

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

THURSDAY, 13TH JULY, 2023

[CORRECTED COPY]

CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
Minutes	1441
Communications from the Speaker	1441-1442
(1) Welcome	
(2) Present Evidence – Hon. P.K. Bala	
(3) Breach of Parliamentary Privilege – Hon. S. Kiran	
2023-2024 Appropriation Bill 2023 – Debate on	1442-1533

THURSDAY, 13TH JULY, 2023

The Parliament met at 10.11 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MR. SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All honourable Members were present.

MINUTES

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, before I confirm the Minutes of the sitting yesterday, I wish to beg your indulgence and the indulgence of the House in the Budget response speech of the honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Justice yesterday. He inadvertently referred to your goodself, Sir, when he mentioned “Your Excellency the Speaker”. He had meant to say, “His Excellency the President”. If that could be corrected, Mr. Speaker, in the *Daily Hansard*, then we can proceed to confirm the Minutes. So, begging your indulgence and the indulgence of the House before we confirm.

MR. SPEAKER.- Yes. I think we all agree to that as he accidentally said that.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, can I confirm the Minutes subject to the change?

MR. SPEAKER.- Yes.

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Wednesday, 12th July, 2023 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed subject to the correction of what was stated yesterday.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SPEAKER

Welcome

I welcome all honourable Members to today’s sitting. I also welcome those joining us in the gallery and watching the live proceedings on television and the internet. Thank you for your interest in the National Budget proceedings which is still underway.

Present Evidence – Hon. P.K. Bala

At this juncture I would like to inform the House that yesterday I received a letter from the

At this juncture I would like to inform the House that yesterday I received a letter from the honourable Parveen Bala requesting to provide his evidence by the next sitting as he needs time to obtain this from the farmers and other sources out there in the cane belt.

Honourable Members, please take note that I have approved the honourable Bala's request and that he must present his evidence on Monday, 11th September, 2023 and I also informed the honourable Bala that there would be no deferment. In the event that he fails to present his evidence on the said day, the matter would immediately be referred to the Privileges Committee.

Breach of Parliamentary Privilege – Hon. S. Kiran

On another note, honourable Members, I have received the official communication from the honourable Sashi Kiran on a matter of *prima facie* breach of Parliamentary privilege by an honourable Member and I will address this matter at a later date.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE 2023-2024 APPROPRIATION BILL 2023

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

In Committee:

Head 21 – Ministry of Education

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, thank you for giving me the time. I just have a number of questions. I noticed that in the Ministry for Education since the new Government has come in, there has been an infusion of advisers and other people they have been there. I am not too sure how this is being funded, former politicians and so forth that are sitting in that office which we never had that before; whole host of people. I think there may be two, three and four.

Sir, I just want to understand how that is being funded, maybe from the old budget, the current budget and also from this particular Budget whether it is covered under SEG1 on personal emoluments or whether it is covered somewhere because this is a totally need development that I will never see before.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- It is up to you, honourable Minister.

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

MR. CHAIRMAN.- It is up to you whether you want to answer that question.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- It is all part of SEG 1 - Personal Emoluments, and part of their contractual consultant engagement.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman I have a motion to move. My motion is

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We have not received it, Madam, only honourable Ravunawa's.

We have two motions here. The first one is by honourable Premila Kumar. She is moving that \$250,000 be left out of Head 21. Would you introduce your motion now, Madam?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, I move that:

\$250,000 be removed from Programme 1-1(7) - National Education Summit.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, we understand that there are a number of activities being undertaken at the Ministry and the most important one at the moment is developing a 10-year Education Sector Plan which is funded by Global Partnership in Education. Having a National Education Summit as well as the various processes involved in global partnership education funded consultation will lead to the same result.

In other words, if you are going to have a National Education Summit, it will tell us exactly where we are; where the strengths, where the weaknesses and what we need to do. Similarly, when we are going to develop the 10-year Education Sector Plan, it will involve the same process. We need to know the strengths, weaknesses and how we are going to develop each area.

When we talk about the education sector, it is in totality. Everything to do with the education *per se*. Rather than using \$250,000 just for the Education Summit, you can also use \$250,000 from Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to hold the Summit. My suggestion is, that can be taken off, you can still have your Education Summit rather than using this money.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(1) - Teacher In-Service Training.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Hem Chand, could we complete this motion that is here before me, then we go to your question.

