Minister explain the new IT system that FRCS was supposed to have implemented? Is it working? I understand there has been some cost overrun and whether it is working full on now or is it still under contraction. And the other question is about efficiency, et cetera. What happened to the 20 member committee which you appointed? Is their report out? Where is it at the moment?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I will take the first question first. Regarding the IT system, we are also concerned about the IT system and in respect of the messaging being so generated from the IT system. So, we have asked the new Chairman, Fay Yee, to actually focus on that and there has been, over the years, a number of issues to different systems that have been procured by FRCS.

I think there is a need to consolidate that but there is a new IT system as you have highlighted and the new Board will be looking at that system. Sir, what was your second question?

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That was chaired by Dilip Khatri.

I think when COVID-19 happened, everyone kind of went into their little dungeons, but I had a message from Dilip Khatri saying that the budget is fantastic. He could not believe it, to quote him. So, I expect that they would be making some recommendations but I have asked them to work with the new Board.

The Chairman, I am sure would be talking to the Committee but we also would like them to and we did not want to pressure people in the COVID-19, people's businesses were closing down and they were all essentially small, big and large and medium businesses. We do not want to put pressure on them, so I am sure that they will give us some report in respect of the efficiencies. But, I think given the massive changes in the tariff structure and also removal of various taxes and stamp duties, they will come up with some further positive news on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Activity 2? Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Mr. Chairman, in SEG 7, just a clarification on that item on National Asset Management Framework, there is quite of a huge reduction in that SEG. Can we have some clarification from the Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is not a huge reduction, it has gone down to \$10,000 from \$20,000. As you know that we were developing this because we want to move to some accrual accounting. And Government, as you know, for all these decades have been into cash accounting. So the idea is to consolidate all the Government assets, taking the value in, et cetera. That is why we have got that. At the moment because of the changes that have taken place, the reprioritisation, some work will continue but not as much as it did previously.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification to the Honourable Minister, the grant for Fiji Servicemen Aftercare Fund that used to be under Programme 1-2? Is it now being looked after by another Department?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- In the last budget you may recall, we moved it to Ministry of Defence.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- All right, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 3.

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 4?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On Activity 4 - Internal Audit and Good Governance, this is a question to the Honourable Minister. One of the problems we have had with Government Departments, Statutory Bodies, Government Commercial Companies is the inability of some of those Ministries and Departments to actually produce annual reports on time. My question is, whether this allocation for Audit and Good Governance actually tracks down these habitual late comers, in terms of producing annual reports? I am just asking you in general in Internal Audit and Governance.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, you will find that Internal Audit and Good Governance, and what the Honourable Member is actually talking about in respect of the public enterprises, that falls under Programme 3-1. So the Department of Public Enterprises within the Ministry of Economy, that is their job essentially, to make sure that these State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) actually deliver their annual reports on time.

The issue about internal audit and good governance is actually about audit within Government overall and good governance, not to do with the Limited Liability Companies and Government Statutory Bodies that come under the Department of Public Enterprises so their function is about internal audit across all the Ministries. As announced in the two Budgets ago, we now have with these audit reports that come out with the PS for Economy finds that here is any breaches of that, she can directly report it to FICAC; all that takes place.

Regarding specifically your question, that comes under public enterprises so within the Department of Public Enterprises, if you look at Programme 3-1, the staff there generally have an oversight role. They have respective desk officers so they will look after XYZ companies and their job is to make sure that the annual reports, et cetera, come out on time.

I think the problem has been that for a number of years which we will all agree on, for many of the SOEs, there was a lag in respect of the annual reports being prepared. But as you would also know from your former record of the Public Accounts Committee that they have actually now...

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Are you back in there?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, you took me out.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I did not put you out, you just let yourself out. The fact of the matter is that you could not handle not being Chairman.

They now are doing work, they have caught up with many of those organisation's annual reports.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So your Ministry's Internal Audit Governance looks after the annual Reports because I am also concerned about annual reports from Ministries as well, apart from the public enterprises and entities.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, what I am saying is that Internal Audit and Good Governance, as the name suggests, is about internal audit which is government internal. Public Enterprise is not internal, it is actually external. These are limited liability companies or statutory organisations that they have their own set of rules, they have their own boards, they have their own government structures and Department of Public Enterprises' staff job is to make sure that they actually have the good government structures in place but they are not an internal audit. Please, you have to have that understanding. They are limited liability companies and the Companies Act

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, I know that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- But you are confusing it.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, no, I am not confusing, I am very clear. I am just saying that even Ministries within Government do not produce annual reports on time.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Oh I see, I see. All right, my apologies.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We move on to Activity 5.

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 6?

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 7?

(Chorus of "Ayes" and "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 8?

(Chorus of "Nays")

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Activity 7.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- We are on Activity 8.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Programme 1-7.

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

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- A query regarding the Construction Implementation Unit. I was wondering if you could explain the role of this Unit, given that we already have under the Ministry

of Infrastructure, MET serves as an architectural and engineering service and you have this. Should this not be appropriately under the Ministry of Infrastructure? I understand you do not have any engineers, architects in this section, given that they are looking after construction implementation and those services have to be tendered out and you are using some private providers for that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, the Honourable Member I think you kind of a bit late in the game. This has been there for a number of years. As you would know that previously we had the Public Works Department who used to have its architects and a lot of the architects were not necessarily qualified. Their ability for the engineers to give certification was not always there necessarily.

Of course, when you have only one or two people within the entire Government to provide these services, the speed at which they could do that was very, very limited. A case in point, *TC Winston*, when we had over 200 schools that were damaged and you had to rebuild those schools really quickly, some of them were actually very, very difficult to do, so you had to engage with the private sector.

The CIU's role is essentially to manage all of that, manage the quality of it, the outsourcing of it and, of course, one of the things that we found were many issues, I mean the legacy issues that we do have. Previously when hospitals were built, for example, they were not necessarily built to international standard hospital levels. Their integrity was not there, so someone at PWD may come and decide to put a sink with a wooden bench and then of course, because the bench would get wet. It would rot and the sink would fall down, it would smell, et cetera. So, now you have CIU where we outsource a lot of the work.

We gain efficiencies in that. We actually have public liability insurance, professional indemnity insurance that is provided by all of these service providers so we are able to expedite the building of these facilities that we do need to do so. I hope many of you will turn up if you are really interested.

The Honourable Prime Minister this year will go and open the hospital in Navosa and I have already seen pictures of it. If you were to give to those people that do respect or the people you want them to do, they never would have been able to achieve that kind of standard and the ability to have that new modern day way of construction.

So, what we are doing like most modern day Governments, we are actually now outsourcing many of these, the input that is there is actually quite significant and indeed benefits us all. Plus we also get a good return for our dollar. That is really important for us. So that is what CIU's role is there too.

They also manage Government assets in terms of the maintenance of it and we are now trying to provide a number of ways in which we can further improve the quality of the assets that we have, where there are Government quarters, et cetera and the rebuilding of that. We are also trying to get a number of areas where we do the input these assets in clusters so that we can get better return for our money when we put them in clusters as opposed to individual constructions that takes place.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 8?

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 9?

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 2-1?

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-1. Honourable Bulitavu, you have the floor.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, just a question to the Honourable Minister for Economy, given that this particular programme was in the Ministry of Public Enterprises in last year’s Budget but now under the Ministry of Economy.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This was put in the previous year’s budget, not the immediate one. The Department of Public Enterprise got subsumed .in the Ministry of Economy, now two budgets ago. It is not a new thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Professor Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, are we on Activity 9?

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You went too fast, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Look, I only respond to you. When I make an announcement, you said yes, yes. You have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- It is a new Ministry, Mr. Chairman.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- *Nahi* new Ministry, *yaar!*

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Just explain it.

HON. A. SAYED.KHAIYUM.- Regarding Public Enterprises, it is a Department under the Ministry of Economy, it is no longer a separate Ministry. This was like two budgets ago. Again, we have done it for efficiency sake. So, we do not have separate sets of accountants and HR people, they do essentially the same role and this is one department that actually monitors public enterprises. We are saving money by doing this.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Still on Programme 3-1 on Fiji Rice Limited (\$800,000) grant. I need a clarification on the grant whether this is a reduction or increase given the potential that we have given to COVID-19 and people would be wanting to use land and plant rice.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAYUJM.- Sir, there has actually been no change, there is still maintenance at the same level. This is obviously given directly as a grant to Fiji Rice Limited. It does not mean that the Honourable Minister for Agriculture does not also have an input through his Ministry regarding rice planting, so they work in conjunction with each other.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Lynda Tabuya.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you. Mr. Chairman, just under Activity 1 (5), there is an amount on Advertising and there seems to be recurring under the Ministry of Economy's Heads. Can you just explain what this is for because it could really be absorbed under Communications, Head 16, this is unnecessary fact, so to speak, on Advertising Expenses under SEG 5. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Ministry actually has to advertise so, for example, if they advertise a position in the Ministry or that particular department, they have to pay for the advertisement. If you want to put out a public notice, then you pay for advertisement and that \$3,000 is for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- All right, we will move on.

Honourable Members, we will now vote on Head 4 - Ministry of Economy.

Question put.

Head 4 agreed to.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, I thank you for your cooperation during this morning's sitting. What we will do now, we will suspend proceedings and take an adjournment for lunch. Thank you.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.58 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.18 p.m.

Head 5 - Ministry of iTaukei Affairs

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-1. Honourable Qionibaravi?

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, may I ask the Honourable Minister, the Prime Minister, to please, advise as to when will he table the annual reports from the Ministry that is owing to the House?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Nothing to do with the Budget. Can we come another day, please?

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- All right, slowly.

My other question, Mr. Chairman, can the Honourable Minister give an update of the Tabua Shop as I note a recurring \$50,000 allocation in SEG 5 for Tabua Shop Expenses?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 1, SEG 5 - Tabua Shop Expenses (\$50,000).

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Is the Tabua Shop in operation?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To support the Tabua Shop's mission to protect and promote the Fijian cultural heritage, particularly, the *tabua*, while promoting sustainable development in terms of monitoring, we have \$50,000, completion of *vanua* consultation was done, consultation with Government stakeholders was done, finalising of policy paper on opening of Tabua Shop, let us state later on and then, of course, we have confiscated 130 *tabua* so that \$50,000 is for the Tabua Shop Expenses.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Mr. Chairman, I am sorry, I did not quite hear the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Fijian Affairs.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- iTaukei Affairs.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Sorry!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Say "iTaukei Affairs".

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- My understanding is Fijian Affairs, anyway, iTaukei Affairs. Is the Tabua Shop in operation?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- If you do not say "iTaukei Affairs", I will not answer your question.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- iTaukei Affairs, *kemuni!*

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Good! Yes, it is in operation.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you. It means anyone can come up and buy a *tabua* or do we have to make a booking.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- You have to apply in person.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- What are the criteria to be able to buy a *tabua*?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- You have to be a citizen of Fiji. Are you?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- *iTaukei*.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- No! Mr. Chairman, *ni vosoti au saka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I am listening. Do not listen to the fellow beside you, well, where he is.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- I would like to move on to SEG 6, Sir. This is one of my favourite topics, the *Turaga ni Koro* Allowance. We would like to move that the *Turaga ni Koro* Allowance be increased. We note that it is currently sitting at \$1.43 million and it has been decreased from \$1.48 million in the COVID-19 (Response) Budget. Would the Minister explain the decrease while I consider my motion to increase this allowance, please?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Mr. Chairman, the decrease is because there is no funding provided for the training component of *Turaga ni Koro* Allowance. The *Turaga ni Koro* Allowance vote consists of two components: Monthly of \$100 to each *Turaga ni Koro* and training expenses, the allowance will remain the same as \$100 times 1,173 *Turaga ni Koro* comes to \$1.4 million per year. The training allocation component which previously had a Budget provision of \$53,000 is temporarily suspended to support this economic recovery that we are going through. *Vinaka*.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Mr. Chairman, I thank the Honourable Minister ...

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Two and two will bring it back again.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- ... for that explanation.

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

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- We would like to move a motion to increase the *Turaga ni Koro* Allowance.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I said that it will come back again.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- We note the explanation by the Honourable Prime Minister that the component on the *Turaga ni Koro* Allowance has ...

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- It has not decreased.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- ... been reduced.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- No, no, it has not decreased, the allowance is still the same.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- No, no, can I explain myself? I note what the Honourable Prime Minister has said that the allocation has been reduced by so much that covers the training of the *Turaga ni Koro*, we accept that. But I would like to move for the component of the *Turaga ni Koro* Allowance, that should be increased.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Why?

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Why? Can I move the motion first, get it seconded and talk on that? Mr. Chairman, I would like to move that the *Turaga ni Koro* Allowance be increased.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- You are not the chairperson.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- SEG 6 from that amount of \$1.4 million to be increased by \$2.86 million in respect of the *Turaga ni Koro* Allowance.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I second, Honourable Chairman.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Honourable Chairman, the *Turaga ni Koro* receives \$100 monthly allowance when we all know that they work around the clock in the village. This is below the minimum wage of \$2.68 an hour.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- It is not the wage, it is an allowance.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- It is an allowance but I am just saying that even for the lowest paid employee, it is \$2.68.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- You do not compare it with anyone that is working anywhere.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- In fact, they receive \$25 a week, Sir, which is barely enough to feed their families given that they do not have the time to go fishing or farming.

(Honourable Members interject)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Order, order!

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- \$25 a week means that they would receive about \$4 a day, it is an allowance, agree, but that \$4 a day works out to about 52 cents an hour if you were to treat them like employees.

HON. MEMBER.- Take-home wages.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- It is not wages, it is an allowance. They are human beings that are providing a lot of service. This is a very sad situation that the official of the village, the *Turaga ni Koro* whom we all go through, coordinate all Government visitations.

They coordinate all non-government visitation to the village and they have their own work to coordinate like the activities in the village to ensure good government and well-being. This is our basis of requesting that they be paid allowance from \$100 that they are currently receiving, to \$300.

It may sound much but in Fijian we call it, “*me i vakayaga ni nodra cakacaka, ai sau ni ti kei na suka*” but \$300 is not sufficient for “*sau ni ti kei na suka*” for one month. So, that is the basis of the increase that we are asking, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Is there anyone else wishing to take the floor? The Honourable Mosese Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I support the motion by the Honourable Adi Litia Qionibaravi given the role played by the *Turaga ni Koro* keeps him very busy. All Government ministries even the District Office, the Rokos any other Government delegation that come to village, they come to the *Turaga ni Koro*.

I will give an example: last year when the Agriculture Census took place, most of the *Turaga ni Koro* had to fork money from their pockets to accommodate the census team that came around to the village and also providing meals for them, not only that, that information were given later to us. I can tell you that later, Honourable Minister, given that the officials in Labasa had come to request that the allowance was a bit late so we had to provide the accommodation, also food and *yaqona*. That was the base, then they travelled to collect data in other areas, they slept for about four nights at my village. Those are some of the difficulties the *Turaga ni Koro* face, they spent beyond the amount of their allowance, not only this allowance as this allowance comes at the end of the month. When there are different delegations, NGOs and also Government partnering with NGOs, like the Ministry of Forestry partnering with SPC in the Reefs to Ridge Project, they have their own officials, sometimes they come and sleep in the village and the *Turaga ni Koro* also has a lot to do and work with the village households in providing for these Government workers who would stay in the village and carry out projects for a few days.

There are good *Turaga ni Koro*, there are those who are able to afford it, some may not but again, they do not have any office, they run around here and there trying to print out their letters and even sometimes the various applicants by various villages in terms of licence, the FNPF applications that are certified by the *Turaga ni Koro* and other government forms that are certified by the *Turaga ni Koro* or need the support letter from the *Turaga ni Koro*, that is an office by itself.

Again the \$100 allowance is not enough and I support the motion to increase their allowance given that they are one of the Government's immediate agents in the village who are in contact with the villagers and also become the focal point of Government in distributing information and awareness on Government programmes, especially when the Budget is announced and the various allocations that will be announced by the various Ministries, the *Turaga ni Koro* will reveal to the *Bose Vakoro* (village meeting) in terms of where to get those assistance and forms for social welfare. The *Turaga ni Koro* plays a very important role in certifying those forms to confirm that the particular applicant is a member of the village. That is my contribution, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- In supporting this motion by the Honourable Qionibaravi and also the Honourable Bilitavu, what he has just articulated here. Everything that happens in the village, has to go through the *Turaga ni Koro*. People appear sometimes after they had made an appointment, but many times without any appointment, so the *Turaga ni Koro* cannot do anything else, except be available for people who come to the village because they have to get the permission of the *Turaga ni Koro*, more so now because they are termed to be people employed by the Government. So, that has brought a different light to the work of the *Turaga ni Koro*.

I think what brings about an issue to the *Turaga ni Koro*, is that, in every village there is a *Turaga ni Koro* and *Nasi ni Koro*. The *Turaga ni Koro*, whilst it is seen and proved to be doing a lot more work than the *Nasi ni Koro*, the *Nasi ni Koro* is paid twice what the *Turaga ni Koro* gets. In the question that was given, Mr. Chairman, that was answered by the Honourable Minister for Health that the *Nasi ni Koro* go through some training, which enables them to be provided a higher or twice as much as the *Turaga ni Koro*.

What can the Honourable Prime Minister do in terms of improving the livelihood and the life of the *Turaga ni Koro*, seeing that they are so important in the life of the village. In supporting that motion by the Honourable Qionibaravi, my question is, although he has said that they will be assisted in the future, what can he tell us now to give some relief to the *Turaga ni Koros*? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you. In support of the motion in addition to what has already been mentioned, I believe that this position needs to be reviewed. If you look at it from a HR perspective, it is essentially close to a full time position. So, the Ministry should seriously look at incorporating that as part of the provincial administration and...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Let those who understand the situation explain, let me explain that as mentioned by Honourable Bulitavu, there are many cases daily nearly every time, even in the middle of the night, etcetera.

The other issue is that, they are using their funds after finishing their allowance for transport and everything. The way I am looking at it, it should be incorporated into the structure of the Provincial Council, as one of the Provincial Council Officers and a proper assessment should be done whether it is a full time position or three quarter or half time, and then you assess the position accordingly and place them in the proper salary structure. That is the proper way to do it for them to be compensated accordingly. Thank you.

HON. S. ADIMAITOGA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to contribute to this, since they are harping about that, especially Honourable Bulitavu. These *Turaga ni Koro* are not working full time. It is just the part-time. So any stakeholder who comes to the village will bring their *sevusevu*, *yaqona* or the grog. They are not given this from their pockets.

And to tell you the fact, Honourable Bulitavu, everything is done by the Ministry. They are paid \$200, it is not the full time job because it is their allowance. So whenever any stakeholder arrives in the village, they will visit them and their *sevusevu*. According to what you have said, I am against it. Please can you come up with the right point and do try not to bit around the bush. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. We will move on to your next motion.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- There is no other motion .

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have a second motion here.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Yes, Sir. But there has been no vote on the motion. Thank you, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Do you wish to have a second motion?

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Yes, Sir. Mr. Chairman, we note that under SEG 7 with the allocation of \$45,000 for the Village Bylaws in the original budget last year. This was removed this

year in the COVID-19 Response Budget. However, we note that there is another \$30,000 allocation for Review of Village Guidelines.

I wonder whether this is the same as the Village Bylaws, is it on the same subject? If so, then we do not support this Review of Village Guidelines and I would like to move a motion for the removal of that allocation. If it is the same because it was originally Village Bylaws then now it says "Review of Village Guidelines." If it is the same thing as the Village Bylaws, we would like to move that it be removed.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Member, you can speak on your motion now.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The people in the village do not need guidelines to be determined for them. The draft Village Bylaws that was circulated earlier had provoked a lot of resistance from across the spectrum of the Fiji society. Therefore, this expenditure is not in line with what the people want and ...

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- That is not true.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Must be left out of this Head.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- That is not true.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Is there anyone else wishing to participate in this? Honourable Prime Minister?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Mr. Chairman, this is a review of village guidelines and the village regulation guideline undertaken consultation with the relevant stakeholders, the *vanua* and to raise awareness. The new village guideline is really to provide awareness to guide and protect *itaukei* to traditional leadership at the community village level, everyone wants that. And it is the preserved traditional and culture to ensure that hygiene, sanitation and environment standard is maintained and to maintain order and peaceful living in the village. Who does not want that?

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Mr. Chairman, I asked the question separately. If it is the same as Village Bylaws, we would like it removed. Now after listening to the response from the Honourable Prime Minister, it is another programme and I will withdraw that motion. But it will be good to just find out, what is happening to the proposed Village Bylaws? What is the current situation?

We welcome this Review of Village Guidelines that will ensure the people in the village understand what they should do in the village in respect of village leadership, *Turaga Ni Koro* leadership and the maintenance of clean village respect for the village, et cetera. Thank you, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, the Review of Village Guidelines in the budget is something that we, the Ministry Health fully support. It is something that we have been working with the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, with the *Roko Tui* and also our community health workers with the support of the *Turaga Ni Koro* in terms of the wash, water, sanitation, hygiene

purposes. There are certain challenges in certain villages and this is something that we fully support in terms of moving forward, especially now in the COVID environment in which we are in. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on to Activity 2

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 3?

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will now vote on Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6 with respect to *Turaga Ni Koro* allowance. Head 5 to be increased by \$2.86 million in Programme 1.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We now vote on Head 5.

Question put.

Head 5 agreed to.

Head 6 – Ministry of Defence, National Security and Policing

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

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Chairman, under SEG 2, there is an allowance of \$15,000. It is an increase from \$5,000 that was allocated last year. Can we please get an update on that?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 1 (2) - Allowance of \$15,000.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sir, what is your question?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- I just need an explanation for the increase from \$5,000 to \$15,000 for the allowance under the SEG.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is actually a reduction.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- It is a reduction, Honourable Member.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- As increased from last year from \$5,000 to \$15,000 this year.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is Activity 1(2).

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You are talking about allowance?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- I am talking about allowance, yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So, the allowance in the Revised 2019-2020 was \$20,886 and now its \$15,000 so there is a reduction of \$5,800.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Just on SEG 1 - Personal Emolument, I note that there is an increase in Personal Emoluments but there is a decrease in the allowance. Is there any new staff coming in or there were some empty posts that have been filled?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, the increase is because of the regularisation of few posts that you can link that with SEG.7 which is on projects, the National Security and Defence Councils Secretariat. What has occurred in this Budget is few of the posts have been regularised. So, it has been taken on in SEG 1 and will be less from SEG 7 because work has progressed in as far as the work undertaken by the National Security and Defence Council Secretariat and these posts, therefore, have been transferred into the Ministry and regularised. So, that is the increase. That includes all the FNPF, et cetera.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Bulitavu?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Yes, on SEG 7. Thank you, Honourable Minister, for that. On National Security and Defence Review, as you have alluded to, there is a reduction for those who have been absorbed into those personal emoluments, but what is the review and what work is left now for the national review to be completed?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, the National Security Strategy has been endorsed in principle by Cabinet and of course, but subject to legal vetting again by the office of the Solicitor General. Of course coming back to your previous question and the link to SEG 7, Cabinet has also agreed with the establishment in phases of the office of the Secretariat and the work of the Council. This is where the fluctuations in figures are happening, but the last meeting that we had with the Office of the Solicitor General was on 26th of June, 2020 and hopefully that final vetting will be completed soon. Because the Cabinet Paper has already been drafted for this to go back into Cabinet and then the next work from there is the Bill and then the review of the ministry headquarters and then all the policy papers that come with it; defence white paper, the police white paper and intelligence white paper.

I also wish to mention Mr. Chairman, Sir, that with this, the ministry has been renamed as Ministry for Defence, National Security and Policing, but with what we have now in the ministry headquarters apart from the secretariat that was agreed way back in 2016, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would know that all that we have in the Ministry of Defence still is what was used to be when it was Ministry of Home Affairs. This is the work that we have here, so the review of the office headquarters itself, and then the subsequent documents. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Bulitavu?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Yes, still on SEG 7, I note that the Fiji Day Celebration is not an activity in SEG 7 this year. We understand the COVID-19 restrictions, but there is a Remembrance Day Celebration which will take place. What is the Ministry's plan if the COVID-19 restrictions is lifted, whether the Fiji Day Celebration will still be held or not?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The Fiji Day Celebration obviously, as we also announced in the Budget the last time, is in the Ministry of Civil Service who is going to be cross the ministerial event.

The amount of course is not being reduced, given the COVID-19, but it is still there as Ministry for Civil Service. Cross ministerial event.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move one. The Parliament will now vote on Head 6.

Question put.

Head 6 agreed to.

Head 7 – Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Head 7-1-1. The floor is open. Honourable Leawere?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Mr. Chairman, on SEG 5, there are two items that I would like to seek clarification on from the Honourable Minister under SEG 5, Activity 1 and they are the Apprentice Scheme - Other Industry (\$180,000) and Training Expenses (\$20,000). Could we have some elaborations on those two items please?

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This allocation is for the apprentices who are engaged with the Government Shipping Services. This is the payment for them.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Anything else? Mr. Chairman, how many do you envisage will be using this allocation?

HON. P.K. BALA.- Currently it is a four-year programme and we have 10 at this point in time.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 2.

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 3. Honourable Tikoduadua?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under SEG 10, the allocation for workmen’s compensation has increased to \$1.2 million from \$1 million last year. In the 2018-2019 Budget, the allocation for this was \$1.75 million. When Honourable Leawere queried a deduction in the allocation last year, we were told by the Honourable Minister that the allocation was for the pending cases and the Honourable Minister stated then that the Accident Compensation Commission of Fiji (ACCF) was now there and it would deal with future cases both ways.

Now, this does not make sense, Mr. Chairman. It was decreased from \$1.75 million to \$1 million last year to handle pending cases because the ACCF would deal with it all. Now the allocation has increased again to \$1.2 million. Has the number of pending cases suddenly increased? Why are they not being evolved completely through the ACCF? Why is this initiative still showing up in the Head as the ACCF now has the legal mandate to deal with these issues? I am just requesting these clarifications while I consider whether to table the motion. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before the ACCF came in, there were huge applications with the Ministry of Employment. When the legislation came in, it stated that all the pending cases will be dealt by the Ministry within six years, so the legislation allowed the Ministry to continue with the pending cases. I am happy to inform this Honourable House that this \$1.2

million that has been allocated is ready for payment. In other words, all the cases have been dealt with and after the announcement of the Budget, all those applicants will receive it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 4. Honourable Tikoduadua.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Chairman under SEG 7, the allocation for Foreign Employment Services (\$300,000) which is a reduction from the \$712,000 allocation given in the previous Budget.

When Honourable Leawere queried this allocation, the Honourable Minister said that this was for engagement of work attachés specifically for those who had graduated with certificate, diploma and degree to gain work experience. His Ministry paid \$130 weekly to those who qualified with a diploma or degree, and paid \$100 for certificate holders.

Mr. Chairman, how many attaches would this \$300,000 cater for, which geographical regions did these attaches come from and what is the recruitment process and recruitment dates? Better still, when can the Honourable Minister table a report on how this allocation has been used to help graduates seeking work experience and what has been the success rate of these beneficiaries in terms of long-term job security? Thank you Mr. Chairman, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, just to assist the Honourable Member he keeps on quoting wrong figures. The reason why he is doing that is because he is not looking at the revised 2019-2020 budget figures. So, the COVID-19 Budget Response revised the figures from 2019-2020. This is why you are claiming that there is a huge disparity when actually there is not.

If you look at the figures, for example, in Programme 1-4, the amount that you are looking at there the \$1.3 million, that is the revised estimate and look at the column on top, the heading. What you are claiming is the 2019-2020 Budget that was actually delivered last year. So, this is why I think whoever has written it for you has got it all wrong. They are quoting figures from the original Budget when those figures were actually revised. So, that is why you are claiming that there is a huge disparity when actually there is not. So, these figures were revised.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Sir, I will go back to the Foreign Employment Services and the Attachment Allowance; as stated by the Honourable Minister for Economy we need to refer to the COVID-19 Revised Budget to get the actual figures. For the Foreign Employment Services this is for the 12 project posts that would be based in our divisional offices in the Western Division, Northern Division and here in the Central Division.

This funds will also be provided for the medical and fitness test for the seasonal workers pre-departure. So, that is what this allocation is for.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 5?

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 6?

(Chorus of “Nays”)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Mr. Chairman, Activity 6-5, in 2019-2020 it was \$148,000 in terms of that activity, especially on SEG 5. What would be the reason for the increase in the National Wages Minimum Survey, can we get some update on that on the qualification, Mr. Chairman, Sir?

HON. M.K. BALA.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, Sir, this \$100,000 that is allocated here is for the survey of the national wages minimum next year. I just want to add on, I know why you are harping on because last year as I have mentioned to this House, that the review has started, it has begun. Unfortunately, we had to face COVID-19 and the draft report that was supposed to be presented to the tripartite partners could not happen because of COVID-19.

So, you can see the interest of government in this regard on the review of the national minimum wages and that is why \$100,000 has been allocated so that we can take this survey next year. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 6?

(Chorus of “Nays”)

Question put.

Head 7 agreed to.

Head 8 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-1?

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Anare Jale.

HON. A. JALE.- I will be asking questions on Programme 2.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(6) - PIDF Operating Grant, could we please be provided an update on that organisation given the concerns raised in the past on the duplication of roles in regional organisations? Our view is that, since it is a duplication that could be rationalised and probably phased out. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sir, is that what I was trying to say, is that a motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No, it is a question.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Just a clarification on the roles of the organisation, its current functions and whether that it is still

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is not a duplication of the Forum Secretariat. As you know that PIDF in fact has a number of NGO participation, it has a huge proclivity or focused towards the green and blue Pacific economies and of course, it helps with a lot of the PSIDS countries in that respect, so Fiji has continued with the grant. As we know change in the grant allocation, that grant of \$1.2 million continues.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Chairman, further to that are the times we live in when we need to be aligning ourselves closely to our big neighbours, because PIDF is perceived to be anti-Australia and anti-New Zealand.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- *Oso*, that is not true!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- If there is a perception there, I think we should remove it because the time is now to be close to our big neighbours, given the realities of what he faces. But these are perceptions that we have, Mr. Chairman.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- It is only you that has that perception, we are close to our neighbours, thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Just also, Mr. Chairman, if I could clarify from my economic perspective. If we were not that close, Australia for the first time, Honourable Gavoka, actually has given direct budget support. Direct budget support is not given to people who are you are not close to. We give direct budget support to people you are close to. New Zealand is doing the same. So, how can PIDF be seen to be anti-Australia and anti-New Zealand?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tikoduadua.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to move a motion. Mr. Chairman, pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that 8-1-1(6) be decreased by \$700,000 from Head 7 in respect of the PIDF Operating Grant which has an allocation of \$1.2 million under "R".

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

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

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At the time of austerity, it is prudent to look carefully at value for money. To-date when we in this House have not been privy to return investment to the people of Fiji, PIDF will have to work with \$500,000 in the coming years, because so far it seems to be a white elephant with no directive back to the people of Fiji. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Any further Member wishing to participate in this motion?

Programme 1-1?

(Chorus of "Ayes" and "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Anare Jale?

HON. A. JALE.- I would like to move a motion, Mr. Chairman. I am proposing an increase of \$2 million to Programme 2-1(7).

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

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

HON. A. JALE.- We support the continuation of some of our Missions abroad. We would like to see the continuation of our Washington DC Mission, Brussels Mission, as well as the PNG Mission. The \$2 million that has been moved is to cater for the continuation of those Missions.

I do understand that in that particular SEG there is a provision to close up Missions. So, if we have it our way to continue to have the missions operating, that means the additional \$2 million that has been allocated to closure can also be used to see the additional cost that may be required to

continue the three Missions. We have already emphasised the importance of having the Missions and I will not labour on that anymore, but I feel that those Missions are very important for our diplomatic relationship.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Any further Honourable Members wishing to participate in this motion?

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will now vote that:

Head 8-2-1(7) be increased by \$2 million.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We now go to the motion by Honourable Tikoduadua that:

Head 8-1-1(6) be decreased by \$700,000 from Head 7 in respect of the PIDF Operating Grant which has an allocation of \$1.2 million under “R”

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 8.

Question put.

Head 8 agreed to.

Head 9 – Independent Bodies

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme: Policy and Administration, Activity: General Administration. Hon. Professor Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just some clarifications on two of those bodies; one is that the Auditor-General’s Office, this is a clarification from Honourable Minister for Economy.

In 2018-2019 Budget, we had got \$5.9 million allocation. We are reducing it to \$5 million which is understandable, but as we discussed earlier, Mr. Chairman, the responsibility of the Auditor-General’s Office, particularly when we going to operate within a very, very strict Budget. I think what I would want to know is whether reduction in the Budget is going to have to an impact on how the Auditor-General’s Office is able to monitor expenditures throughout Government Ministries and entities.

The second issue is the Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA), I see it has been allocated \$76,000. I think last year it was allocated \$150,000. We still do not have a chairperson, the position is still vacant. I am not sure whether that allocation given, we have had experiences of MIDA not even being able to present its annual report to this House on time. Sir, I would ask the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy to give some clarification on those two.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, in respect of the Auditor-General's Office, unfortunately this is the problem one can have if we just compare year-in and year-out, when you have one-line budget items. So for example, with the Auditor-General's Office with \$5.9 million in 2018-2019, they actually hosted an international meeting. So, that is why there is an increase in the budget. It did not mean therefore consequentially that the reduction in the budget meant that there is a reduction in their capacity to operate. When you host an event, you have \$200,000 to \$300,000 more, et cetera.

Mr. Chairman, the INTOSAI meeting which is an International Auditor-General's Meeting, however so, it does not affect the operations. As you know also there is a reduction with the Auditor-General who has taken a 10 percent pay cut, of course, reduction of FNPF. So we will carry on with these normal operations, and there is no problem with that.

In respect to MIDA, yes there will be a chairperson that will be appointed. I am glad the Honourable Member is very keen about MIDA being up in running when his completely opposed it, I remember a few years ago. But the expenditure there is essentially for two, one salary position and one wage position in the event when people are employed and it is a very modest sum of \$76,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tikoduadua, to move your motion. You have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 9-1-1(6) be increased by \$1 million in respect of the Office of the Auditor-General.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- My apology, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Are you withdrawing this?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- I am, Mr. Chairman. My apology.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- My gratefulness. Honourable Gavoka?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes, Mr. Chairman, I wish to move a motion without notice that the allocation for the Judiciary be increased by \$250,000.

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

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The allocation I am recommending is to accommodate or take in an Integrity Commissioner under the Judiciary. In other jurisdictions, Mr. Chairman, this a part time position on a need basis without a permanent office, and normally it has a retired Judge, who acts as a Commissioner.

We saw this, Mr. Chairman, in our visit to Canada in 2015; Honourable Seruiratu, Honourable Viam Pillay and Honourable Sela Nanovo. In the Parliament of Ontario, they set up this Commissioner in 1988 and in New Brunswick, we actually met the Commissioner. I think the

Honourable Seruiratu had returned to Fiji at the time and Honourable Pillay and Honourable Nanovo met with this gentleman; a retired Judge. His role, Mr. Chairman, is to advise and direct on conflict of interest to a broad range of public servants and also prepare resources for Members of Parliament and Ministers about rules they must follow.

Mr. Chairman, if you look at the Ontario Parliament, that was started in 1866 and they only created this position in 1988 because of the need by Parliamentarians to have a Commissioner, who they can go to, to advise them on complex issues regarding their role as Parliamentarians and their personal interest and the like.

I say this, Mr. Chairman, as we sit here today, 12 of our colleagues are being investigated by FICAC. It is very unfair for us to do this to them without the benefit of a Commissioner they could have gone to, to advise them on what they are being investigated on.

A Parliamentarian's duties can be very complex. The way we evolve with our roles, there could be changing circumstances. You are based somewhere, you have relocated somewhere else and some of them have done that, and for which the belief is that, they need to be investigated. But as I said, things have changed for most of them. And if they have the benefit of this Commissioner, he could have advised them - This is how you go about it, you are allowed to do this or you are not allowed to do it.

That, Mr. Chairman, is very important. If they have this for the Canadians, who are very well educated with 100 years of parliamentary tradition behind them, we should also have it in Fiji. We are a new Parliament, we are a new people in this kind of work. We need advice like that from Commissioners to guide us in our work. We could be asked to serve in Boards, to buy shares in some companies. Before you do that, you could go to a commissioner to advise you whether that is in keeping with your role as a Parliamentarian.

Mr. Chairman, it is unfortunate that the connotation is always about money and that it is dishonest, but we cannot say that. We must provide support for our Parliamentarians and I just wish that we could relook at the whole situation and lend a helping hand to our 12 Parliamentarians. You know what it is like, their pictures are on the front page of the daily newspaper. You can imagine what they are going through right now, so we cannot just throw them to the wolves, so to speak. We must do something to help them and I believe the creation of an integrity commissioner will help us in our roles and to ensure that we are always behaving ethically and above board.

We met this person in New Brunswick. He is so affable, very approachable person. I just want to say, I wish we could have this guy in Fiji. He was a retired judge and he was giving us an example of what he does for the Parliamentarians in that part of Canada.

Mr. Chairman, I think we should consider this. The position must come under the Judiciary. It needs to be independent but in some jurisdictions, it can be a part-time and on need basis but someone that all of us can go to when we are not sure about certain things to do with our role here as Parliamentarians. I hope, Mr. Chairman, that we can all agree as a Parliament to do this. It is for the performance of our duties to the highest standards and something that we all need to help us do our job. Thank you, Honourable Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Is there any other Member wishing to take the floor on this?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, I speak in support of the motion as the Whip of the Opposition, Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA). In support of that, it is the importance of us seeing that what affects one Parliamentarian affects us all, either side of the House that we are on,

and it is the integrity of the whole of Parliament, there is the perception of the public, you know, in support of that we do need an independent person that they can go to.