HON. H. CHAND.- Sorry.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- It is on Head 22, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, Head 22.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- We are on Head 21 at the moment.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you and I apologise for that.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(1) - Teacher In-Service Training. My question to the honourable Minister, are Early Childhood Education Teachers and Special Education Teachers covered in that \$50,000? If yes, what is the allocation for ECE and Special Education?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- It is the In-Service Training. Mr. Chairman, the allocation is to carry for 50 percent salary while on study leave and the current budget allocation will cater for one officer who is currently on study leave with partial pay. Those teachers who are on the verge of completing their programmes of study and in the priority area of study in the Ministry will be considered for study leave with pay for one semester. So those teachers with four or less units will be given due consideration. Priority for maritime areas are Maths, Physics, Industrial Arts, Early Childhood Education (ECE), Primary Education and Special and Inclusive Education (SIE).

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, this is just a clarification I am seeking from Programme 1-1(5) - E-Transaction Cost. Can the honourable Minister give us an update on the progress for this particular activity?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, this is the same provision for last year and the actual expenditure was only \$399 so that is the progress that transpired. Out of the \$50,000 allocation, only \$399 was used. For this particular E-Transaction Cost for \$50,000, the progress so far, only \$399 was used from the \$50,000 that was budgeted for, actuals to-date.

The Ministry has created a provision to receive revenue through M-PAiSA rather than collecting cash over the counter, so provisions are also available and has been used to pay exam supervisor allowances through M-PAiSA. This Government initiative to venture into digital money online transaction will give options to customers to make payments for Government Services from the comfort of their homes and schools. The customers will be able to save time and travelling expenses to visit nearest offices to make payments. Students can use these services to pay fees for exam remarking and exam recounting.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Just a further clarification, precisely Minister what you have said is the purpose of that money that was given last year. My question is whether M-PAiSA services have been put in place in different divisions so that students in rural and outer islands can use that service? Normally they used to go to the physical offices to do the payments, so how have you worked that one out?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- First of all, we are trying to get the connectivity for all the rural and maritime areas in place in order to allow the M-PAiSA facility to be accessed from the respective divisions.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you honourable Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, I hope you know that 96 percent of our schools are already connected. So you have to work on the 4 percent for connectivity, but the whole idea for having this e-transaction cost shown in the Budget is to improve the services for our students who had to wait for a very long time to get feedback from the Ministry whenever they wanted to get their marks checked.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you very much, honourable Member. We also note that more than 90 percent too is intermittent connectivity. It is not full-time connectivity.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Not at all.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, I note that under SEG 6, you have a number of operating grants and transfers to various organisations. I am interested in the one in relation to the Fiji Higher Education Commission. I realised that this is a grant, but the grant will be used in various different places.

Given the interest currently in TVET and the importance of using TVET, I just like to know whether under this grant are things in relation to the National Qualifications Framework and the development of a stronger competency-based training qualification that all TVET providers can use across the country? Would that be something that is included as part of this grant?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- As part of the operations cost for the operation of Fiji Higher Education Commission, it is currently working with the Ministry of Education in terms of the development of a TVET policy first and we also look into the qualification framework.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-3(6). I need clarification on Grant to Special Schools. Does this grant also include inclusive schools? If yes, how many inclusive schools are covered?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- You can answer your question.

HON. H. CHAND.- No, I do not because this figure keeps changing.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- There is an additional funding, Mr. Chairman, of Grants to Special Schools. Last year's allocation was \$730,000, so we actually utilised \$455,000 - 62 percent utilisation and this year is \$1 million, an increase of \$311,000.

HON. H. CHAND.- My question is, does this grant also include inclusive schools?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- I am trying to answer the question which I will end up with saying yes to that.

HON. H. CHAND.- Thank you. How many inclusive schools?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The allocation is to cater grant payment to 17 Special Schools with 125 students, 87 Special Inclusive Schools.

HON. H. CHAND.- Thank you, I got the answer of 87.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- So why ask?

HON. H. CHAND. – Thank you, honourable Minister, you gave the answer which is 87. The honourable Prof. Prasad said 344.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will not go into that.