Unfortunately, it would have been beneficial to go through an internal Parliament process before this matter was taken up directly. It would have been beneficial to have that, Sir, however, we are talking about supporting this motion in having this independent person, and I do support it to benefit us all, not just for now but also in the future for all Parliamentarians. Thank you, Sir.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- If I could, Sir, just mention a couple of things, how legally it is not possible. You cannot have a so-called independent commission linked to the Judiciary. Independent commission would be created under statute. The Judiciary has specific powers under the Constitution, it is one of the arms of the State, so legally you cannot do that, No. One. No. Two is that, the Honourable Member talked about these police officers who have been charged by the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC) and then he used that to talk about the support for Members of Parliament.

As mentioned earlier on when Honourable Professor Prasad talked about the Transparency Commission which I had alluded to, I had referred the two Members who moved this motion to Section 149 of the Fijian Constitution which actually creates a Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament, including the President and Ministers and everybody else that are defined under this particular provision. It also creates the Accountability and Transparency Commission.

We should do precisely what they are actually suggesting and the reason why that has not been put in place is because the enabling law was tabled as two separate Bills in this Parliament and the Committees did not review the Bills on time and those Bills then lapsed after the term of Parliament ended in 2018, so they now need to be brought back when we will be informed that the Committees can actually review those Bills, so Committees need to tell us.

I would, please, urge them, if they are referred to Section 149 of the Fijian Constitution, it talks exactly about these issues that were just being highlighted and, Mr. Speaker, Sir, you know, being charged by FICAC is not being sent to the wolves. These are certain laws that people have breached, in the same way that the police would charge someone else. So, I hope the Honourable Members actually see the wisdom and actually withdraw it because legally, it is not possible to put a Commission created by statute in the Judiciary and secondly, that we already have a provision in the 2013 Fijian Constitution that we can set up such a Commission.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, that is my motion and I thought I have got to reply. Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is not a Commission, it is a specific person under the Judiciary.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, you cannot.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- And, Mr. Chairman, Sir, I brought this up when a United Nations Team came to Grand Pacific Hotel and they all took note of that, and I am sure their Report is somewhere here in Parliament that Parliamentarians need this person, this kind of office, whichever form it takes but we cannot be working in the dark, so to speak.

The Canadians also have their Constitution, they also have their transparency but they have all that but they found a need for this. So, I believe this position or whatever it comes under must be made available for the benefit of everyone in this House, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, from a findings perspective, one cannot allocate money for a particular position when we do not know what the parameters of that position are. Even if the Honourable Gavoka is now saying it would not be with the Judiciary, but under Head 9 which is about Independent Bodies, so, what are the parameters? Where is the law that you want to give this particular person or individual or commissioner or whatever you may call it, the legal boundaries, what are his parameters? You cannot allocate funding by just saying “We will give a million dollars now or whatever it is” when you do not actually have the law.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, most Parliaments have a Parliamentary Counsel, we do not have it yet. We do not have a Parliamentary Counsel yet.

(Honourable Members interject)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Member, we will bring this to a vote. We have had enough talk on this. The motion is that:

Head 9 be increased by \$250,000 in Programme - Police, Policy and Administration, Activity - General Administration, SEG 6 with respect to Judiciary.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 9.

Question put.

Head 9 agreed to.

Head 13 - Independent Commissions

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Head 13, Mr. Chairman, regarding the Accident Compensation Commission of Fiji (ACCF), an increase of \$84,500; can we just get a clarification into what this allocation is for? Is this for operations of the Office or is it the compensation payout allocation? Since Accident Compensation Commission has now taken over the injury accidents as well, can we just get a clarification from the Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sure. Firstly, as the Honourable Minister for Employment highlighted that when the law was created, the ACCF actually did not have any retrospective operational work that could be assigned to it. It was moving forward, it was everything poster, lobbying, et cetera. So the ones that are currently with the Ministry of Employment, is to do with those ones that predates the creation of ACCF.

We are currently in some discussions to see how we can actually get some of the workers currently with employment, to come into ACCF because we can then streamline and save some costs in terms of revenue and costs, but it will probably require some amendments to the existing law for the ACCF to be able to deal with those matters that dealt in that they actually came into being prior to ACCF's formulation.

In respect of the actual ACCF, the payment from the ACCF does not come from this budgetary allocation. It comes from the levy that is paid by the people who use motor vehicles. As announced in the budget, we now reduce the levy by 50 percent to give some relief to people, so they

do not pay the same amount of levy. Again, this is helping ordinary Fijians which you did not mention in your budget addresses.

But, the point means that there is obviously been a decrease in the salary of the CEO, reduction in FNPF, there has been an increase in the service provider cost. In fact, ACCF now does not only deal with the motor vehicle injuries and deaths by motor vehicles, but also school yard injuries, we also now have employment matters that also comes before the ACCF, which is therefore, meant that there has been a slight increase in the funding of \$84,050, compared to what it was.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- A clarification on this ACCF. Can we just get clarification from the Honourable Minister whether the disbursement of these funds to ACCF are subject to any criteria condition in terms of provision of annual report that they need to submit?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Obviously, there are acquittals that they do provide and then the funds are disbursed like all other agencies that we do provide.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Filipe Tuisawau.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a query on FCCC, regarding their role. Could you please clarify whether the rationale behind their decision is accessible to the public and can it be queried in detail? Can their decisions be challenged in a Court of Law? Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Can you repeat the first question, I did not hear the first part of it?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- On their decisions, can we seek clarifications on that, the rationale behind it and formulas they use? For example, how they set the fuel prices and also whether their decision can be challenged in a Court of Law and if yes or no, the reasons? Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The templates that you are referring to, for example, price controlled items like, fuel and various other price controlled items whether it is flour, biscuits bread, etcetera, all those templates are very transparent. The templates are set by FCCC, working in conjunction with their respective suppliers of those goods and, indeed, services whether it is electricity, water, et cetera, or whether monopolistic situations. For example with the Ports because it is the sole provider of that particular service any increase in the fees by the Port operator will have to be approved by the FCCC because of anti-competitive behaviour that could exist as a result of them being monopoly. So those templates are made in public the people who are actually have those templates are applied to them obviously they know about it.

In respect of the decisions, of course people can be prosecuted by FCCC, they can be taken to court, people can appeal those decisions so they know that is before the court in itself. As announced in the Budget, I be tabling hopefully, tomorrow on a particular Bill in respect of some of the powers for the FCCC to be able to ensure that the very least there is some form of passing down of the reduction in duties in various items.

Honourable Member, you may be interested to know in Fiji, if you go to a supermarket there is only about 70 percent of all the goods you have seen in the supermarket there is only six or seven suppliers of those goods. So they have a very good control and a number of times we have highlighted previously even when we reduce to zero-rated duty for example, at one point in time on baby products we have a very young population people buying baby products, baby wipes, et cetera,

whether it was reduced from 32 percent to 5 percent or zero percent, there were no comments on the reduction in the price of those goods.

The reason being in one particular instance, you had only one agent for Johnson & Johnson in the entire Pacific. So here essentially, ate up all their duty reduction. He had one of the lawyers from NFP having a go at me on social media saying that “by doing this for FCCC , we do not understand the market”, we very well understand the market and the market is when you have monopolistic position, geopolitical position over new price gouging, you need third party intervention. And this is what FCCC plays a very pivotal role in that respect. And I hope you will support the Bill when you bring the amendment.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, we move on. Honourable Aseri Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification in terms of the allocation for the Commissions, can we get a confirmation from the Honourable Minister on the Operation for Mercy Commission? Are they in one of these Commissions?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, because they do not get any money. The way the Mercy Commission operates, you do not have Independent Secretariat at such, full time secretariat I should say. All of these commissions have independent and full time secretariat so CEOs, et cetera, and all of these people are actually paying money to CEO, et cetera.

The Mercy Commission is made up of Commissioners who are chosen, is chaired by the Attorney-General, we received the submissions from the individual prisoners, we have certain guidelines and then we gave our recommendations to His Excellency the President who then gives the pardon.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 13.

Question put.

Head 13 agreed to.

Head 15 – Ministry of Justice

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will now vote on Head 15.

Question put.

Head 15 agreed to.

Head 16 – Ministry of Communications

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Head 16-1-1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, regarding SEG 7, there is an increase of \$163,000 in terms of Special Expenditures.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- In SEG 7.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is Programme 2, you are looking at. We are doing Programme 1-1 at the moment.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Qionibaravi.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(5), there is an allocation of \$50,000 for Constitution Day. Can the Honourable Minister inform the House what form of celebration will be undertaken for Constitution Day (\$50,000)?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I am sorry, if I heard you correctly. What sort of celebrations?

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Yes, are we still having celebration given COVID-19?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, I mean, I think if we see that we have allocated \$50,000 obviously, if there are restrictions that will stop us from having large gatherings, that will be factored in. But, Honourable Member you may also know that for the past number of years, we have also been organising essay competitions throughout Fiji. We do pay, we give prizes to children, students, we have singing competition. We have people reading oratory. So, all of those expenses are catered for within this.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- My other question is the Jubilee Celebration.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is in Ministry of Civil Service.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(5) - Qorvis Communications (\$800,000). Can the Honourable Minister clarify what are the services this company provides for Fiji? Does it do tourism work and whether it did work for COP23 or other activities for Ministries? We note that he just done work for other dictatorial regimes which suppressed human rights. So, we are interested in the expense of activities in Fiji. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- They provide general public relation services to the Government of Fiji, both domestically and internationally. Yes, we have elucidated a number of occasions in this Parliament that they have provide a support to us for the COP23 and post-COP23 efforts. They do provide those types of services for Fiji.

In respect of obviously a number of the situation in respect of spreading Fiji's message they do have a lot of contacts, for example even with COVID-19 a lot of the messaging that we had with overseas counterparts. They get us positions in various editorials. Those things obviously, help us to position ourselves.

You would also note, Honourable Member, there is actually been a reduction in the allocation. That was \$1.1 million allocation. Now it is \$800,000 reduction to Qorvis for those purposes.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman I would like to move a motion on that without notice, that Head 16 be decreased by \$800,000, as per the allocation for Qorvis Communications.

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

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

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, just to clarify – reduce or remove by \$800,000. We feel that it is a drain on our national resources which should be better spent on health or education for the welfare of the people of Fiji, rather than being wasted on a company with poor reputation that had worked with brutal and murderous dictatorial regimes around the world.

We have invested in our Ministry for Information all these years and we have people there, our local talents, who we could utilise for the work which it is doing. Not only that, but we also have various experienced journalists; not only in Fiji, but in the Pacific, who could also be used for this particular work. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- All right, we will move on. Programme 2-1. Honourable Leawere?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- No, Mr. Chairman, I am still on Activity 1, SEG 5.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We are on Programme 2. Honourable Biman Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-1(7), there is a new allocation of \$15 million for Online Business and Construction Licensing System and digitalFIJI. Can the Honourable Minister explain what that involves?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is incorrect. This Online Business and Construction Licensing System is \$6.6 million.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I said together it is about \$15 million.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, the Online Business and Construction Licensing System will allow Fijians everywhere, overseas and locally and also foreigners, to apply for new business licences, getting construction permits, participation in government agencies to approve the applications, all online. Both the applicants and the processing agencies will be able to track the progress of the application submission, so you can actually do all of this digitally.

When we say business licensing, we actually mean your approval to be able to start construction of the building, so for example, if I may be a new company or a new company is wanting to start a hotel in Fiji, I could be overseas and I could apply for a hotel licence, then I could put in my permits; all of that can be done online. Approvals for example, from the National Fire Authority, OHS, Ministry of Health, Immigration, everyone gets into that, and then you have all online applications - ease of doing business is all in that respect.

The other win is in respect of Government's digital transformation to bring key government services online. For example, we have the Registrar of Lands Titles and Deeds, the Infrastructure Cloud-hosting and Licence Subscription, the Business Process Re-design, Starting Solution Implementation, Data Harmonisation - all of these issues I am sure you would appreciate.

We in Fiji have not been very good in respect of collation of data across the different agencies and we want real-life data that is available. So, today, if someone asks us exactly, how many people in the province of Namosi are growing, for example, cassava? We may have some data but we do not have the exact data. If someone says to us today, how many people are actually operating canteens from home? We cannot tell you. We should be able to have that kind of data.

So, this is all part and parcel of the roll-out of the digitalFiji programme to get some quick wins on that, so for example, applications being available on mobile phone apps and also part of that

is the national switch, which will be part of the rolling out cards. We found the country was very vulnerable for example to climatic changes.

There have been a lot of issues in the past about people double dipping, Social Welfare double dipping. We recently had a case where a lady whose baby had passed away, was able to go and claim \$1,000. We had another lady who claimed \$1,000 in Ba, \$1,000 in Lautoka, \$1,000 in Nadi; all on the same day. If we had real live data, if they were to pick one up, their names would have actually been picked up immediately within a matter of minutes or seconds; all the BDM Offices would have it picked up, so that is what we are trying to do.

We recently had a case where someone who was actually in a de facto relationship because there were some tussle over the property, was able to get two death certificates. There are leakages because people are able to take advantage of the fact that there is manual intervention in the process.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Who is doing this? Have we hired a...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, this is done through the Singaporeans. The Singaporeans, of course, are managing it but we also have individual vendors who actually provide those services. It fits all. You know, you have seen the work that has been done in the Immigration Department.

We now have actually seen the capacity, the technology for people to go, the Immigration Department to go to people's homes, where they are incapacitated, to be able to issue them with their passports, at the hospital, you know they had somewhere to go for emergency flights. We have people now who can go to Post Offices and actually get a passport. If they are in Tavua wanting a passport, they do not have to come to Suva or Lautoka or Nadi. They can actually do it from their own hometown, so it reduces the cost of people in terms of time; they do not need to travel or take time off work, cost in respect of fiscal financial work and of course, increases productivity and provides a better service. That is part of the programme.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask a question on Head 16-3-1.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We have not gone to that but we will move there now for your sake. Programme 3-1.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Sir. My question is to the Honourable Minister to please explain why Fiji cannot have just one emergency number and whether an investigation has been carried out into how many homes were destroyed because victims did not know the National Fire Authority (NFA) number.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, which SEG are you referring to.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- I am just asking a general question on communication. It has to do with emergency number. I am asking as to why Fiji cannot have just one emergency number and whether investigations have been carried into how many homes have been destroyed because people did not know the emergency number for the NFA.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, the reason why I asked you which SEG, if you look at Programme 3-1(7), it says National Emergency Telecommunication Plan, and that is precisely what we are doing.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Are you moving towards just one number for emergency.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, one or two but it depends. This is why we have a plan. We need to work it out to see the capacity. If you can let me finish - once the plan is done, the study is done then we will have either one number or numbers. Some countries have two numbers, some countries only have one number, so in our case, we are going to see what is the best plan and that is why we allocated that funding for that.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you. I have another question, Sir, on SEG 7 as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have the floor.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Sir. It is the last item on SEG 7, connecting the unconnected. Could the Honourable Minister just inform the House as to what this means?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- It is to connect you to the unconnected.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- You.

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Obviously, we need some connection. Honourable Member, you are blushing.

(Laughter)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, this is obviously not a marriage bureau. We need an explanation from the Minister.

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir. If you look at “Connecting the unconnected”, just below that you will see in SEG 10 - Northern Connectivity (World Bank) (\$1.5 million). This is overall part and parcel of the connecting the unconnected. What do we mean by that? It is connecting them particularly, to internet services and telecommunication services.

You may recall that we landed the cable on Vanua Levu (Savusavu) connecting it to the Southern Cross Cable. The Honourable Prime Minister had opened that and we had been provided funding by the World Bank. There was \$1.5 million which was underutilised and the World Bank actually wanted us to utilise that for telecommunication purposes. So, for that \$1.5 million we have essentially identified over 40 different locations throughout Vanua Levu where certain schools, villages, rural areas have absolutely no connectivity, and the telecommunications companies will not go there because there are only like 20 houses or 15 houses or 5 houses. There is no economic return for them. We will actually connect them through this particular programme as we have done through the telecentres where you can get data back.

One of the things that we do want to do moving along, as far as telecommunications is concerned, at the moment, is a very old way in particular dealing with disaster management. We expect our Commissioners to go out in their vehicles to see what is actually happening but we do not necessarily rely on what the people over there are able to tell us in real time data. So, we have your *Turaga ni Koro*, you have your district advisory councils who if they are connected can actually send

us pictures, data, information back almost immediately, if they are connect. So, that is the Northern Division.

This Connecting the Unconnected is, overall, to do with Fiji and we are going to focus initially on the Western Division for this utilisation. We are developing a plan as to what are the areas? Where are the critical areas? Where are what we call the brown outs? Brown outs are areas where you get some connectivity and some other times it fades out, or you blackout to complete black spots where there is no connectivity whatsoever. It is part and parcel of getting the connected unconnected from that perspective.

HON. ADI L QIONIBARAVI.- Is \$30,000 sufficient?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, because it is developing a plan. We already have staff within the Ministry of Communications. The way we work is very smart so, we have people doing two or three jobs but that is part and parcel of many for consultation when we go out and do the surveys, but the staff themselves who are paid from SEG1 will actually be funding it.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Bulitavu?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Just a follow-up on whether that “Connecting the Unconnected” will also link up with the current mobile service providers given their towers, to share. Some of them do not want to share. Only *Digicel* can catch in some areas while *Vodafone* does not.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- As we have highlighted previously in a number of countries the telecom providers are actually regulated or mandated through law to actually share infrastructure, and where infrastructure is actually owned by everyone.

There are shared infrastructure and of course in Fiji, it has been allowed to carry on like that for years. So, we now will come up with the next best thing which is an MOU. *Digicel*, *Vodafone* and Telecom Fiji Limited have now got MOUs in particular to be able to share infrastructure.

For example, in Labasa (Delaikoro) the actual lease up to the mountain site is owned by TFL, so they have got a gate and they can lock it. So, if *Digicel* or *Vodafone* wants to go they do not give them the key but all that has been sorted out and people can share infrastructure. Also now, the strength of the tower needs to be built to at least withstand Category 4 or Category 5 and be able to carry transmitters. So, before you have one tower with one transmitter because it was only for one company but now you have got one tower with four or five transmitters and it needs to be built strongly.

So, that is the next phase we are getting into and you will see and hopefully you will support that also with the data levy amendment to the Act that we are going to carry out. We will give another 0.5 percent more, they would not agree to that from which we will also not only continue with the tele-centres but also in respect of addressing the black spots.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Professor Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, SEG10, allocation to *Walesi*. The platform is available for access to broadcast television, wireless internet. I think there are serious complaints from people using that in many parts of Fiji that we have been to. I want to ask the Honourable Minister; what are the problems, what is happening? Why were people using it actually face a lot of difficulties? In some areas it goes off, and sometimes it is not available for days. These are issues,

it could be technical issues but we are allocating quite a big sum and we want to be assured, the people want to be assured that the services available under this platform is improved immediately.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- If I could, Honourable Member, just highlight to you that since July last year to June of this year what *Walesi* has done. There have been seven Customer Care outlets opened modular offices. You see those container-wise ones - Sigatoka, Ba, Rakiraki, Savusavu, Suva, Lautoka and Labasa online premises, customer growth, terrestrial viewers have increased by 16 percent from a 119,000 to 137,800. Satellite viewers have increased by 101 percent from 1,100 to 2,378 viewers. The *Walesi* App has increased its usage by 47 percent. So obviously a lot more people are watching their televisions on their phones nowadays.

There are now 456,464 viewers who have downloaded the *Walesi* App. I hope the same number have downloaded the careFiji App. In fact there are more information than the careFiji App.

Community installations, a total of 711 installations in community village halls done for free. When we say “do it for free”, it is not just connecting them to the satellite dish if there is a necessity for them, but also giving them a free TV set and set top box.

Terrestrial coverage expansion, these areas have never had access to free terrestrial television and then Naitasiri, Wainibalavu, Nakorosule, Nawaisomo, Lomaivuna, Taulevu, Rakiraki, Naiyala to Nayavu and Sigatoka Cuvu, Vatukarasa, Rukurukulevu, Sila, Tore, Valley Road, Narata, interiors of Ba, Rakiraki, Tavua, Tailevu, Natovi area and Nataleira, Savusavu, Buca Bay, Wailevu East, Wailevu West, Rabi Island, interiors of Cakaudrove, Malake, Saqani, interiors of Bua, Nasolo, Nacaria, Kubulau, Cikobia and Kadavu.

Satellite installations in remote areas free to access in Lau Group, Moala, Lakeba, Yacata, Matuku, Ono-i-Lau, Rotuma, Yasawa Group and Vatulele.

Then they established another 13 additional transmission sites during the year, taking the total number of transmission sites to 22. Current population coverage is at 90 percent by terrestrial. In other words from tower to tower and obviously we would increase 95 percent and the remaining 5 percent is satellite network.

Public Wi-Fi area, there are 16 public Wi-Fi sites, total of 43 terabyte data used in the last 12 months, an increase of 328 percent, 26 FNU facilities have 100 percent free Wi-Fi coverage, a total of 464 terabytes data used in the last 12 months, an increase of 70 percent.

The OTT *Walesi* App infrastructure upgrade to meet increased demand, there are 17 additional services deployed at ISP Telecom networks for content delivery to improve user experience, data used increased by 237 percent.

Last but not least, obviously we had during COVID-19 the Education Channels that were rolled out by *Walesi*. One of the issues of course, Honourable Prasad is that even if people may complain, in particular people use it by phone. So when, for example, there is a rugby match going on very popular and in the capacity the data for the Telecom providers, too much traffic, so it does freeze. Again we are talking to Telecom providers to make sure there is enough bandwidth available for that.

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

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a query for the Honourable Minister regarding SEG 7 - Cost of Telecentres (\$100,000) on whether that is still in progress? I

noticed that has been a regular budget item. I noticed also that there has been no public opening of telecentres lately. In addition to what Honourable Professor Prasad stated on *Walesi*, in this COVID-19 situation, I consider this a luxury item and this needs to be reviewed.

The other issue here is, what is the status of this company? Is IT SOE or partly Government-owned enterprise? In the website, I noticed that they are saying it is a Government-owned company but it is not listed here in the Supplement to the Budget. Fiji Foods and FBC are listed here but not *Walesi*.

Given that situation and also they have not submitted any annual reports, we have provided grants, I think we have provided grants for the last two or three years, so there needs to be a proper audit of this *Walesi* Company, in particular the amounts which are being given and are quite substantial as to the cost effectiveness of this and proper reports provided, annual reports, et cetera. So without notice, I am moving a motion that SEG 10 under Head 16 be reduced to \$5 million pending the proper assessment, review and submission of reports. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Bulitavu, speak against the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have the floor, Honourable Member. Do you wish to move a motion on this or you withdrawing it?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- I am awaiting for the explanation on the telecentres and then I will make the decision, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I thought that the Honourable Attorney-General has just explained all that a few minutes ago.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, I have explained everything about *Walesi*, I do not think there needs to be said anything more on that. Regarding the telecentres, the way the telecentres operate is that we started off the telecentres a few years ago when a lot of people used to use, for example, voice quite a lot. Now people use data, *Viber*, et cetera. We used to charge a small levy for incoming international calls (Honourable Member are you interested or shall I stop) where we set aside funds.

I still remember the day that the Honourable Prime Minister actually opened the first telecentre and we opened it actually in three places in Suva Sangam, Levuka and also Rakiraki where we, in particular, went to schools that did not have computer laboratories, we gave them computers, webcams, printers, and we gave them access to data which we still continue to pay till today.

A lot of these remote places, the telecentres are maintained by Government, some of the equipment has become obsolete. We have now 30 telecentres of which 26 are still operational, four had been deactivated but now we hope to revive them again. Some of the places we used to pay for the security guards because our condition was, "if we are going to give you these telecentres, we want the people in that locality to have access to the telecentres after school."

So a farmer or someone living in that area could go and use that computer to make a phone call or learn about certain things and in fact, the moment you tell people you can make free *Skype* phone calls, people get interested. So we actually have to pay for security guards because the schools said otherwise we would open it up to 3 o'clock. That money goes towards the maintenance and the upkeep of these telecentres. This is why today we have a huge penetration rate or accessibility of internet. Yes, sometimes we actually paid for the computer teachers too just to run the telecentres.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Member?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, I thank the Honourable Minister for the explanation, for the clarification on *Walesi* and the assurances that reports will be provided to this House and I withdraw that motion on *Walesi*. Thank you.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I was going to speak on the motion to support him but he is withdrawing it.

(Laughter)

Walesi is a serious problem, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 4-1?

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Right we have a motion to vote on that:

Head 16 be decreased by \$800,000, as per the allocation for Qorvis Communications.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 16.

Question put.

Head 16 agreed to.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will now suspend proceedings for refreshments in the Big Committee Room and proceedings will resume in half an hour's time. Thank you.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.12 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 4.46 p.m.

Head 17 – Ministry of Civil Service

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-1.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to ask under SEG 5, could we please get some clarity on the \$150,000 location for Leadership Training, please?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is essentially for course skilled training for senior civil servants to improve service delivery to Fijian people through leadership training and to drive those changes down through the Ministries themselves. So, it is for senior civil servants.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Anare Jale.

HON. A. JALE.- Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy clarify the allocation of Customer Care Centres. There has been an increase of about \$151,000 in that. What is that programme about?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sir, we are looking at SEG 5?

HON. A. JALE.- SEG 4.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We have two ministries where you can actually call in for complaints. So, it is like call centre through Vodafone. So, the two Ministries are the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations. People can call directly these helplines and their problems can be attended to. It is actually being maintained, we have outsourced this to Vodafone. We pay them for those services. So, they obviously in turn employ a lot of the young people who provide the services. It is also a good way of tracking in a way where the complaints are, when it was made, when it was resolved, et cetera.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Qereqeretabua.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Another question under SEG 5 about the \$52,500 location for Other Contractual Services. Just seeking clarification from the Honourable Minister, thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sure, these pertain to security, health services, cleaning services to maintain various office premises or Government Referral Centre and the Centre for Training and Development.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Pio Tikoduadua.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Chairman, a question on SEG 7. There is an allocation of \$49,563 for Cadetship Programme. The question is, is there any synergy with the Ministry of Employment Attaché and Volunteer Scheme under the National Employment Centre?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, a cadetship within the Civil Service itself, so it is not to do with the Ministry of Employment *per se*. It is the Ministry of Civil Service going out and trying to get bright people to join the Civil Service. As we have announced that we have got

top graduates, we do a rotation of them around the different ministries and eventually, they end up in one of the Ministries that they want to end up in.

At the moment, we have an allocation for two cadets only at this point in time, and that is what that \$49,563 is for.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua?.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, in SEG 7 of the 2019-2020 Budget, there was an \$861,000 allocation for Civil Service Coordination Implementation Unit. Could I just get a clarification from the Honourable Minister, about whether that Unit had been set up and what happened, and what does it do in the 2019-2020? Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, it has been subsumed within this Ministry, so you will see for example, if you look at SEG 1, you look at, for example, an increase in SEG 1 of \$646, so essentially this is where you have the 18 positions that have actually been regularised. Predominantly, these are for Training Officers within the Civil Service Coordination and Implementation Unit, so they used to sit at the project posts, so now they have been regularised, so they are in SEG 1.

What we are doing now, prior to COVID-19, we also are in talks to get the Singaporeans to come and do 'Train the Trainers' here to upskill our Civil Service in terms of service delivery, so we are building capacity within our training officers, so, people from different Ministries can actually go for training in different aspects, whether it is service delivery, whether it is in any part of, say Budget, Audit, in terms of how do you deal with complaints, all of that is being done on leadership training. We try and do that more inhouse to build capacity for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, the Parliament will now vote on Head 17 - Ministry of Civil Service.

Question put.

Head 17 agreed to.

Head 18 - Ministry for Rural and Maritime Development & Disaster Management

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-1. Honourable Saukuru, you have the floor.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I just need a clarification from the Honourable Minister on Head 18-1-1(6) - District Advisory Counsellor Allowance (\$600,000). How much are they paid and how many District Advisory Counsellors are there?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are 302 constituencies in total throughout Fiji. Currently, there are 279 filled and the rest are vacant and in terms of the allowance, they are paid \$170 per month for the Advisory Counsellors.

You would probably ask why the difference between the Advisory Counsellors and . The *Turaga ni Koro* just look after one village, but Advisory Counsellors have bigger areas and that is why there is a difference in the rate.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Professor Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a related question because we have a lot of issues being raised by people with respect to the kind of things that advisory councillors do and what is their role, what is the ambit within which they operate, and what are the type of direct Government link and the services that they are expected to deliver to the people because I think there is a lot of dispute.

I raised this with the Honourable Minister for Agriculture some time back because there are people who were saying; Alright, advisory councillors have certain preferences, they do this, they do that. I am just asking the Minister - do you have some kind of supervisory mechanisms through which to ensure that the advisory councillors because they are supposed to be politically-neutral, they are supposed to be working within the Government mechanisms to serve the people in their area? Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Honourable Member, for the question. In fact, there are always issues with advisory councillors and they have a lot of differences in the communities as well but one thing that the Government has done in the last few years is to ensure in terms of the monitoring mechanism, is for them to submit reports.

This was an issue that I think if you recall, Honourable Leader of the NFP, we discussed in one of the previous meetings of Parliament (I think two years ago) where they raised questions about not being paid simply because in terms of monitoring, like Turaga ni Koro as well, they are now expected to provide reports so that we can then release their pays so the number of visits that they do, so the monitoring is done by district officers and the provincial administrators.

The other thing that I would probably add to that in terms of monitoring, now what the Ministry is doing is, we are developing SOPs for all the programmes and including the monitoring mechanisms so that we can also improve the customer services. I have seen the first draft of all the SOPs that are developed by the Ministries, the policy team in headquarters but when it comes to issues again in the areas in which they operate.

Usually when it is referred to headquarters, we will always refer it back to the Divisional Commissioner and down to the district level so that they do thorough investigations and then submit reports. Of course, if there is a need for them to be changed, they have to be nominated by the respective communities and we endorse, so we are trying to strengthen that through these new SOPs that we are developing. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Honourable Minister, on SEG 8, the Construction of Government Stations in Wainikoro, Kubulau, Namarai and Kavala, \$1.5 million. Given the time that we face today and the need to put money into the hand of our people. Would you consider moving that to rural infrastructure; Programme 2-4(SEG 10) - Grant to Self-Help Projects which has \$1 million, so essentially holding the construction of those premises and putting more money into self-help projects?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- A matter of priority, given the times we live under.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, if I may clarify, these are rolled over projects, they have already started. Out of the four - Wainikoro, Kavala, Kubulau, if all goes according to schedule, they should be completed by this August and the rest, because the contracts

have already been signed, all these will be completed in the next financial year. But there is also a difference between these projects and self-help projects, which are about socio-economic projects. It has nothing to do with infrastructure.

So, if say, for example, they want improvement in their village sanitation for flush toilets, that is for self-help in terms of a social project. Economic projects, if they are not funded through Rural and Outer Islands (ROI), say if someone wants to start with apiculture, with a few boxes for bees. That is the economic empowerment component under Self-help, so it is a social and economic empowerment project.

Whereas this Capital Construction under SEG 8, because government is decentralising, Honourable Member, these are communities that do not get access through to Wainikoro. Tui Namuka would agree and Tikina Dogotuki and Tikina Udu have to come all the way to Labasa to get to the DO's Office. So, now we are moving closer to the area, that is why we have these capital programmes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Rasova?

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir, I just want to thank the Honourable Minister for his contribution on that but in regards to that, I have not been to Wainikoro, Kubulau, Namarai but Kavala, that is where I come from. The Government Station is already in Vunisea and so is the District Officer. I just need a clarification: what are you going to do in Kavala, will you do the same? Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I think I have just stated why Government is decentralising services. We need to get closer to the communities and this is the same thing that we did in Dada in Namosi.

We have this Station in Kubulau, otherwise the people of Kubulau have to come all the way to Nabouwalu. So, it is about decentralisation, bringing the services closer to the people.

Kadavu, for obvious reasons, we have completed the Police Station, now the DO's Office so that we can see what is there in the area.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Just a clarification on SEG 8, the Upgrade and Renovation of Existing Staff Quarters: I note that this renovation and looking after the staff quarters is the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy. Is there any specific difference why this allocation has been set on this? Is there a list of supporters that will be undertaken on this renovation exercise?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir. In fact this is a new allocation under SEG 8 to the Ministry this year. In the four divisional geographic divisions, the housing committees are chaired by the Divisional Commissioners and this allocation is just for minor repairs, screens, probably leaking tap whereas what is allocated here in the Ministry of Economy is for the bigger works, again it is about creating the environment for the Civil Service.

Now, there are no longer what we used to call "institutional quarters", it is all government quarters now. So, it is the role of the Commissioner, even if one of the health officials in the health compound has got a leaking tap, that is, for the health. So to avoid confusion as well, there are some Ministries that are allocated some money for this also, for example, Ministry of Forestry, it is in the Rural Development as well.

Some of the facilities were not constructed by the Ministry for Works, then PWD. We have our own pre-fabrications, sort of, like you will see it in Tukavesi and few other government stations, but this is for the entire Civil Service so that the Commissioner can just attend to some minor repairs for government quarters. It is government quarters, not government-rented quarters, that is another story. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Just further clarification. This essentially, if you see the Ministry of Economy, it will not have any capital works in the CIU and it will not have any capital works allocated money to it. It rests with the respective Ministries. For example, the CWM Maternity Hospital for \$7 million, even though it is coordinated by CIU, the actual allocation is with the Ministry of Health. It is the same way with this.

So even with this one here, after some of the cyclones, the plumbing, as the Honourable Minister said, painting, roofing, installation of hurricane shutters, et cetera, when you actually have it in a cluster, we get a better return for our value for the dollar. If we say, "Okay there is 25 quarters, for example, in the Western Division that needs to be repaired". So when we call for tenders, you actually get very good pricing. Now if you call for tenders for individual quarters, et cetera, this could be more than \$50,000 or less than that, then you do not get a good pricing but when we are able to cluster it together. So this is to do with all the quarters that rest within this particular Ministry.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Chairman, just on SEG 7, to the Honourable Minister, on capacity building, I think he already enlightened us in previous budget. But how will this allocation really help the Office of the Commissioners in their servicing the community in their Divisions? Community Capacity Building.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This allocation for Community Capacity Building, the Honourable Adi Litia Qionibaravi earlier on, on iTaukei Affairs asked about training for *Turaga ni Koro* and this is also for the same purpose, but not only for *Turaga ni Koro*, but also for all the rural development stakeholders. This is where this money is parked so that whenever Commissioners need to have development forums, particularly capacity building for the rural development stakeholders, this is their allocation. The allocations are based according to what the activities Commissioners plan for the next financial year.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- This is just for the Honourable Minister to probably look into. Given, most of the attendees, the *Turaga ni Koro* and Advisory Councillors, the trickle down of information, especially when you talk about budget estimates, budget toolkits, the programmes, into a particular place in that particular division or province or district, that covers where this *Turaga ni Koro* or *Mata ni Tikina* come from.

Sometimes they are not aware of this information. If that could be an area to improve, so that all these Government actors and agents who implement this, are well informed so that they are also be agents to pass this information to people, so that people can know where to go to in terms of programmes to apply for and also to benefit from. Sometimes budget announcements are just on the top but they do not trickle down and people too are not informed and they are not aware to these programmes that has been budgeted for.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Just a clarification on 3-1(8) on the Community Access Road Footpath and Foot Bridges; can we just get a clarification indication whether in terms of the leasing of footbridges that are included in this Programme?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Sorry, Mr. Chairman, I have the list of foot bridges that are already considered for the next financial year. I think we have Qauia and Sarava those are the ones that are already in the list. When I said “already in the list” these are the ones that have already been scoped. For those two, we probably just need an amount of about \$43,000 or so to complete those. But then there will be other requests that are already there. So, when they receive this funding then the finalisation and the reprioritisation of this will take place within the Ministry.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Tikoduadua.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is related to the question by the Honourable Aseri Radrodro to the Honourable Minister. This community access roads is the allocation of \$2 million with footpaths and foot bridges. What is the interface of this allocation with FRA in terms of the access roads? Does farm access road excluding sugar is included also in this \$2 million?

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

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am glad that the Honourable Tikoduadua asked this question but this is one of the issues that we used to discuss when he was the Chairman of FRA and the Minister for Infrastructure as well - the demarcation between the community access roads and the PWD standard roads.

Farm access roads is with the Ministry for Sugar and for non-cane it is with the Minister for Agriculture. When it comes to rural access roads ,there are rural roads and are under the FRA inventory and then there are other roads that are not in that inventory and that is where this allocation comes in.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Tikoduadua

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not sure whether it has changed inside that probably it has changed in terms of trying to harmonise all the works for roads under one roof. I can understand what you have said because back then there were a lot of discussions and debate about whether these roads should really be under FRA. But it seems now that it is not. It should be allocated under rural infrastructure meaning we are not going back to the old way, is the old way of doing it instead of having it under one roof. Anyway I just want to clear that.

But I also want to move a motion, Mr. Chairman, under the same Head, Programme 3, Activity1 and this is to do with SEG 7 on Emergency Water Supplies. The notification is there with you and I would like to move that Head 18-3-1(7) Emergency Water Supplies be increased by \$700,000 in respect of Emergency Water Supplies. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Tikoduadua, the floor is yours.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Sir. Mr. Chairman, in this COVID-19 world, in trying the ability to keep washing hands at home as well as in the rural schools is critical.

This allocation should be increased to ensure that happens. We should avoid community transmission of COVID-19 at all cost. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, if I may just clarify, may be the Honourable Member can reconsider his motion. On roads, one thing that I forgot to mention as well on rural road is the good thing now that FRA is revisiting some of the old road depots. I think they are cleaning Tukavesi as we speak and that assures us the commitment that FRA has in improving the condition of rural roads.