HON. H. CHAND.- No, that is not the total, honourable Prof. Prasad.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Chand, we will not go into that kind of questioning where you have the answer and you are trying to do something that has been proven. We will end it there because we need to cover other areas as well.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, on the Grant to Special Schools, honourable Minister. There are lot of children who are born out of autism which is a spectrum and we see a lot now. I think the trends is getting higher with kids who are born of autism. They need special attention, speech therapy and they speak much later. When I read into it, it just says that their brains are just wired differently from us who think that we are normal.

In these Special Schools, do we have those specialists who deal with autism where parents can take their kids there? I also read that, the earlier it is detected, the better. Are they included in these Special Schools? If not, I plead that it is an area that we need to be looking into and get it funded.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, honourable Member. That is an area that we are trying to beef up in terms of having our schoolteachers to specialise in that field. *Vinaka*.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Thank you.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, before I ask the honourable Minister, I would like to thank you for your understanding of my matter. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, through you, just going back to the Grant to Special Schools. The Ba Special School was destroyed through fire and what I have been hearing from the last two days that now the respective ministries have got their own capital allocation. Is the funding in this allocation for the construction of the new Ba Special School?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- I have to get back to you on the listing, Sir, but the ownership of the Ba Special School is Sanatan?

HON. P.K. BALA.- Yes.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I have a question on Programme 3-1?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No. Is it Programme 4-1?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, I am on Programme 3-1.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- We have finished.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Yes, we were there.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I put my hand up.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Madam is asking a question here, with respect to her as a lady, we will allow that.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Sir, but I had put my hand up. My question is on Programme 3-1(6) - Remission of Fees. If the honourable Minister can provide some details on this.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- This is a new allocation. Mr. Chairman, 5,361 boarders received half remission of \$27 per year then we will need an additional of \$126,945. Most of the rural schools will receive full remission since most of their parents do not have fixed employment. The total budget request is to cater for the variance in boarders roll:

- 0 to 2,500 - full remission of \$50;
- 2,501 to 6,500 - half remission of \$27; and
- 6,500 and above - do not qualify for this remission.

The new proposal using the Term 3 in 2022 audited boarder's roll, an additional funding to remain at \$126,000 to cater for the alteration and the eligibilities. On social welfare recipients and students whose parents died while serving in peacekeeping will be receiving full fees charged but schools.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, if I can move on to Programme 3-2(5) - Boarding School Food and Supplies of \$2.8 million allocated for Government Secondary Schools. My question is, how many students will benefit from this grant and how are school farms contributing to the food

supplies? Now that the VAT has gone up and this amount has remained the same, how will this be managed?

HON. A.M. RADRORO.- Mr. Chairman, this allocation is the same as last year, the \$2.8 million has not changed but the utilisation rate is only 99 percent. The allocation this year is still the same. This allocation is to cater for Government Boarding Schools to procure food and supplies for boarders with a total of nine Government Boarding Schools, a total of 2,899 boarding students roll was noted for Term 1 in 2022 and the nine Government Boarding Schools with an average of 311,000. Food ration grant is provided per year to cater for boarders' food expenses.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, just a supplementary question.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Are we still on the same SEG?

HON. P. D. KUMAR.- Yes, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Madam.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- That will also be complemented by the school farms that they have.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Honourable Minister, if you can tell us about the school farms. I do understand that VAT has gone up, the food prices will go up because VAT will apply on chicken and other items which the children consume. How are you going to manage this?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Apart from the school farm, it is giving majority of the food to boarders in terms of cassava, *dalo*, *rourou*, milk, beef and fish. They are purchased around the school areas.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Chairman, the honourable Minister mentioned about Government schools. Just a small question, rebuilding of RKS Dormitory.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- We have gone past that.

(Chorus of interjections)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Order!

HON. V. NATH.- Following on from honourable Premila Kumar, you mentioned about Government schools.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V. NATH.- Just answer. It is something good. You must be aware, honourable Minister that the dormitory at RKS burnt down.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Nath, you raise your question this way and I will direct it to the honourable Minister.

HON. V. NATH.- No direct communication.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No direct communication from there straight across to him, please.

HON. V. NATH.- My apologies, Mr. Chairman, I thought you signalled to go ahead unfortunately. May I, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes.

HON. V. NATH.- Thank you, Sir.

Rebuilding of RKS dormitory. As we are aware, the dormitory at RKS burnt down and I do not see no reflection in the Budget.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- We will reach there.

HON. V. NATH.- Thank you.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, in relation to Programme 5-1(5), I see there are a number of issues there that relate to TVET. They have a sum for Technical Equipment - Secondary Schools of \$300,000, Development of National Qualification Framework of \$10,000. I know that this National Qualification Framework was brought into being may be 10 years ago. and the Development of National TVET Policy. So given that there is a sum of money of \$300,000 for Technical Equipment, I take it that to mean that there are some secondary schools that are still doing TVET type programmes and not just woodwork, et cetera.

It relates back to the question that I had earlier on in relation to the Higher Education Commission, Development of National Qualification Framework, Technical Equipment and the Development of National TVET Policy. I would just like the honourable Minister to elaborate how well this is working together to assist the development of the trade and technical skills that we need? If I can just elaborate slightly, Mr. Chairman.

One of the problems that we have is the disconnect between the kind of programmes that are held in different places - at the school level and different institutes so that there is no flow in the type of learning that they have so it becomes articulate into the same sort of qualification. In other words, there is no portability of what people learn. I am just wondering whether this is being addressed in this way through competency-based frameworks and whether that is being addressed in all of these allocations?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, there is an allocation there that will accommodate what you have just stated.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, on Programme 1-1(8), my question is on Vatuwaqa Primary School, I live near the place. This school was burnt on the eve of election day. It is probably the first school that fell onto your lap when you became Government. I see that you are dealing with the dormitory from RKS that just burnt recently, Vatuwaqa is still in ruins, are there plans to get Vatuwaqa also in this upgrade?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, Vatuwaqa is currently awaiting the fire report. Once we get the fire report then we will initiate the technical scoping which will be funding request to probably a donor or to the Ministry of Finance.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Six months later?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- We are still waiting for the report.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Chairman, I do not normally try and stop the flow.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, honourable Member.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- If I am going to ask a question, I have to declare my interest in that question. Programme 6-1(10) - Building Grant – Non-Government Secondary Schools. I can see that there is a grant to Non-Government Secondary Schools. Why I said that I declared my interest is, I am asking about Richmond Methodist High School in Kadavu. I just recently returned from the school and a lot of school buildings (I attended it in 1972) children still continue to occupy those school buildings. I just wanted to ask the honourable Minister if that is being considered under this Head?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, I think there is a lot request coming to the Ministry of Education from various schools. Our team have identified the schools that will be upgraded in these Non-Government Secondary Schools. SEG 10, \$149,000 will be used for the construction of new facilities for three schools - Moce Secondary School Science Laboratory, Nakorotubu Secondary - 1x2 classroom, Vatukaloko to cater construction of new 1x1 classroom. The remaining \$195,000 will cater for upgrading and maintenance of the existing facilities for seven secondary schools to improve the deteriorating structures - Nakauvadra High School Dining Hall, Yasayasa Moala College School Block Renovation, William Cross College - extension to new sewing room, St. Vincent College - walkway, Nadogo Central College - renovation of the dormitory, Rewa Secondary School - upgrading of school foyer and Saraswati College - upgrading of school fencing.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, my question is on SEG 9 - Purchase of Tractors (\$325,000). Can the honourable Minister provide some details in relation to this particular item, and how these tractors will be used by who, which school, what is the programme surrounding these purchase of tractors?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, this question is related to the earlier questions regarding boarding rations. This is for three new tractors that are needed for three Government Boarding Schools - RKS, ACS and QVS to be utilised on the school farms and boost farm production for hostel consumption.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Just a supplementary on my previous question, Mr. Chairman, please. I just wanted to ask the honourable Minister if this school can be considered on the building and also there is a huge soil erosion on the bridge side which is taking part of the school away and the school ground is about halfway gone into the sea. I am just asking the honourable Minister if that can be considered in the future?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- You have to fill the building request form.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- His answered your question, honourable Koroilavesau?