On Emergency Water, this is for emergency purposes. But one new initiative again in this year's Budget and we are thankful to the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy for accepting our proposal from the Ministry of Rural Development but that allocation is not here. That allocation is with the Ministry for Infrastructure and Utilities. We made a submission to the Honourable Minister on water and sanitation in rural Fiji and that allocation is now covered in another,

So, this is just build for emergency purposes. But if we improve the current water systems whether its gravity fed, rain fed or borehole systems or whatever that is the new allocation that is now not in this Ministry but we made the submission and it is now with the Water Authority of Fiji, I believe Honourable Minister. So, that is another allocation so I feel that Emergency Water allocation is sufficient because of the increase now in that new allocation to improve rural water projects.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sir, just to clarify two things. We are not going back regarding the FRA. Honourable Tikoduadua as you know that when you are there, there was a lot to talk about what we will do. Where do we draw the boundaries? So there is not definite answer that have been formulated. So, we are not going back *per se*.

So, the position is not change. But regarding what the Honourable Minister said about the water supplies is absolutely correct that the WAF actually has been allocated a substantial amount of money for carting water in case of emergency and also what we called Emergency Water too.

This is on top of that. This gives the particular Ministry of Rural Maritime Development a bit more latitude in the case they feel you know something is missing we do not like now. In WAF not able to do that then they step in and they have been allocated \$300,000. But if you see in the concerted effort through the WAF Programme to have emergency water and also carting water and that increment has been given for that too.

HON. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tikoduadua.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I am going to withdraw that motion on the basis on the explanation by the Honourable Minister for Rural and Maritime and also the clarification by the Honourable Minister for Economy in terms of this additional allocation under Ministry of Infrastructure for our own water.

I am sorry this is sort of outside of the Head 18, Programme 3, Activity 1, but because it has been brought up about FRA, I think there was a good idea in the first place that the National Assets are group under one page. I know that has been subject a lot of debate because it actually we can keep track our value for money but when disbursements are done in different places, particularly where road was involved in the last time. We did not really know what was going on in different Ministry because they had their own different priorities. Along those lines we accepted, depending

on the needs but it would be sad though that if they start this segregating these activities that used to be under one roof because we needed to manage this national asset and the allocated money under one roof, also.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 4-1. Honourable Qionibaravi?

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, Programme 4-1(7). I have noted the reappearance of the allocation for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Policy, an allocation of \$30,000. Can the Honourable Minister please clarify whether this is a continuation of the consultation from the previous years? If so, how much will it take them to finalise important policy? We all know how vulnerable we are to natural disasters.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Sorry, Mr. Chairman. The DRR policy has already been endorsed by Government, so this allocation is for the awareness. We want to do aggressive awareness on the DRR Policy, so the policy is already in place. Cabinet endorsed it in 2019.

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

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. Just a quick general question to the Honourable Minister under Programme, Activity 1, with regards to Evacuation Centres. Where does that fall into, given some of our communities are also dependent on and some are bridging into village hall/evacuation centre?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, the Evacuation Centres, we have Aid-in-Kind, we have allocations from some of our partners and we also have few projects that will be rolled over for next year. So, apart from what we have been allocated, this is where the self-help project allocation can come in as well. But this is one area that we are working very closely with our partners, particularly New Zealand and Japan to help us with not community halls but properly constructed designated Evacuation Centres.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, on SEG 10, on Disaster Relief and Rehab Fund. We noticed the input by the civil society organisations; Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS) and Red Cross et cetera in Disaster Relief and even in this COVID-19 Relief, are they covered in there, despite Honourable Bala labelling them as being politicised?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Do you want funding for them, Honourable Member?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- If there is assistance it could be ...

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. We have what we call 'cluster systems' that is where the Non-Government stakeholders come in. There are nine clusters in total; the wash cluster, the protection cluster, the shelter cluster and the list goes on, and this is where it is only chaired by Government, but this where all the civil society and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) come in.

Under the Act, the Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS) co-ordinates apart from the Fiji Red Cross. They are the two members of the Non-Government and civil society organisations that are members of the Disaster Management Council.

All agencies outside of Government that are key stakeholders in Disaster Management or Risk Reduction, they must link through the FCOSS and the Fiji Red Cross. And of course, all these civil society organisations are already included and that is why they received their funding from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), from New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) because they have a working relationship with National Disaster Management Office (NDMO).

Also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are occasions when we have disasters where certain groups come and ask for letters of support so they can have funding, so it is based on their connections with the communities where we make recommendations and most of them have received funding.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Qionibaravi.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir. I would like to ask the Honourable Minister as well on this Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Fund. In 2019, I had raised the question on whether the Government would be changing its policy in repairing churches, community halls that were damaged during *TC Winston*. The answer that I was given is that for Tailevu there will be five evacuation centres built.

I would like to just inform the House that during the recent *TC Harold*, a little community in Tailevu at Wainikavula, just a few minutes away from Matacula Village - one of the villages that was designated for an evacuation centre to be built - they had to take shelter in their church but alas the church also collapsed that night, so they were all squeezed into the house of the *vakatawa*. My issue is the need for evacuation centres to be built or repairs to be carried out in churches or community halls where people normally run to for shelter. There is a need to provide these community halls or repair the halls or churches so that the people are assured of a shelter should they be at the receiving end of these cyclones. The question is whether Government will consider changing the policy to ensure that people do have shelters to run to during disasters. Thank you.

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

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I have clarified this previously. It is not about community halls. It is about proper evacuation centres and I think the two biggest lists that we have in the Ministry is the request for seawalls which is referred to waterways, and request for evacuation centres. It is just dealt with according to the years in which these submissions were made but of course, evacuation centres, but Government is no longer assisting on churches. It is on community evacuation centres and of course, we have allocated resources at schools and the focus is on individual homes. We need to look after our own households first and thus the focus is to look at building our homes to standard so if the homes are safe then we can minimise these other costs.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Just to add to what the Honourable Minister says about focusing on homes. Out of the 206 schools we repaired after *TC Winston*, there were 77 buildings at 63 schools that now act as evacuation centres, you will find some of the school buildings we built, they are actually concrete buildings, double-story with one roof, some of them actually have generators, water supply so they double-up both as schools and also as evacuation centres. It makes a lot of sense, centralisation of resources, better utilisation of resources and much stronger too.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 18.

Question put.

Head 18 agreed to.

Head 19 – Republic of Fiji Military Forces

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1, Activity 1

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- SEG 5 on the Band Equipment is this for a new musical instrument or it is a rollover project?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have the RFMF Band and most of the equipment needs maintenance and of course probably a few needs to be replaced so that is why we need that allocation.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, Sir, under SEG 7 which is for recurring or operating expense here \$400,000 allocation for VAT, clearance charges. My question to the Minister is what is this for? Because no other Head has this in SEG7 and nor was it in an Activity in 2018-2019 Budget? Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have Black Rock funded by the Australians but whatever is brought into Fiji for Black Rock in Nadi although it is tax exempted but we still have to pay VAT and that is why that allocation is marked here.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 2

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 3

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 4

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 5

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 6

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 7

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 8

(Chorus of “Nays”)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- SEG 1

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 8(1).

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Can we just get a clarification from the Minister on the decrease in the Established Staff. Does this mean that there will be lesser people employed in terms of the Established Staff?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 8-1 page 95

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, the reduction is merely just for the FNPF contribution of 5 percent. No loss in staff, they have 388 established positions.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 9

(Chorus of “Nays”)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, overall on the Fiji Military Forces budget the concern has been expressed regarding that portion of the budget and the increase cost as opposed to other sectors of economy or the civil service. Are there any plans to look at the review of the cost and rationalising some of the costs internally, moving forward? Also given the amount which are given every year the reports regarding the spending of this budget are in the Annual Reports. Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, let me take the second question on the Annual Report. I know the Committees have raised it to the RFMF and I have summoned the Chief of Staff and he is working on all the outstanding reports.

On the review of the Force, Mr. Chairman, we talked this morning about National Security Strategy. Once we have this in place and then the review, because that is in the National Development Plan as well; the review of the Ministry for Defence and of course all the RFMF and the naval component. So it goes with our National Security Strategy, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There is also an understanding that the Job Evaluation Exercise (JEE) will be coming up to the Military, the last that was done was about in 2002. That will come through, of course, the Ministry of Defence and when it comes, we will then talk about it.

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

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a clarification from the Honourable Minister generally on the involvement of the RFMF in COVID-19 quarantine operations. I understand that they are involved at the resorts or Government allocated locations. Can you clarify about Army personnel who are now providing COVID-19 quarantine monitoring at residences because I have noticed that there are several set ups around some Central Suva neighbourhoods of sheds with Army Officers in the neighbourhoods and there has been no information about that to the public. So if you could just clarify that, please?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, I will kindly ask the Honourable Minister for Health to respond and I can add if need be.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. The question by the Honourable Member, there is no exemption to the quarantine so quarantine remains as it is. What happens is, everyone coming back into Fiji must have their COVID-19 test, they are predominantly Fijian citizens. When they come back into the country, for example, there may be some who are staying in Government designated facilities may not be appropriate. For example, some coming back who are sick, some coming back after having treatment, so they are brought back and the assessment that is made by both the IMT COVID-19 team and also with the Quarantine Enforcement Group which is obviously the support staff including the Disciplinary Forces.

They examine the place where this person may be and where they live and having agreed that they can be able to monitor them during the time of the quarantine, that is then become acceptable. It is passed and then they move into that facility, could be back into their own homes, for example. So then they have the Disciplinary Forces providing the quarantine enforcement around them till they complete that time of quarantine.

Some of them moved out, for example, in the instance of that case that was published in the *Fiji Times* after day 6 or day 7, some of them as soon as they arrive into the country, but again these are cases that are not exempted from quarantine, but quarantined in another area which is being well thought out and assessed by those who are in the group providing the quarantine enforcement.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you. I posed that question for clarification because the members of the public are assured that they are at Government chosen locations, isolated from the public but these are members of the public who are being quarantined in their homes in neighbourhoods. So there is one specific area where they were seen where they set up. There is no information to the public as there is a guarantee that those people who are in the public, residences, neighbourhoods are safe if they are being quarantined at their homes. It is a concern for the public but I guess my other point is, are they coming out of your budget from RFMF or from the Ministry for Health?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- It comes from the IMT COVID-19 Budget and again we will talk about it when it comes Head 22, about the COVID-19 Budget and what that entails. But I want assure us today that there is no exemption to that quarantine. The protocols that we have in place, they are watertight (that is why we have no community transmission of COVID-19). You are talking about singular cases, we have had more than 4,000 people coming back into Fiji, nearly 5,000 now.

So what you are talking about here, Honourable Member, is only a few cases and again these are cases that have been well thought out, assessments have been done, it is based on a compassionate basis, it is based for example, we have had someone come back with a heart attack, it was difficult to look after him because he needed rehabilitation, walking around and as you know in the Government designated facility, they stay in the hotel room all throughout that 14 days. So we were able to ascertain that this person's house was a well quarantine place, it was about more than a quarter acre that he lived in and that we have military personnel on hand to be able to ensure that he was able to do his rehabilitation with our doctors coming to check on a regular basis. But again, Honourable Member, please there is no exemption to the quarantine, no one is at risk and it is all funded through the COVID-19 Budget that is in place.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Seeking clarification from the Honourable Minister regarding Activity 9(4) - Docking of Vessels (\$50,000). I do not see this in the Naval Division - Activity 5 but there is a docking of vessels expenses of \$50,000 under the Hydrographic Unit. Can we get clarification on this docking of vessels?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, every now and then it is not only for hydrographic vessels but most other vessels, fishing boats that need to be docked. So that is that allocation for some major repairs on it.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Naval vessels or specialised hydrographic vessels that have been docked here.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- We have two vessels now, the *RFNS Kacau* and the *RFNS Volasiga*. But the intention now in the Fiji Navy that *RFNS Volasiga* which is specifically designed and equipped and even the Honourable Minister for Lands has already been taken on because a lot of works that, probably the surveyors in the Ministry of Lands would like to undertake will be, and of course I think the next Ministry we are looking at is Ministry of Waterways, to go look at its capability, state of the art, everything is done within the boat, including printing of new maps. So that is the *RFNS Volasiga*.

So that leaves the flexibility to the Fiji Navy to use *RFNS Kacau* which is a much bigger vessel and on a sort of multi-purpose role. A classic example during this HADR Exercise. Because of the size of *RFNS Kacau*, we loaded a container at the back of the vessel and we took stores to the outer islands. We have two vessels at the moment which were given for hydrographic purposes but the Chief of Navy and the Commander RFMF has options. It looks like *RFNS Volasiga* is going to be the dedicated vessel.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, we will move on. Parliament will now vote on Head 19

Question put.

Head 19 agreed to.

Head 20 – Fiji Police Force

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-1?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Mr. Chairman, on SEG 1 on the Re-Engagement Bonus of \$615,715, can we have some clarifications from the Honourable Minister on that amount? Is this for the Special Constables or for the retirees who are taken back as re-employed officers? Just some clarifications on that, Mr. Chairman.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Re-engagement, I think your good self and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would know that Police and Military Officers are re-engaged after every three or five years, so this is why we have the Re-Engagement Bonus. After every five years of service for the Police, for Regular Force Services if re-engaged are entitled to this Re-Engagement Bonus under the Police Act. They will be re-engage until the day of their retirement or whichever comes earlier. So after every cycle of five years, they go through this.

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

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We are concerned that Women in Policing (\$20,000) has been removed from the Budget for the coming year, yet Institutional Strengthening has been increased from \$300,000 to \$350,000. Can the Honourable Minister explain?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Which SEG?

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Activity 1, SEG 7.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Women in Policing is about senior women police officers, not only senior, but they have their own organisation and they have meetings. Now all meetings are on virtual. They are not given this allocation for allowance and expenses for the meetings because all meetings are now virtual.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Why is there a need for an increase in the Institutional Strengthening allocation?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, I think there is a lot complaints from the public about the service of the Fiji Police Force and we need to create the environment for them. While we are not only focussing on police stations and whatever in the urban areas, but of course in the outer areas as well and that is why we need this allocation on institutional strengthening so that we can upgrade and create the environment for our police officers.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. On SEG 8 on the announcement that was made - Construction of New Police Stations in Nakasi, Nadi, Lautoka and Nalawa (\$40 million). If the Honourable Minister can clarify and outline the distribution of this \$40 million to these four projects and what phases will this \$40 million cover? What does it cover whether it also comes up to construction or just Phase I works?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Nalawa, apart from the other three construction works have already started. Nalawa, we have finalised the land and now the other consultancy works and the designing phase. But let me go through the allocations.

For Nakasi, currently the Police Station is into its Phase II whereby the \$35 million is the total cost and for this financial year, \$4,994,141.99 is the allocation for the continuation of the work in Nakasi.

For Nadi Police Station, Mr. Chairman, the allocation for this year is \$5,701,717 and as I stated, hopefully, if all goes well for Nadi, it will be completed by December or hopefully February, 2021.

For Lautoka, we are allocating \$6 million. For this year, the total cost for Lautoka is \$28,843,000, so this year, the allocation will be \$6,075,492.86 and, of course, for Nalawa, the survey has been completed and now, we are into the consultancy and design phase for the new Nalawa Police Station.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Aseri Radrodro?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification to the Honourable Minister on Programme 1-1(1). There is an increase of about \$33 million, compared to the previous years. As compared to previous years, there was only an increase of \$8 million for the regularisation of some

Special Constables. Can we just get a clarification and indication of how many people will be regularised in this increase in SEG 1, I think it is close to 100 percent increase?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The allocation for the increase as stated in SEG 1; it is to cater for the shortfall in Personal Emoluments for the existing 1,918 officers and that will involve an amount of \$14,293,413. Then we have the continuation of Phase II. I have talked about the reform and restructure in the Police Force already, Mr. Chairman.

A few years back, before we started with this reform, there were about 3,046 members of the Regular Police Force but as we speak, we have about 4,130, so we are in this whole restructure, we will probably double the number of personnel in the Fiji Police Force. So, with the continuation of the restructure in Phase I in 2018-2019, 621 new officers were recruited and out of that 621, 601 Police Constables and 20 civilians.

Into the continuation of this Phase II, it will involve an amount of \$6,418,806, and that will include the Phase II of the restructure where 164 Special Constables will be regularised. Of course, taking into consideration nine month's salary of current Special Constables, where we have about 255, but the number that will be regularised this year will be 164 of the Special Constables.

Of course, there will be the recruitment of 30 civilians as well, particularly technical, because they have a lot of electronic equipment, communications equipment, including boats and other gadgets that they have. Of course, the filling in of about 394 vacant positions, that will involve about \$2,717,318 so you will see that significant increase in SEG 1, and that is where it will be allocated.

Again, we want to strengthen the Fiji Police Force (FPF) so that they can do their work better and, of course, with the Capital Works under SEG 8 will improve their working environment as well.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you, Honourable Chairman. On SEG 9, on the last item, the purchase of police boats and outboard engines: Could we have some indication as to how many boats will be bought from the \$300,000, and how are they going to be distributed?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That will involve the purchase of two boats, together with their outboard engines.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I just want to provide a clarification so you do not say that the Honourable Minister read out the wrong thing. The Honourable Minister was asked a question about the police stations, read about this year's figures but going into next year's figures, for the Nakasi Police Station, we allocated \$13.9 million and actual works onsite is about 30 percent completed.

The Nadi Police Station is getting \$7.6 million, actual work onsite is 51 percent completed.

The Lautoka Police Station going into next year is \$18.3 million. So far 35 percent has been completed so you will see substantial works have been carried out. Obviously, then the 100 percent will spill into the following year.

The Nalawa Police Station, as the Honourable Minister highlighted, we are also now getting what we are calling "containerised solutions". For Nalawa Police Station, you can now get containerised solution, the air-conditioned offices, you have them done off site, put them onsite, the cyclone worthiness, et cetera, but Nalawa Police Station will also have public convenience. So next

time you drive down Kings Road, you can just stop there, we are building those kinds of facilities. Just to correct that, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Tikoduadua.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question for clarification is on SEG 8 and questions the allocation of the \$40 million for the Construction of the Police Stations in Nakasi, Nadi, Lautoka and Nalawa.

Mr. Chairman, I recognise that there is a need for police stations to be built for the police, however, I am trying to question the rationality of this, given I am trying to find as well an allocation under this programme under Activity 1 with regards to police training, in terms of balancing out the physical infrastructure versus the training for professionalism for the police.

I am saying this, Mr. Chairman, because recently I have been vocal about this and I am worried about my concern for the welfare of the police officers who do not quite understand their role, how they are trained and because of their welfare, we need to understand also their limitations - how they can and cannot conduct their functions as police officers. So police stations are good, but I am trying to get some clarification from the Honourable Minister where under this SEG is, an allocation to ensure that we do not have police officers who get victimised later because of just carrying out their job according to the law they believe. Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Honourable Member, which Training vote are you referring to? Through you, Mr. Chairman, could you clarify which Training vote are you referring to?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am raising an issue of the allocation of \$40 million for these police stations. I recognise the need for good police stations for our police, but I am looking through SEG 8 for the construction of buildings and these are ongoing - \$40 million is allocated for it.