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Yes.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Chairman, just to answer that, as well as honourable Premila Kumar's question on the National Education Summit and the private secondary schools (if we can call them that), the Methodist Church has recently made an announcement that it intends to stop levying the members their *vakamisinare* and *solu ni cakacaka levu*. So, congregations in Kadavu can

direct what they like to contribute to the Methodist School in Richmond. The coastal erosion will be handled by the Environment and Climate Change Departments and not a school concern.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Question put.

Head 21 agreed to.

Head 22 - Ministry of Health and Medical Services

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, on Head 22-1-1(4) in regards to Sanitary Services. You have the motion in front of you, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is a motion?

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Yes, Sir.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- I second the motion, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You may want to elaborate on your motion.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Sir, we can all recall the message by the honourable Pio Tikoduadua in this House about the male cloak room in the hospital facility. Now with the increase in women graduates, I think the sanitary service needs to be increased in its allocation from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- I second the motion.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, if you are with me on Head 22-1-1(7) – Health Seminars/Meetings a mere \$10,000 for this financial year. I believe it is not enough. This is a big Ministry and I propose that it be increased to \$100,000.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- I second the motion.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, my question is on Programme 1-1(7) - Implementation of National Action Plan Gender Based Violence Against Women and Girl with \$50,000 being allocated. Can the honourable Minister tell us how this money will be used?

HON. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- The 2023-2027 National Action Plan for Gender Based Violence Against Women is the first two five-year plans intended to progress the decade of action led by the Government of Fiji. Funding has been allocated to four pilot Ministries - Ministry of

Education, Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs, Minister of Youth and Sports and Ministry of Health and Medical Services as the Government's commitment towards the implementation of the programme.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Supplementary question, Sir. First of all, I appreciate the fact that this money has been given to different ministries to address this particular issue, but you can tell us like if this money will go to the Ministry of Health. How are you going to use this money? I know you have a plan but what activities will be undertaken?

HON. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- That will be looked after by one of our Core Centres, the Family Health Division and their programmes that they will run on this allocation.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will now go on to the motion by honourable Ketan Lal.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I move a motion on Head 32-1-1(8) – Refurbishment of Savusavu Hospital. Currently it is \$250,000. I am requesting for an increase of another \$200,000 because in the previous FijiFirst budget, there was an allocation of \$1.8 million for the refurbishment of the hospital. Unfortunately, as soon as the new Government came in, they relocated that fund to, I think Child Support or School Support. Now they are allocated only \$250,000. I understand the people of Savusavu who are currently watching, the business operators had come together and contributed some amount of money to help the hospital refurbishment, but I think the Government needs to support more.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have completed all that you are supposed to do, honourable Ketan Lal. Introducing and elaborating on your motion all one go, that is very great.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Thank you, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- So, now we will put that to the vote.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Sir, if I can on behalf of the honourable Minister for Health add, I think the honourable Member is kind of misleading the Parliament in making all those references where funds were moved from here and there. The Savusavu Hospital, Mr. Speaker, was in one of the worst conditions that we saw. In fact, even in 2022 it was so bad that the business community had to get into it. I mean I am just responding to him because he is misleading.

The honourable Minister of Health explained in his Budget response very clearly that the work that was done was already completed and we saw

(Honourable K.K. Lal interjects)

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Let him finish. Listen!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The reason why I am answering this, honourable Member, you do not understand this because the CIU was in your former Minister of Economy's Office. All the maintenance was under the Ministry for Economy and that is why until the CIU was handling that. So, the funds was taken away. Now the allocation is appropriate, it will be done like all the other health centres and subdivisional medical hospitals.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, we will put this to the vote.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman in relation to SEG 6 of that same Activity in relation to the Sai Prema Foundation Fiji. I would just like a clarification from the honourable Minister. I am aware that the agreement between Sai Prema Foundation and the Ministry of Health (if I am correct) was that the land would be provided. The Ministry for Health would be providing some of the staff and that they would be meeting the operational cost. If I am correct, this would be a new grant. Is this now a change in the relationship between Sai Prema, Fiji Government?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, with regards to the Sai Prema allocation, yes this is a new grant, the allocation brought about through their submission.

HON. J. USAMATE.- So that would mean there is now a change in the original understanding between the Government of Fiji and Sai Prema. Is that all changed now?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Not all changed. The relationship that was built previously, the understanding is still there. Like any grant funding, there will be a grant agreement, there will be a proper process of how the funds will be utilised through appropriate accountability mechanisms. Because of the shortage of health personnel, nurses and others, we did not want to make the commitment that we will provide additional staff, et cetera. We are going to just provide the funding, they are doing a good job looking after the kids and that is what we want. It is like giving grant to universities and other tertiary institutions. That is the model that we have used.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, under SEG 10, I am just referring to the Direct Payment - Fiji COVID-19 Emergency Response and Aid-In-Kind - Prevention and Control of NCDs. I would kindly ask the honourable Minister, through you Mr. Chairman, if he can just give us the details of these two allocations, please? How is it going to be utilised and where?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Is it SEG 10; Fiji COVID-19 Emergency Response Project (World Bank). It is adjusted to the estimates provided by the Climate Change and International Cooperation Unit, it is a direct payment. On the Fiji COVID-19 Emergency Response Project is adjusted to the estimates again, it is donor support for infrastructure assessment at CWMH.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, this is a matter of national interest given the experience during COVID-19. I am not sure if anything is there in the Ministry, honourable Minister, about CDC because when CDC was compromised, it really put us in a very difficult situation during the COVID-19 Response. That is very critical for us should we have the next pandemic. That is why I was interested in this allocation, honourable Minister.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Fiji CDC is now a Cost Centre of its own. They have their own allocation now.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, just a very small clarification honourable Minister of Finance with respect to that specific Sai Prema issue you raised. It would be us giving them a grant, does that mean that we are not going to provide them with the staff completely or is it a partial thing? I think it is a very important institution for our children, phenomenal charitable institution. We all understand that. I am just wondering whether that funding that has been given (grant) is in full for them to source their staff whether it is here or offshore or whatever it is or are we still partially going to provide the staff? That was the original agreement, I understand.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I think the honourable Member has asked a very good question. You are right, what we have done is, we did not want to commit that we will provide staff, nurses and doctors. That will be entirely left with the Ministry of Health working with Sai Prema; giving them all the support and if there is a necessity at a particular point in time, that will be another arrangement.

But this is direct funding support grant to the institution as part of their operational expenditure. It is just like we give funding to a university. The grant is given, the grant agreement is signed, the process of accountability of funds is included in that agreement. We did not want to be involved in it directly. They are doing a good job and it would be unnecessary for the Government to involve itself when we have to deal with so many other things in Government hospitals and other areas.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, again just a quick supplementary. Honourable Minister, I only asked because I know the scarcity....

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Remember the words you are using, honourable Member – small question.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- It is small, Sir, but it is a very important institution and maybe I might want to ask we give them some more because I know about the scarcity of our health staff. If we are going to assist them in that particular way, the staff may actually come from overseas and it may cost us a hell of a lot more.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- As I said, we have just given them the money, we have left it to them to use it in the way that they want, as long as they are serving the purpose and achieving the objectives that we as a Government and the previous government supported.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, it is for children so I am

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, I noticed under Aid-In-Kind the continuation of the programme from JICA for the NCDs and also for the 5S-KAIZEN-TQM. This programme has been going for some time and I am glad to see that they are still running.

Just for the establishment to the 5S-KAIZEN. Can you just explain for this \$2 million, I do not know whether there are any deeds as to what exactly, because there has been a lot of complaints about doorknobs and things like that and KAIZEN and 5S would look at cleaning things up. Just a slight elaboration on exactly what the two \$2.586 million will cover for 5S?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Honourable Usamate, through you Mr. Chairman, you wanted to know about the improvement of health service of the 5S-KAIZEN?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Yes.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- It is another project by JICA. It is a pilot project started off mostly in the North and it is now with some of our facilities. It is to do with sorting and improving the facilities in terms of sorting. The quality of health has improved with this in terms of the sorting of materials.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Now it started in the North, has it now moved into the Central Division in the large hospitals because this is about keeping a place clean, making sure that there is a place for everything and it is always in place. So, it is now in the Central Division too?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Yes, Sir.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(1), I noticed the reduction in Doctor's - Salary together with their FNPF from \$81million to \$76 million. I seek clarification from the honourable Minister about the reduction in the salary allocation.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, I thank the honourable Member for that question. The posts are still the same, in fact the reason for the reduction:

- 1) Medical Intern to Medical Officer transition previously was from January to July. Now it is March to July so we have taken away two months from that;
- 2) Removal of substantive Medical Officer salaries due to acting appointments, secondments, study leave or leave without pay; and
- 3) Some of the specialists are still attending their respective specialist qualifications, especially Radiology and Pathology so they are still in acting positions. I want to beef up our capacity in terms of speciality availability and when they do get their qualifications, they are formalised into their roles as a Specialist Consultants.