My question is more on trying to understand this Activity for Police HQ and I am looking through all the allocations for the police and I want to perhaps be guided by the Honourable Minister where the allocation is for Police Training that would look after the maintenance of making the police understand their role under the law and there have been instances lately where unfortunately....

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- I am raising this question, Honourable Prime Minister, because this happened and there are five police officers who are now being charged, because they carried out their job. So, I am just trying to rationalise \$40 million for the building but where can I find in this allocation training for officers so that they do not fall under the same crack that others have fallen while carrying out their duties. It is for their welfare, for their trainings.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, if I may respond to the query by the Honourable Member, I have talked about the basic training that all police officers go through and then the Police Force is very specialised as well in terms of the role that they play. Of course, in the subsequent activities under this Head, they undergo a lot of training with their own partners.

Of course, if you refer to Head 20-1-1(5), you have the allocation there for Force Education Programme, that is additional to what the other departments within the Fiji Police Force are allocated to help them in their professional development.

However, I do emphasise the fact, Mr. Chairman, Sir, that a lot of the police training now this year, particularly, we have managed to send one of our top investigators to the United States. Most of the training are now currently being conducted together and, of course, that is where we get our funding from as well. But Head 20-1-1(5) - Force Education Programme has that allocation of \$295,000.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir, just a small clarification to the Honourable Minister regarding Road Safety Awareness Programme which has now been set under SEG 7. Can we get a clarification as to how different is this Road Safety Awareness Programme from what it is to be done by Land Transport Authority? Also is Women in Policing no longer entertained by the Fiji Police?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have already answered about Women in Policing. This is a regional body where our women do attend meetings, all the meetings are virtual now, so there is no need for that allocation.

We have a Traffic Unit within the Fiji Police Force and if you even look at SEG 9, under the Traffic Management Equipment, there is an allocation of \$200,000, and we work closely with the Land Transport Authority, but of course, the Traffic Unit do their own awareness as well and this is where the allocation comes in.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Honourable Minister mentioned something about the big summit or convention or the meeting that they are going to have about the restructure of Defence. If we were to do the same for the Police, and bring in community participation, the expenditure going into infrastructure to support the Police, instead of having those big expenditures, perhaps, a cross community training between the community and the Police. If we were to have that sort of activity funded, where we are participating and raising the national morale which should reduce lawlessness and all these things perhaps to help reduce the Police budget, it may have a very friendly atmosphere between the police and the policed. Just a thought and general observation. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank your Honourable Leader of the Opposition. In fact, we have Community Policing and they work very closely with our communities. The Drug Units have their own awareness workers. If I may also add that within the overall restructure of the Ministry and the engagement of our communities, we have in fact completed the training in the West with the Turaga ni Koros.

Last month, we were supposed to go to Vanua Levu, but that has been put on hold because of the two things that we want to do together. One is the old Divisional Intelligence and District Intelligence set up, this is all part of this together with the community and engagement and this community engagement is not only in terms of crime but in terms of search and rescue as well.

So the *Turaga ni Koro* in the West have already been given their kits to help in search and rescue. Of course, there are a lot of plans in place for the involvement of the community. So we would kindly appreciate the assistance of all Honourable Members in this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Programme 1-2. Honourable Ratu Tevita Navurelevu.

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I need to move the motion without notice.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have the floor.

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Head 20-1-2(7) be increased by \$92,000 in respect of Transitional Crime Unit to be increased to \$100,000 for the current \$8,000. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it is crucial at this time for the department, the international crime units to maintain the current staffing and not to be reduced, to help in the detection and prosecution, especially during this economic downturn. We must remain vigilant and keep watch for possible dangers. In particular the important of trafficking, hard drugs into our country and to our neighbour. Thank you, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Are there anyone else who want to contribute to that motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Member, you can move your second motion.

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Thank you, Sir. My second motion is on Head 20-1- 2(7) increase by \$10,000 in respect of the CID Expenses in the previous allocation amounting to \$150,000 in the 2018-2019 Budget Estimates.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Ratu Navurelevu, you have the floor.

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the allocation of the CID Expenses SEG 7 be increased to \$10,000 as the previous allocation was \$150,000 in 2018-2019 Budget Estimates. This would ensure that the officers in the unit know that Government is committed to reduce crime and supportive of their work and funds are not hindrance to their work of detecting crime. Thank you, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Does anyone wish to participate in this motion? Honourable Member, which Activity?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Activity 6, Sir, to the Honourable Minister through you, Mr. Chairman, one of the things that I have not seen in the whole of the Fiji Police Force budget is the renovation of Police quarters and barracks. If you move around the country in Labasa, even in Navosa and Keiyasi the conditions these Police barracks are in, most of them the windows are covered with plyboards and even not renovated.

If you even go to Nasova, if there is plan in the pipeline in terms of having that in the budget or what are the measures in place to ensure that these quarters are maintained and even in Nasova too. Recently, in Nasova we had fire in one of those barracks given the conditions they were in and also the wear and tear. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We have an overall and we have had discussion with the Police Force. What you are saying in respect of the many of the Police barracks most of these barracks were built in the colonial times in fact there has been no strengthening done, some of these Police quarters are actually got concrete decay, so we have done some studies of that and those of you for example, know Lautoka like in Vomo Street, you see those wooden barracks there on the left hand side as you go up, below Jasper High School.

Now, that is all crown land so at the moment one of the issues that we have announced in the Budget is working with the private sector in respect of developing housing. All those land is basically a State land so we have had discussion with the Commissioner of Police where we are going to start building concrete strata title apartments for the Police they can actually owned those themselves. So that will give them an asset in itself, some of these can be more readily done as opposed to others because like Vomo Street it has got sewage water everything is connected. We have already got some preliminary designs we are doing in that respect. So there will be a long term solution but we can start those projects quite early.

Some of those quarters have been fixed that we have general allocation if you look at Head 50 in respect of the overall expenditure which we then can use for emergency purposes. So for this year's budget what we have done is focussed, for example, on the projects that are already going. Any general maintenance can come from Head 50, if there is any need to do that immediately. But the long term goal is that and we hope to actually kick starts some of these projects at least the designed within this financial year.

MR .CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Honourable Jone Usamate.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Also some of the money that is provided for in the Ministry of Works for some public buildings which is been included some work has been done for police quarters for the sewer line, toilets and things like that. So, it came around to \$600,000 in the Ministry of Works. I think those with those ones in Lautoka. The sewer, the waste water treatment that is been done also. A bit of work is done from the Ministry of Infrastructure.

MR .CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Tikoduadua.

HON. LT. COL. P.TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am referring to Head 20-1-6 - Western Division. Mr. Chairman, under SEG 5 the Southern and Eastern Divisions have allocation for Crime Prevention Strategy but the Northern and Western Divisions have no such allocation. Can we have some explanation by the Honourable Minister to understand this?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- I am sorry, Honourable Member, through you. Mr. Chairman, can you just repeat your question, please.

HON. LT. COL. P.TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, if you look at Programme 1, Activity 6, for the Western Division and compare that with SEG 5 for the Eastern Division. The Eastern Division has an allocation of Crime Prevention Strategy \$15,000 and Southern Division also has that. But the other two divisions, Northern and Western do not have them. So, I just need some clarification as to why?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For Crime Prevention Strategy for the Eastern Division this is based on the work that already being undertaken and those that are pending. So, those that are being costed are the ones that respective Divisional Heads intend to undertake in the current because in some instances, the allocation is parked with the respective divisions but there is a team from Headquarters that comes to do this awareness in the respective districts. So, that is why those that have already been undertaken have not been allocated this cost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Activity 10, Honourable Tikoduadua.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Central Police Station on SEG 5 Witness and Suspect Meals. I am raising this because there is allocation for meals for suspects but in light of this I know I raised this issue with the Honourable Minister, particularly the option of containerised Detention Centres. Is there any social distancing if we set any other developments further to have solutions for other aspects of operations but what about detention trying to make sure that when people are detained that they also practising social distancing.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Currently, in Nadi, we are using containers but not the best I would admit. Most of the containerised units which we are currently trialling in are with the Police Special Response Unit but, of course, definitely there is consideration for this because I have highlighted also in terms of the tension the two areas that we need this, apart from office space, is about detention, extra cells and, of course, for the storage of exhibits as well. So that rooms within the existing police stations can be freed up because exhibits are taking up a lot of spaces in the current police stations. Definitely, it is under consideration, Honourable Member.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, just to also highlight. Programme 1-9, you will see an allocation of \$300,000, it says Minor Improvement Works. This is police support services, so again it does address issues like broken louvers et cetera, footpaths, office partitioning and all those types of things can come under General Maintenance for that too, community police post and all of them.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you Honourable Members. We will have two motions.

Head 20-1-2(7) be increased by \$92,000 in respect of the Transitional Crime Unit from the current \$8,000.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The second motion is that:

Head 20-1-2(7) be increased by \$10,000 in respect of the CID Expenses.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the Parliament will now vote on Head 20.

Question put.

Head 20 agreed to.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, on that note, we will suspend proceedings for dinner. The Parliament will resume in an hour's time. Thank you.

The Parliament adjourned at 6.23 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 7.29 p.m.

Head 21 – Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1, Activity 1. Honourable Kepa, you have the floor.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is for Programme 1-1(1) on personal emoluments, there is a reduction on this Head of \$22.264 million. My question to the Honourable Minister is, what does this imply for the established staff since she has reassured that there will be no loss of staff personnel. There is a concern on that, Honourable Chair, if the Honourable Minister can give a response to that.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, if I can give some numbers to the Honourable Member. This is related to the total number of teachers and headquarters staff. Obviously there is no reduction in that. We have 1,422 Early Childhood Educators (ECE) teachers, they remain. Primary school – 6,185 and secondary schools 5,567 with all our divisional and headquarters staff. The reduction is across the whole of the Ministry's Budget and as we go along we will be able to see the variance from last year's allocation to this year's allocation.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Mr Chair, is the Minister saying that there will be no loss of staff, that they will retain their positions. Is that correct?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Obviously.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- I just wanted a reassurance from you, Honourable Minister.

Just a second question on that same SEG. Where the MyAPA payments would be made? Would it be made from this SEG or will it come from Head 50? Where will it come from, Honourable Minister? Thank you, Chair.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Mr. Chair, can the Honourable Member clarify which year's MyAPA is she talking about?

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- This is for 2017-2018. We will start with that one.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Just give me a minute. Thank you. We have already paid out 2017-2018. The 2018-2019 is still in process and as announced by the Honourable Attorney-General, the rest was put on hold. The MyAPA payments, that is still in the assessment process. For 2018-2019, it will be paid from savings within.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- So, 2017-2018 period is already paid out.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Yes.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Which years are still left to be paid, Honourable Minister?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- I mean if I can clarify the MyAPA payment here. MyAPA payment was to be paid out to all those who qualified. It was not to be paid across the Ministry, so this is done after the moderation committee moderates the performance and then identifies those officers who qualify for the payments and this is mostly done from savings within the Ministry. Obviously, if they qualify, they will be paid.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Alright, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Professor Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is not really a question, Honourable Minister but perhaps a suggestion because I am not going to move a motion. I know \$60 million has been allocated for free education both for primary and secondary. Given the fact that there are many areas in the country especially in the Western Division where children are being served lunch by religious organisations and others, does the Ministry feel or have space within the Budget that has been allocated?

I know there are some organisations who were doing it but they are saying that they may not be able to continue a longer period of time and whether the Ministry has any plans to allocate some funding to these organisations or through other NGOs so that children in certain areas where they are affected could be served lunch meals. Thank you.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Sir, I think it is very important that I clarify the Free Education Grant often referred to as FEG. Free Education Grant is distributed in percentage terms to schools and this is based per child depending on the level of your school. I will give you some examples. So, 30 percent of the FEG grant is given for administration and office, this includes the salaries and wages of all the auxiliary staff and office administration. At one time we had the school managements paying office staff.

Now, government is paying through the FEG and that is 30 percent, than we have building and compound maintenance which is given 20 percent, than we have IT computer and test material that amounts to 15 percent, library and text books 10 percent, physical education and arts, music and science we give 10 percent, teaching and learning materials we give 15 percent. So, that is for the teaching and learning and creating that environment for our students.

I will give you the allocation that we give to children. I think this would sort of clarify the information or clear the mixed information that was given to the House by the Honourable Kepa. If you have a school that is categorised as a small school and have a children of about 51 students to 100 students in the primary school, apart from giving \$230 per child, we also give a base grant of \$5,300. If a secondary school is classified as small we give Year 9 students \$682 per year. Year 10 gets \$682 again, Year 11 gets \$727 per capita per year, Y 12 gets \$727 and Y13 gets \$852. So, there is variance in the number and if you look at a large secondary school, we sort of ensure that there is balance between the grant that is given.

If you are a larger school you stand to gain more so the per capita per child is reduced a bit. What we are going to do this year is we are going to relook and revise that because we want schools that are smaller, we want schools that are out in the maritime areas to benefit from this grant. So, obviously in this grant we do not have any allocation for any other bit.

But we do have school managements and heads of schools who sort of have savings within this and since the introduction of Free Education Grant in 2015, government has never asked them to refund any money. So, schools have savings in that but at the moment I think I have made myself very clear, without any actual study report which will indicate that children are going to school without lunches, we will not be able to commit anything because we do not have funding for that but I would like to put on record our appreciation for those agencies, donors, mothers clubs, and the faith based organisations which have come on board.

So, apart from what we have done is we have a separate allocation for transport assistance. We have just finished our survey and our survey has indicated that 35,000 plus students have actually indicated that their parents have lost their jobs and their parents have reduced hours of work so assistance will be directed towards them. That much I can commit to.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, while I have the mike, just on SEG 7 on the \$10,000 allocation for National Research Council; if you recall you were not the Minister at that time but this Parliament approved the National Research Council. My question is whether the National Research Council has been appointed? What is the \$10,000 allocation for? I do not think I have heard National Research Council being appointed. Thank you.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Mr. Chairman, through you, this is still work in progress. I followed it up last year when we had the discussion with USP and FNU and I was told that their terms of reference was still being drawn up so this will be used as we progress. Thank you.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, on SEG 9 in terms of boats and outboard motor engine of \$200,000; I believe that there are some schools which are accessible by rivers, are they also included in this \$200,000 or just the island?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- I can actually confirm that every year we give out an average of six to ten boats together with outboard motor engines with fuel and other supplies to schools. These are basically for those rural deep maritime areas. We already have 35 requests so far and with the budget allocation we have got \$200,000. We intend to supply six schools and that will be prioritise out of the 35 and 13 engines for schools that already have a boat. This is a gradual distribution across to schools.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you for your comments, Honourable Minister. The other question, Mr. Chairman, some of these schools they cross the river like the one in the upper reaches of Namosi, like Saliadrau, they cross and come down to Navunikabi. Will they also be accommodated in this?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- They are also included in this.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- *Vinaka vakalevu.*

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Yes, all schools that need assistance, they apply to us through their managements because the boats are given to the school managements and these boats are supposed to offer free service to the children without charging any boat fare. But what we have found out, Honourable Member, is many a times these boats are used for community purposes as well, and this is where the wear and tear comes in. So we strictly advise school managements to use it for the purpose it is being given for. If I can give an example, we have 13 schools that have requested for engines, the engines have gone, if I can use the word *kaput*. We need them to look after this. So when we hand them, we give them a set of instructions as to that is to be used solely for the transportation of our children. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Bulanauca.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a point of clarification on SEG 10. Completion of New Bau College (\$689,085). Such a sudden drop from \$2.7 million from budget address of last year to only \$689,085. Will that complete the college?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is I think Phase 2 or Phase 3 of the completion of the Bau College. It was \$2.2 million but we cut it down, we got rid of the two lifts and the three escalators.

(Laughter)

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Mr. Chairman, thank you Honourable Prime Minister, I think he needed that. For the information of the Members of the House, yes, there is a reduction. The reduction in the funds is for us to cater for the balance of the contractual payment. So the building is almost complete and the amount that we have given is to complete our contractual obligation to our contractors.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a clarification on SEG 6; a huge increase close to \$3 million, particularly for Fiji Higher Education Commission, \$1.9 million. I think last budget was \$690,000, Fiji Teachers Registration Authority (FTRA) Board also had an increase from \$300,000 to \$430,000, Transport Assistance has increased, which is a good thing, but I remember the Honourable Minister had highlighted previously about some investigations regarding this transport assistance and has that resulted for an increase in the allocation?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- The Fiji Higher Education Commission budget, yes. This is due to the operations of the Commission and this is an operating grant that we pay them every quarter of the year. For the ...

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Registration Board.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- FTRA.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Yes.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- The increase is due to the operational cost for the Authority. Again this is a grant that is given to them every quarter and of course it allows them to carry out their operations more efficiently.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- And Transport Assistance.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Transport assistance, yes. This is for the student's subsidised transport we are talking about. In fact, let me be very honest here. We have a number of students who do not even qualify for that. We have a \$16,000 salary bracket where the parents' income is below \$16,000 and students apply for that. What we are finding in our system is there are students whose parental income is more. So the review process is going on and we are trying to see that it is targeted, it is given to those that really need it.

But what is happening now, I will just give you the figures of the survey that was revealed to us because of COVID-19, we needed that increase because right now we have close to 30,000 students who expect that assistance from us. Obviously that request will cater for the increase that we have been given.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- (Inaudible)

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Yes, we have advised our Heads of Schools and we also advised those who signed the statutory declaration for those parents who earned below \$16,000 to be mindful of that. We are really going to tighten up this to ensure that this assistance goes to those that actually need it.

We have had issues, we agree with that but we have also had issues with those that are trying to abuse the system. We have parents using their cards. The tracking system that we now have with Vodafone indicates that the students are not in school but the card is being used and sometimes the student is in school but the amount is deducted from the card to show that someone is using it.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- (Inaudible)

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Yes, that is why we locked the card to see that it is only used from one particular time in the morning to the another. We are working closely with Vodafone and the Bus Operators Association, I would say that when we had closure during COVID-19, minimum usage was done. We can save on that and I think that is the whole idea of this revised budget, prudent financial management of whatever money we are given. So I would like to advise the parents and the children as well to capitalise on this and not to abuse the card.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, just on SEG 8 on Upgrade and Maintenance of Government Schools (\$170,000). Can the Honourable Minister explain what Government school is included in this allocation? If you have got a specific list, will that be allocated per Government school or is it on a needs basis.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- It is a general maintenance scheme that we are going to do for 13 Government schools and it is going to be on a needs basis. We have the Assets Management Team that has done the infrastructure audit of our Government schools and the audit has revealed some finance as to where we need to put our maintenance money to. So this will be utilised in the next financial year.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, the question has already been asked, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- My question to the Honourable Minister, Mr. Chairman, is in terms of the four escalators that are going to go onto Bau College. My question is on SEG 7 and this is on the School Farm Competition. We know that food security is an issue. What kind of gardening are you encouraging students to do that will set them up in terms of early introduction to gardening? Because I know that schools that have that, they have a head start but those without land, would you be thinking of hydroponic gardening or if they are beside the sea, seaweed farming like in villages in Tailevu, Honourable Minister?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Honourable Member, through you, Mr. Chairman. We started this programme last year with all our Government schools. We wanted our Government schools to produce enough to sustain the students boarding and provide them with more healthier and nutritious meals.