Those are three reasons but the posts are still the same.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- *Vinaka.*

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman, on Programme 1-1(8) – Construction of Walkway – CWM Hospital (\$1 million).

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- That is the walkway as you come from the Maternity to the West Wing (the container), \$1 million to construct a proper one.

HON. A. BIA.- *Vinaka.*

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, still on Programme 1-1(5), if the honourable Minister can elaborate a little bit about the In-Service Training? What is this allocation set aside for?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, through you, this In-Service Training is mainly for midwifery and excludes all Medical Officers and Dental Officer as you know they have to go through TELS.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- *Vinaka vakalevu, Vuniwai.*

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Honourable Minister, this is to do with Programme 1-1(6) - Grant to NGOs is \$900,000. Do you actually have the list of the NGOs that we are assisting or you come and apply for assistance? There is a quite number of NGOs that exist and associations that are also supported by different bodies. Is there a list of NGOs that you have already?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, the list are currently utilising the funds for this financial year but for this one in the next financial year, they will have to go through the same process of EOI.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(5) - Emergency Radiology and Laboratory Services of \$4 million and under "R". I believe this is for specialist tests that are sent overseas, but for the Radiology Department at CWMH, they now have a space for the software. The

utilisation of the PAX software system is a vital tool for radiologists to display, capture, store images and share images in the fastest and reliable way. I seek clarification from the honourable Minister, it is a reduction as well from the previous financial year and if the PAX system software for the X-ray Department at CWMH is also part of this?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, through you, the Emergency Radiology and Laboratory Services, this is an allocation for emergency outsourcing and it is increased from \$3 million to \$4 million this year.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- One more question, Mr. Chairman, if I may? This is a very pertinent question about the Laundry Service at CWMH. Again, the honourable Minister of Finance has allocated \$1.3 million although they are dissatisfied with the previous arrangement. Maybe if the honourable Minister can clarify and also inform Parliament if there is any plan for the new Laundry Service Arrangement for CWMH.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- The current allocation through you, Mr. Chairman, is for the outsourcing of laundry service in the Central Division only as we plan and scope for the new laundry in-service.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- I am satisfied with that, Mr. Chairman.

Just one more question, I noticed that Community Health Workers' allowance has moved from the Public Health Allocation to Policy and Administration - Programme 1, an allocation of \$3 million. Just a clarification from the honourable Minister as to why they moved it to this Programme as it is purely a Public Health Programme. It is on SEG 7 – Community Health Workers.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Through you Mr. Chairman, the reason why it has being brought back to Headquarters is to allow easier transition of payments. Usually before when it is within the divisions, the approval has to come back through Headquarters. So, we have moved that to Headquarters to allow the easier transition of payment to our Health Care Workers.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- It is for administration purpose. I am happy with the explanation, Mr. Chairman.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Just in Public Health, I do realise that all the Public Health aspects of the Ministry are not totally covered by this Activity, that it is spread out in others. When I first saw the total, I was a bit worried because it had dropped by \$3 million. I just want to be sure, maybe the honourable Minister can give some reassurance that Public Health which a preventative part of health has not diminished its importance or its prioritisation in the Ministry. I have got that feeling when I saw this allocation because I said, I realised things are spread out. Can you just give some reassurance on that?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Most of funds for this programme has been reallocated to others such as the new Cost Centre for CDC as well. It used to come under this.

HON. J. USAMATE.- It is still a key priority?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- It is very much a priority.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, while still on Programme 2-1(5) - National Food and Nutrition Security Programme - \$200,000. Probably between the honourable Minister of Agriculture and the honourable Minister of Health, this is one of the commitments that we made way

back in 2016 to FAO Rome on the Zero Hunger Policy, and Fiji was to develop and Food and Nutrition Security Policy. It has been formulated already but where in the system is this being withheld, because that is the commitment we made to FAO.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, the budgets have been increased. What was your question?