We took it down to the West, currently it is in very early stages and I cannot confirm that we will be venturing out into hydroponic or seaweed farming. It is basic farming that we want to encourage our children to do and almost all schools have garden spaces. So these children are encouraged to utilise whatever land is available and we rely on our Heads of Schools to be innovative in this. We do not dictate to them what is going to work for them, they decide what works for them and like I said, it is a very new programme and this budget continuation in this year will also help us to relook at ways we can do it better.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Activity 2?

(Chorus of “Nays”)

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I wanted to move a motion on Activity 1, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 2?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- No, I wanted to move a motion on Activity 1.

My motion is this.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Move it.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I would like to move a motion that Head 21 be increased by \$1 million in Programme 1-1(8) on Upgrade of Maintenance of Government Schools.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- I second the motion, Sir.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you. My motion is to increase the allocation to Upgrade the Maintenance of Government Schools by \$1 million. I think this issue has been an ongoing one in all Government schools. If you go around all Government schools in Fiji, I think they are in deteriorating condition.

Most of the boarders and also the hostels are not in proper conditions. Even the water system is not functioning well and also this has come up from different PTA meetings but again it comes up to the Principal to the Ministry, but given that this allocation is only \$170,000 for 13 schools, if they divide that equally, each school will have \$13,000 but again these are ongoing issues.

Probably, emails have reached the Honourable Minister in terms of some Government schools probably once or twice. We were in talks in terms of the Adi Cakobau School (ACS) and also other Government schools. But again as a parent of that school where my daughter too is a boarder at ACS, again, there is a need for the maintenance of the school. Very old wooden buildings. When it is hot, the fans are not working and also the furniture are very old. Toilets are not in good condition. Even when we come for parent visitation, it is not in accordance with the standard in which the school was set.

Also the boarding facilities, when there is bad weather, the rain comes into the hostel and also they have been sharing taps and toilets in some of the hostels when there is not enough pressure, they will have to use other hostels, despite the water treatment just closer to the school. That is the reason why I want to move this allocation by \$1 million, given that proper education will depend on the conduciveness of the environment and also our children who are boarders that will help a lot in how they perform academically. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, the clarification is this, as we all know, because of COVID-19 obviously we are trying to have a restrained budget wherever we can.

In respect of the Upgrade and Maintenance of Government Schools (\$170,000), that is essentially for the upgrading of the ablution block at Natabua Primary School. The total cost is \$169,000. Then we also have Bucalevu Secondary School to cater for the defects to library. Natabua High School in respect of the retention payment.

Our construction of new facilities for Government schools, again this is the final payment for the Queen Victoria School (QVS), the design of a double-storey, classroom block and basement. We have a tender that was awarded to Concrete Solutions at a cost of \$2.1 million and we have a construction period for 24 weeks and 52 weeks for Defects Liability Period (DLP). Payment to-date we made is \$1.9 million.

So, obviously all of these works are going on in respect of that. The Honourable Member may be obviously talking about schools but as you also know that, yes, of course there are some schools that need works, but we cannot do it all now just because you are allocated \$1 million, it does not mean it will get done. As you know that we have said, we want to work on 'Ready to Shovel' projects and all the construction works that we have actually targeted are 'Ready to Shovel' projects, so given the fact that we need to restrain our expenditure and the fact that we will still continue with these works, whether it has already been designed, been done, et cetera, that is the allocation based on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 2?

(Chorus of "Nays")

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, I wish to also speak in support of the motion by the Honourable Bilitavu. I know that the Honourable Prime Minister just recently opened a hostel in Levuka Public School and would have noticed that the students have to walk a few hundred meters from the dorms to the canteen or the dining areas and it rains a lot, and that has been their complaint. The students have to walk in the rain, even in the night to get to their eating facilities, so that will be something that can be looked at for the safety and comfort of those students in Levuka Public School. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- All right, we will move on to Activity 2.

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA.- Mr. Chairman, Activity 2, SEG 2. This is the only allocation for overtime that is given here for Library Services, which is \$5,000. What is that overtime for, Honourable Minister, because there is no other Activity or Programme that has overtime except for "Library", and I would think that there are other Activities and SEGs that would need this overtime, so what is it in particular about this library?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- I am sure this overtime allocation actually is across all ministries and the Library Services works like that. The Library Services is involved in setting up community libraries and obviously, there will be incidences where we will have staff working overtime, and they would be paid that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 2-1.

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 2.

(Chorus of “Nays”)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Mr. Chairman, SEG 5, in terms of the Education Forum, I note that on SEG 7 in Programme 1, Activity 1, there is an Education Forum reflected there and then it is also appearing in SEG 5, Programme 2, Activity 1 (\$10,000). Can I have some clarification from the Honourable Minister: are they different or are they the same - The General Administration and this is primary.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Sorry, can we go back to the first one. Which one are we talking about?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- No, I am just saying that it is being reflected in Programme 1, Activity 1, there is the Education Forum. It is also appearing in Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 5: One is \$20,000 and one is \$10,000. Can you give some clarification on that, please?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- One in SEG 5 for Activity 2 is the Education Forum, we have not actually had this for a couple of years, and this year, we intend to have an Education Forum with all our stakeholders. The other one is for the Early Childhood Forum, we normally have it once per year.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- So that is the one in Programme 2, Activity 1 which is Early Childhood. Is that correct?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, if you read Programme 2, Activity 1, it says “Primary Education”, that is related to Primary Education. If you read Programme 1, Activity 1, it is an Education Forum, so that could be used for Early Childhood, it could be used for higher schools - generally. For the ones specifically there, for Primary, normally, that is how we have the expenditures put.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Yes, I understand that. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Kepa.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- For Programme 2-1(6) this is on Free Education. Honourable Minister, I am not in the habit of giving wrong information. However, supported by the Auditor-General’s Report, in that there are some overpayments and underpayments to various schools which they have highlighted. And they say that one of the reasons is because the Education Act which they have highlighted has been given to the Solicitor-General’s Office to review, and for them to review to capture all the changes that have come about, including this Free Education Grant (FEG). My question is, when do you expect the Solicitor-General to produce this review since it has been with them since 2016?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Mr. Chairman, I would not be able to answer it right now because I do not have that information at hand, I could provide it to the Honourable Member later on. What I can inform the Honourable Member is that, we are now very strict on compliance. The submission of the audited accounts from school managements and school heads is to ensure that we pay them accordingly, we pay them on time and we pay them the right amount that they are supposed to get, so that is how we are strengthening so that we do not underpay and do not overpay any school.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- So, that is one of the reasons you are having issues with FEG because of this review that

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- No, we do not have issues with the FEG. I will not agree with you that we have issues with the FEG. We may have issues with the distribution of FEG when schools do not comply with the submission of audited financial accounts.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Right, can I just stand to correct that Honourable Minister because this has come from the schools and also it is supported by the Auditor-General's Reports that state that going right back to its inception that they have had issues with FEG distribution. So, can I just leave it with you.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- And I would like to say to you that if schools and managements have issues then they should come to the Ministry so we can sort it out.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- It is supported by the Auditor-General's Report. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Can I, Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Kepa is reading some Auditor-General's Report saying it should be sent to the Solicitor-General's Office.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- That is correct.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- But the point is, was it sent to the Solicitor-General's Office, that is a recommendation. It does not mean therefore it is with the Solicitor-General's Office, that is a policy decision. That is an observation by the Auditor-General, it does not mean it has to be sent to the Solicitor-General's Office because those kind of matters can actually be resolved at a policy level. So, it is incorrect to say when will the Solicitor-General give the report, so that is No. One. No. Two is what the Honourable Minister is trying to say, and we have sort of discussed it from a finance delivery perspective that many of the schools in our earnestness, there is no doubt, we probably erred on the side of being, you know, caring for our children so that no child misses out.

On the side of trying to get everybody free education, there may have been instances where the Ministry of Education in the past, may have actually been giving money to school committees that have not been accountable themselves, that is the issue. These school committees need to be held responsible. At times, Honourable Reddy, who was also a Minister, would also tell you that at times they had to hold off giving the grants because the schools simply were not giving any accountability.

The staff, for example, that the Honourable Minister for Education is talking about that are now being paid through FEGs, these were school committee people hiring their daughters, cousins and relatives to be working in the Ministry and the schools being paid by the Government under no proper transparent recruitment system, so all of these issues had to be meted out, some of them are still being meted out, so I think it is completely misplaced to try and justify some of the figures that you give in the past that is incorrect to, sort of, you know, say - well, this is some kind of problem systemic issue. The systemic issue actually stems from the fact that many of the school committees actually have not been accountable.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- I respect what you are saying, Honourable Attorney-General but if you were to look at the Auditor-General's Report, which is the Performance Audit of Effectiveness of Institutional Framework for Preventing Corruption, and this is the Parliamentary Paper No. 152 of 2019. I am just telling you that this is one of the issues that the Auditor-General has highlighted that is one of the reasons that they are having issues with the FEG distribution and it is because of the

Education Act which is supposed to be reviewed by the Solicitor-General's Office and it has been with them since 2016. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I think while we are there, I would also like to say on the same issue that from the next financial year, in order to ensure that we have sound financial, transparent management of the fair grant that government gives to schools, we are going to have a grant argument with the Ministry of Education and the school management, so we know that the money is targeted to where it is going. I can assure you that that is with the Solicitor-General's Office for vetting, and once we release the next financial year grant, we will follow on that.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Thank you, Honourable Minister, and also consultation is very important.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 2.

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 3.

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 4.

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-1.

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-2.

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-3.

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 4-1.

(Chorus of "Nays")

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order! Do not try and beat me, I will keep the time.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 5-1.

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 6-1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Yes, Mr. Chairman, Sir, on the Asset Monitoring Unit, just a clarification; can the Honourable Minister for Education explain about the asset recording exercise that the Ministry is doing? Can the Minister advise whether the Asset Monitoring Unit is looking after that exercise or does it come under another unit?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir, are you referring to any particular SEG or just a general question? Mr. Chairman, Sir, the budget that has been given to the Asset Monitoring Unit is mostly used for projects undertaken by the Ministry. There is a separate allocation with Head 50 that looks after major projects that is not monitored by the Construction Implementation Unit. So, the budget that we are given is mostly committed for minor works within schools, that is what they do.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 7-1.

(Chorus of “Nays”)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Just a clarification on 21-7-1(5) on the Examination Expenses of \$1.4 million and the Printing cost of \$435,000. The expenditure that has been highlighted there, what some schools have experienced is that, they have yet to print the exam papers at their own costs, so what are these examination expenses and examination paper expenses?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- These are the expenses of examinations. Actually, there is no variance in the amount that we are given from last year to this year. This allocation covers expenses related to the wages for casual, coders, check markers, packing and despatch and allowance for those markers, meal allowance for staff, stationery and logistics, and this is based on expected scripts to be printed, cost of materials and meal allowances.

Because we have reduced the examinations to two this year in our Year 12 and Year 13 exams, so this will cover for the printing costs as well. When we have internal assessments, standardised internal assessments, these are printed by the schools. These are two external exams that we are going to have this year, that will cater for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Lynda Tabuya.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Just a question to the Honourable Minister because you are reducing your external exams, should that amount be reduced?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Like I said, this amount will include everything. We have markers that we hire to mark, they are paid allowances per each script that they mark and it includes all the other logistics as well, those who check, those who code and those who dispatch, so this includes all that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 8-1. Honourable Vosanibola you have the floor.

HON. P.W. VOSANIBOLA.- On SEG 10, would the Honourable Minister just elaborate on the Rehabilitation of Levuka World Heritage Structures? What are the plans and programmes?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, I want to respond to that question on Rehabilitation of Levuka World Heritage Structures. That is being done by the Ministry of Local Government and in particular, by the Levuka Town Council. This is done in consultation. It is a heritage but Levuka Town Council is there so they work in partnership.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is a heritage issue and of course, the list is to heritage UNESCO, therefore, what this work is for, in fact it is for the consultancy work for the restoration and strengthening of Levuka Community Centre Complex through the World Heritage Structure that maintains the historical integrity of these buildings.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Saukuru.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to seek an explanation on SEG 7- Fiji Heritage Foundation Secretariat and its role if it is different from existing boards such as Department of Heritage and National Trust of Fiji? Just need an explanation on that, please.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Could you please repeat your question, we cannot hear?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- SEG 7 Fiji Heritage Foundation Secretariat.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- My question is on the Fiji Heritage Foundation Secretariat. The role they play, is it different from the roles played by existing boarder like Department of Heritage and National Trust of Fiji?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Mr. Chairman, this is the amount given to the Foundation for their operational. It is a foundation.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It was established in 2012 and is based on the National Trust of Fiji. This Trust Foundation initiative invested to facilitate assistant towards built heritage in the country, the needs to be conserved and maintained, so a lot of built heritages in buildings need to be maintained so it falls within that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Qereqeretabua.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On Programme 8, Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to ask the Honourable Minister under SEG 7- the allocation of \$4000 for the Levuka World Heritage Listing. Is that to renew a listing? I was just wondering again like the Honourable Vosanibola the \$254,000 for the rehabilitation but it is under "R". So I just want to clarify what is exactly that \$4,000 is seeing that we headed into our 50th Anniversary will be ashamed to lose our heritage listing in Levuka. So just clarification on what the \$4,000 is for, thank you Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Firstly, it is not under "R" I do not know what she is reading.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- No "R" here.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There is no "R" there, "R" is in SEG 10.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Sorry, I said I refer to what Honourable Vosanibola had referred to.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, but you said it is under "R". It is not under "R", SEG 10 is under "R", not 7, get it right.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Mr. Chairman, I am asking the Honourable Minister for Education about the \$4,000.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, no I am telling you because “R” comes under the Ministry of Economy, so I am telling you is not under “R”. That is why I am clarifying to you. The Honourable Minister can answer the question.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- So to go back to my question, the \$4,000 Honourable Minister, thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So the funding is to carry out small project institution maintain and capitalised in Levuka World Heritage listing. It will support the Levuka community in maintaining sites, training for the community and capitalise in tourism opportunities, creating literature and pamphlets in the various world heritage buildings in Levuka, creating awareness in schools and amongst community to protect this site.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Honourable Minister, the \$4,000.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is also a Levuka craft fair, Levuka Heritage Community meeting and Levuka Stakeholders Awareness Workshop.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. The \$4,000 is going to be enough for that list you just read out?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, Levuka is not a big place, you do not have to travel far.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I would like to withdraw my motion based on the answer and the assurance given by the Honourable Minister for Economy that there is not enough finance and they are controlling it plus the plight of the Government schools that have highlighted will be considered at the next financial year or when our economy has recovered. I withdraw my motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Adi Litia Qionibaravi.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Mr. Chairman, I was just going to follow-up on Programme 8, Activity 1, SEG 10 on the rehabilitation work carried out in Levuka for the structural work under requisition.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Finished.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- I understand that work has been carried out by the Ministry of Local Government according to Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Let me clarify that. The number of buildings which is owned by Levuka Town Council is a heritage building. They need to fix that. So for that reason, they are working along with Ministry of Education because Heritage comes under them. So that is the collaboration we have.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- My question, Mr. Chairman, is where is the funds controlled? Is it with the Ministry of Education or has been transferred to..

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Is with the Ministry of Education.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- That is with the Ministry of Education.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will move on. Programme 8, Activity 2?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you Mr. Chairman. Could the Honourable Minister advise the House on the programme of digitalisation of records at the National Archives? *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- What SEG?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Just a general question on that Programme Digitalisation .

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

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Yes, I know it is about allocation but it is a major issue.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- SEG 5.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Storage and preservation of materials.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- SEG 5 allocation of \$50,000 is already there. Again is work in progress of course, I understand the importance of preserving the records that we have and that is work in progress.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 21:

Question put.

Head 21 agreed to.

Head 22 – Ministry of Health and Medical Services

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-1. Honourable Salote Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to seek clarification from the Honourable Minister for Health and maybe from the Honourable Minister for Economy also in regards to SEG 1, not only for that Programme and Activity but it is consistent in all other Programmes and Activities in regards to overtime and allowance.

If I am correct, I heard the Honourable Minister for Economy in his address saying that there was no payment of overtime. I also noticed from all other Heads that we have covered, the overtime was only for the wages which is SEG 2. But for the Ministry of Health which is good, but I just seek clarification on that, for personnel emoluments, there is allowance and overtime right through all Programmes and Activities.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- First and foremost, the overtime is now converted to time-off in lieu and you would understand that. So that will mean time in lieu which means the hours that they have worked above the normal working hours is paid in terms of their leave. It is like leave. So, they claim it on hours off or they can actually accumulate it and add it on to their leave. This is

something that is not new, that has been used in the past, there are many forms within the Ministry of Health and also in the Civil Service. Also, in terms of the strategies that are in place, some of the things that we have already planned are things such as working within the policy of flexi hours in which the Civil Service has approved quite a few years ago. I believe you were then a senior civil servant, Honourable Radrodro when that was approved.

And also in terms of staggered starting and knocking times, the increase use of shift work system, redeployment, task shifting and also the other important thing within the Ministry of Health is we got a significant increase again within the numbers of nurses and midwives which a majority of the overtime comes from. So with more than 200 new nurses and 40 new midwives, those will actually reduce which is actually very good for us because certainly as you are aware, a lot of our nursing staff are young and they are predominantly female. They have young families. So whilst the overtime is useful monetary wise but they have also indicated that the ability to actually have time-off with their families is also very useful. So, those are the strategies that we have put in place.

You may also be aware that all is not lost in terms of allowances. The meal allowance has been reduced to \$10 for GWE and also civil servants, maybe the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy can actually discuss that later. But these discussions, Honourable Member, has begun to happen when the Budget was called. The Divisions and also the Subdivisional areas have been discussing this and put relevant strategies in place. But as I have alluded to, the significant increases in the number of nurses and also midwives will help with the predominantly large part of the overtime that comes within the nursing division. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is rather contradictory when the Minister for Economy clearly stated in his Address that there is no payment of overtime and it is in lieu. In my interpretation, when it is in lieu of overtime, it is just that you do not come to work, but you still get paid, so that is different. When it is stated like this; overtime, it suggests that there is overtime being worked and it is going to be paid.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Honourable Member, you got that wrong. You have to understand that there are two types of payment for overtime. You understand that very clearly, as a former senior civil servant. One is the 1.5 times and the other one is the 2 times on a public holiday. What this is saying is, when you work, for example, someone is supposed to work until 4.30 p.m. or 5.00 p.m. and then they work another extra two hours until 7.00 p.m. That two hours is time in lieu, for example, they can choose to ask, look, can I get 2.00 on Friday afternoon off, so that I will take my time off in lieu that I have collected from Monday evening, and they will then, take if off. When that time that they take off because they knock off early at 2.00, the lieu comes in to actually cover for that time.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Just to clarify Honourable Radrodro. You will continue to shake your head and we will be here until midnight. If you had come to that Budget Session as you were supposed to come, you would have understood. But I think, in order to solve all of this, I will just simply forward you the circular that has been sent to the civil servants. That explains in very simple English terms of what it actually means. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, on Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 3, I just need clarification on the Overseas Medical Consultancy of \$1.7 million and the Foreign Visiting Team of \$50,000 that has been reduced from 2019-2020 from \$300,000 to \$61,000 in Revised Budget due to COVID-19. My question on that is with the border locked down,

I understand that we still need foreign visiting teams. How would you prioritise these visiting teams coming in terms of the types of the speciality that they bring?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you very much, I will answer them altogether including repatriation. So, as you are aware with the foreign visiting medical teams we have had none this year. There were one or two who came in the beginning of the year, but they had to rush back before the borders began to close. There have been regular discussions with this team on when and what might be the right time for them to come back. There was some initial discussions about maybe the end of the year but as you know COVID-19 continues to play whatever it is beginning to do in this very dynamic situation that we are in at the moment.

So, because of that, it has been pushed back at the moment with the thinking maybe next year the visiting team can effectively come into the country including the Loloma Foundation that comes to Taveuni and I know that you are alluding to that because they interact a lot with your patients in Taveuni.

What I can assure though, is that with repatriation overseas and also with overseas medical consulting fees services, these monies are also used to take patients overseas that need government support. We had 60 of our patients in India that was supported by government either partially or wholly who were stuck during the COVID-19 outbreak. We have been able to bring them all back but the monies are set aside in cases we need to actually send them again.

We had recently sent two children to New Zealand who needed to go across very quickly with the assistance of the New Zealand government.. One needed a heart operation and the other needed a big vessel operation on his chest. So, we were able to connect the dots with the New Zealand government with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also our New Zealand embassy here.

So, it gives us opportunities for patients that will need the evacuation but as you know with the inability to get into India where the costs are lesser we have to pay probably more for this very high-end emergency cases that might need to go. So the monies are there but the ability to be able to do it will depend on the ability to be able to get the flights to be able to take them across and the opening and the exemptions that will happen on the other side, so there has to be medical exemption and that will also mean that we have this bubble so as to speak, so it is important for us to continue pushing the COVID-19 environment in terms of the containment because that will help in being able to take our emergency cases across overseas.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Yes, Mr. Chairman. Just on overtime, probably just a reminder or a request to the Honourable Minister on the COVID-19, given sometimes the overtime payment is delayed for some of the drivers and also health workers. Just a timely payment of the overtime. That is something that could be taken on board.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you. I can assure us today that up until the end of this financial year that we are in, all the overtime that needs to be paid in this financial year will be paid including the allowances. They completely understand that. There are instances when that is delayed because due process is not followed and at the moment with the FMIS that is in place, there is a lot of scrutiny around it and you would know as Member of the Public Accounts Committee the scrutiny that is in on Government finances especially around making sure that the processes are there around payments of overtime and allowances. *Vinaka*.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes, SEG 8 regarding the Navosa Subdivisional Hospital is \$4.4 million. I believe it is going to be opening soon. What part of the work would this cover?

Just before you go into that, Honourable Chair, all this talk about Budget briefing, we are a bit lukewarm about that when invited by Government because in the first year of the last Parliament...

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Can I answer your question first?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- ...I just need to make this statement. After the post-budget, during that week, we had asked all the ministries to come and present to us in the caucus and it happened. First came the Ministry of Education, it went very well, four or five of them. Everyone was lined up for the week but the second one, on the way in they got a phone call at the reception telling them not to go and talk to the Opposition.

From that time onwards, any invitation from Government on post-budget has not really excited us so that is the reason why we have not come because of that last minute cancellation. We came from all over Fiji to be here for that week and the ministries were turned away at our doorstep, not to come and brief us. Let us correct that perception that we are not interested in post-budget meetings, please. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Chairman, I have to clarify that please, Sir. Subsequent to that we had a briefing at Suvavou House and Opposition Members did turn up. Let us not tell lies. Subsequent to that we had people turning up at Suvavou House where some of the Members of the Opposition did turn up to level nine one particular year. I think the Secretariat of this Parliament can testify to that so let us not go back on that.

The reality of the matter is that we had the civil servants there and they were going to give you briefing on that. We would have taken you. You would have also understood from us because we are the policymakers, we would have told you as to why we have done so. That does not give you the ability not to question us but we thought you would get a better understanding as to why we put in place various policies and the rationale behind that. You can question that. The civil servants were there to also present those figures, so please, let us call a spade, a spade.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister for Health.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Can I answer my question on the Navosa Hospital, Honourable Gavoka. Sorry you asked, not the Honourable Chair, that is why I was trying to answer that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, please answer that.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- So that is for the completion of works, the \$4.1 million. As we speak at the moment, water has been commissioned, the electricity has been commissioned, it is actually functional in terms of the utilities. The mortuary has been put in place. All the work that needs to be done to be able to make it functional has already been done.

The equipment purchased has already been planned, that is all part of the \$1 million budget in equipment purchased that has been in place for that hospital and also some of the other sub-divisional hospitals. You might be aware that equipment purchases are divided again into sub-divisional hospital and divisional hospital. The plan at the moment is to actually as the Honourable

Attorney-General has talked about his actually opened it at the end of the year and you are more than welcome to come and see. It is an exciting place. Thank you.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, just on Programme 1-1(8) - Upgrade and Maintenance of Urban Hospitals and Institutional Quarters, this has been increased to \$2 million. Can the Minister advice the House whether this also includes the upgrade for Vunidawa Hospital?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- The Vunidawa Hospital comes under Subdivisional hospitals.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- These urban hospitals?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- That will come under subdivisional hospitals. So when we talk about urban hospitals, it means urban. So you know Suva, Lautoka, Labasa, the towns, but I can assure you Vunidawa Hospital will be catered for with the maintenance of Subdivisional Hospitals.

But as you have asked that question, you may be aware that we have institutional quarters because we have stay-in staff like nurses and doctors that are needed to be for 24 hours. So, that budget allocation there is specifically to make sure that these big hospitals are catered for, they are maintained and also the places where 24/7 staff are being accommodated that are also comfortable for them especially in this COVID-environment that we are in.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Honourable Qereqeretabua.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), I move without notice that Head 22 be increased by \$3.5 million being for kidney dialysis treatment on SEG10.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Is there a seconder?

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

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

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just very briefly, once again just expressing our disappointment that this allocation does not get the attention it deserves. We know very well that apart from COVID-19 there are a lot of other afflictions that continue to cripple our people and the need for kidney dialysis is a very serious need. So can we just plead again please, in the spirit of humanity that we do not deny those that are afflicted with kidney problems for whom their life or death is now about whether or not they can have money for dialysis. So, that is what I wanted to say. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- The National Kidney Research and Treatment Centre will be fully operational in November 2020. As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the supplier's ability to deliver the three reverse osmosis machines. So we ordered them, we paid for them, the 15 dialysis machines arrived on time as I have said, but the reverse osmosis machines did not arrive.

It was not our fault, it was already prepaid. It was the fault of the manufacturer and also the deliverer. Despite our best efforts, the reverse osmosis machines and the dialysis machines are from a German-based supplier which is Fresenius Medical Care. They were able to deliver the 15 dialysis

machines and because of COVID-19 we had then re-purposed seven of the machines specifically for COVID-19 ICU facilities.

You know I was talking about how we have 15 new ventilators that had arrived and we purchased another 15 ventilators specifically for COVID-19. I want to make it clear here for the nation to know, we have COVID-19 ICU facilities in Suva, Lautoka and Labasa, different from the ICU facilities for our normative work. That has to be completely different, that is the expectation. So, they have also dialysis machines. We re-purposed seven of those machines specifically for that on standby.

We are waiting for the reverse osmosis machines to arrive, the engineer currently is stuck in Samoa. He was supposed to make that trip, come back to Fiji, meet up with the machine and actually install them. So, he is stuck in Samoa. We are hopeful that he will arrive in October, the person who will be here and you will be able to meet him.

If you actually look at the consumable budget, the equipment budget that has been put aside in the other SEG, I think in Activity 5, you will see that has been raised dramatically. The reason why, is because the Government then absorbs all the costs. So the \$3.5 million was the setup cost for actually buying the machines, setting up the place, forming also the subsidy cost, we are putting some aside to actually get the positions for the new Nephrologists and also the staff that will actually run it.

We also have to remember that we will have electricity, water, et cetera. Some of that is actually being pushed into the CWM budget which is actually different on a different page. That is now being absorbed in the cost and just like any other programme, the initial cost will go up so once you begin to run it, the maintenance will then be covered. So we are absorbing all those other costs. That is why I do not support your motion before the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Professor Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, if I can just add to that motion and ask this very specific question to the Honourable Minister. So what you are saying is that once the equipment arrives and is all set up, that kidney dialysis will be provided to everyone who needs it?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- For those who actually meet the criteria which is less than \$30,000.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Yes, and already our Nephrologist who is an Australian-trained officer has identified 40 patients.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So this allocation of \$100,000 right now, until such time that you have the machines available and ready, what are you going to do with those who are eligible within that income category who need dialysis now?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- What we are hoping to do is, as I have said, the Nephrologist is beginning to see them and talk to them. We are also hoping to actually continue with the registration programme in place and also discuss with them. We had some issues, there were some discussions initially about being able to put it into the private sector. I can tell you what we are beginning to realise is that some of the private retailers were beginning to bump up their costs by another \$75 and we do not want to do that. For example, if there was a private dialysis unit that was

actually offering about \$200, as soon as they heard that we had this \$75, they were going to go up to \$275 which does not actually affect the patient that we are trying to do. We would rather that they reduce it by \$75. So that is why we were not too keen to be able to do that into the private sector.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- On Activity 1 - just a follow-up question. What about acute injury for dialysis, is that included in this or different?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- The \$100,000 covers the acute injury. So again going back to what you have asked, Honourable Professor Biman, this actually answers the questions also with Honourable Doctor Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu. Anyone who has acute injury in any of the three hospitals get treatment with dialysis free for 14 sessions. If that needs to be extended, that can be extended, but the first 14 days is to be given free. We actually bear the cost also.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 2-1.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Chairman, just a question to the Honourable Minister if there is any plan for Savusavu Sub-Divisional Hospital, given the landslide on that location. Will there be a relocation? Is there anything in the pipeline for Savusavu Sub-Divisional Hospital given that it is also catering for a big population of people rather than going to Labasa?

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Again just completing that kidney dialysis. Labasa dialysis subsidy is actually happening at the moment. There are about 15 to 20 patients on that subsidy. As I have said for the Central Division, we are looking at about 40.

Going back to that one, Honourable Member, that is actually covered in Divisional Health Services in Programme 3. If you look at it, Programme 3 and you look specifically towards the Northern Health Service, we have actually set aside money (if it is not shown there, but also in the front here it will show) for subdivisional hospitals and part of that is about \$300,000 for maintenance in Savusavu and another....

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Just tell it is in Programme 3.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- It is in Programme 3.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu, you have the floor.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Just a clarification. Mr. Chairman, Sir, on Programme 2-1 on Personal Emoluments. Can you give clarification on the drop of Personal Emoluments from the revised budget?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- It is the same thing. The drop in the Personal Emoluments, those overtime hours that are not included, so that is important and also those vacancies that we may not have filled, we will not fund them in the next financial year and also FNPF.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu, you can move your motion.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- I move that Head 22 be increased by \$30,000 in Programme 2-1(7) with respect to Cervical Cancer Screening.

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

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

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sir, cervical cancer screening is an important aspect of reducing cervical cancer especially with its complications. I can attest to that, this year while being invited today as a guest on the Cancer Day and sharing the testimonies of the survivors, I can say that they have benefited from the screening. It was \$50,000 before COVID-19 and it came down but I still believe that it is still important as much as COVID-19 and that is why I am moving for the motion to be reinstated back to \$50,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Anyone wishing to take the floor on this motion?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Outreach Programmes actually covers that. The Outreach Programmes that we are running now with Universal Health Coverage. So, before the screening programme was a separate programme but now because of the Universal Health Coverage that we are doing where we are taking the specialists into the rural areas, that actually covers all that. That is why we do not need to actually increase it.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- So all the other outreach programmes coming under the other Activities are

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Yes. For example, if you look at CWM budget, it has gone up, Outreach budget has actually gone up.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 2-2.

(Chorus of "Nays")

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-3.

(Chorus of "Nays")

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- My motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- On which Activity?

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- On Programme 2-1 (SEG 7). Can I speak in support of that motion please, Mr. Chairman, and this is on cervical cancer?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We have already dealt with that

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- I am speaking to increase.

(Honourable Members interject)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Order, order!

The Honourable Minister has just explained why the figure is there.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- But it is not enough.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Would like to explain that again, Honourable Minister?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- It is not enough, Mr. Chairman, because patients are turning up at the hospitals and they are not been seen.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- If you listen to the Honourable Minister

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- I am listening but he is not looking at

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- I am looking at you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Don't look too hard.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- As I have alluded to earlier, with the Universal Health Coverage and the push that we are doing with taking the services into the rural areas where the specialists are going to the Health Centres, they are going into the Subdivisional Hospitals, they are part of the Public Health Teams and with the outreach that we have in place and the remodelling also because of COVID-19, the services of cancer cervical screening will be part of that.

The other thing that we have to realise, Mr. Chairman, is that we now have Human Papillomavirus Vaccination (HPV) which is the prevention for Cervical Centre.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Tell them, tell them.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- That is fully funded by Government for all our daughters and above 13 years old.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Educate them, Minister.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- What the Honourable Minister is saying, Mr. Chairman, but the fact of the matter is that a young woman went to Lautoka Hospital just on Monday and waited all day to be told that they did not have the Paraphernalia to do cervical cancer testing on her. That is an issue that other hospitals and clinics have in terms of women and many of them, young professionals who are dying from cancer, that is why they are turning up at the hospitals.

I hear what you are saying, Honourable Minister but it is not happening on the ground in as far as the women, most of them professionals who are dying from different cancers especially cervical cancer which is a number one killer. That is why I am insistent on your hearing this and being able to do, hoping that you will be able to do something about it. Thank you, Honourable Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you. Activity 4. Honourable Bulanauca.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Just a point of clarification to the Honourable Minister. I am looking at the established staff in Labasa, down by \$2.4 million. Programme 2-3, Lautoka Hospital, down by \$1.12 million. Programme 2-2 in CWM Hospital, established staff down by only \$387,800. I just need a clarification why so much in Labasa Hospital?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Just stick to this Activity. That is the question you should be asking.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Increase and decrease; that is it.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Stick to the budget.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- For Labasa Hospital, why the big drop in established staff to \$2.4 million – Programme 2-4 (1).

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Again the answer is the vacant positions that have not been filled, but I can assure you that no one is losing their job if that is the worry that you have. No one is losing their job. If anything, as I have said, we are getting new doctors, new nurses so that 220 new nurses, 105 new doctors and 40 midwives in that part of their recruitment the Permanent Secretary and the Divisional Managers will then sit down and decide where they will be put.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 5. Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a question to the Honourable Minister for Health on the Rehabilitation Unit in Tamavua on the repairs and maintenance work there, has it been completed? I believe it will come under Tamavua Hospital. It is not even stated in here but it is part of this Programme 2, Activity 5. The Honourable Minister for Health is fully aware of that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Activity 6.

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-1.

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-2.

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-3.

(Chorus of “Nays”)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 3-4.

(Chorus of “Nays”)

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

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Chairman, my previous question, Honourable Minister, is in regards to Savusavu Divisional Hospital. Is it covered in this particular Programme, Activity?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- I have already answered it, so it is under Capital Projects.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- The importance of that given that Savusavu Divisional Hospital covers the whole Province of Cakaudrove and also helps the Hospital in Labasa, not only that, also the mortuary services because it will also help to carry the weight of the two Hospitals. Even the issue that came up was the land at Nabauto in Savusavu, I think there is also the landslide and there were talks of relocating the Hospital, whether there is any plan on that, and whether it is factored into the budget?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir. I have a very important question on Mental Health, Personal Emoluments. Even though we have passed St Giles, SEG 1- Personal Emoluments, my question is, given the high rates of suicide, what is the Ministry doing?

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Yes, I am asking about SEG 1. In the Northern Division, recently, we have had some suicides, murders - the same Activity but SEG 1- Personal Emoluments, have you accounted for that in your staffing regarding mental health specialists, psychologists? Thank you.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Programme 3, Activity 4, the one we are discussing, why are you jumping around?

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- I am on the same page as you, so I am asking under SEG 1 - Personal Emoluments, given the issues on mental health, suicide, et cetera, it is increasing yearly and I am not saying it is high in Labasa, but it also includes Labasa.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- It is all over the country, including Rewa, they also have mental health issues. How are you incorporating that mental health specialist in that Personal Emoluments? Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, would you like to

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- It is covered. We have actually done a lot of assessment around, it will be covered. But I just heard today my Tovata is having lot of suicide.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 4-1.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Yes, Mr. Chairman. Just a clarification on SEG 5 of Programme 4, Activity 1 - Consumables and Medicine (\$23,700,000). We believe it has been that number, and the last two revised in the 2019-2020, what assurance will you give with the stagnant allocation that the issues such as shortage of medicine and consumables be addressed?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- On the consumables and medicine, we have to understand a few things. Number 1 is, these are the ones that we have estimated that is enough for the patients that we have, completely different from the COVID-19 pathway, so that is one.

The other thing you have to remember, Honourable Member, is I discussed in my Budget Statement the issues that we had and not only us but all around the world with freight because of the crisis that we are in and also the lockdowns that happened, especially in the big nations that manufacture medicine, that is the challenge all around the world. But we have connected with all these governments and we have connected through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also using

Fiji Airways. We are very grateful Fiji Airways is travelling with freight so that we can bring the medicine back to us and we have also reformed our pharmaceutical and logistics service. *Vinaka*.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will now vote on the motion. I will tell you which motion, there are two, so make sure you vote.

The first one, that Head 22 be increased to \$3.5 million in Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 10 with respect to Kidney Dialysis Treatment subsidy.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The second motion that Head 22 be increased by \$30,000 in Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 7 with respect to cervical cancer screening.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The Parliament will now vote on Head 22 – Ministry of Health and Medical Services.

Question put.

Head 22 agreed to.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we have now concluded voting on Head 1 to Head 22. The time is late. 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, so if you wait a while, I will be able to do that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, thank you for your contributions today. It has been a long day but we will continue with the work on this agenda item tomorrow, so Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 9.06 p.m.