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman through you, a policy has been developed already, but where is it? Honourable Minister for Agriculture, maybe we can discuss it after this because that is a commitment we made to FAO and this is linked to our NCDs and the Food and Nutrition Security too from the Ministry of Agriculture. I think the honourable Minister is well aware of this as well.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- I am aware of the policy well and it is within our Wellness Unit at the moment.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- There is a whole Unit there within the Ministry of Health dealing with that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That does not stop you, honourable Leader of the Opposition from discussing it with them.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, I have a motion. This is on Programme 2-1(5) on Non- Communicable Disease Prevention and Control. The motion that I have put across is in that slip seeking for an increase on that particular allocation.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You have introduced your motion?

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Yes, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The motion is that Head 22-2-1(5) be increased by \$650,000 – Non-Communicable Disease Prevention and Control.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, NCDs, as we all know is our number one killer. There is 80 percent death every year coming from NCD-related diseases. We even know that this is costing our economy around \$400 million a year. They are saying that the amputation rate is three in a day. The idea that I am coming up with is just to assist the Ministry in getting more funds to help them in the awareness and education programmes.

I saw on Programme 1-1 right at the end about the Aid- In-Kind given by JICA, but I thought it will be good because it is that bad. At least we are seen that we are standing on our two feet, having funds that we provide ourselves and not depending on aid to fight this. It is more than a pandemic. A figure here, I think in 2020 or 2022, about 2,000 deaths in our country on that. Mr. Chairman, that is the reason I am putting this up and the motion is to increase the allocation so that the Ministry of Health can be more effective job in curbing these NCDS in terms of awareness and education programme.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-1(5) Rheumatic Heart Disease Prevention and Control Programme where \$200,000 has been allocated. In fact, we have just talked about Sai Prema just a while ago, and Sai Prema specialises in this particular area. My proposal would be that this money be given to Sai Prema so that they can do a better job in raising awareness on Rheumatic Heart Disease and contribute more to the work that they do, unless, the honourable Minister can explain to us what exactly this money will be used for.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, honourable Premila. Mr. Chairman, Sai Prema deals mostly with corrective heart surgery from congenital heart defects. This funding will help with the planned activities under the programmes. It is to do with the training, Acute Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease quarterly meetings, community engagement, supervisory and outreach, guidelines and printing of Acute Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease. So, even though Sai Prema and this allocation both deal with the heart, Sai Prema deals with the corrective heart surgery of congenital heart defects.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, although overall there is a reduction in the public health allocation, but the heart of this public health service is with SEG 5 and SEG 7. There is a marked increase in the allocation, and I thank the honourable Minister of Health and Medical Services and the honourable Minister of Finance for boosting some of these programmes, even doubled. I hope for the monitoring and evaluation of these programmes so that we see their effect and the outcomes on the ground.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, again on Programme 2-1(5). Seeking clarification from the honourable Minister on the Vaccine Rollout of about \$100,000. I know it is next to Rheumatic Heart Disease and Prevention and Control Programme. Honourable Minister, is the Vaccine Roll Out to do with Rheumatic Heart Disease?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, this allocation is to support the maintenance and procurement of vaccine fridges.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, once again on the Rheumatic Heart Disease Prevention and Control Programme. I am a grandfather who has two of my grandkids who get their injection on a monthly basis, so I am just wondering, I am not too sure if there is an increase. I know there is still a lot of need for awareness, especially around our settlements and villages. I am not too sure whether that allocation has been increased, is it enough, is it having an impact on the incidents of rheumatic fever so it does not progress to rheumatic heart disease?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, it is an increase by \$150,000 and the \$200,000 is for this financial year. Together with this, we work with other NGOs through MFAT to look after programmes based on rheumatic heart disease.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, just a follow-up question from honourable Naisa Tuinaceva with regards to the Vaccine Roll Out. I believe the purchase of vaccine is further ahead under FPBS of \$4 million. So, can the honourable Minister, explain what the rollout is about? Is this for the outreach whereby nurses go and give vaccines in rural areas?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Yes.

HON. J. USAMATE.- We are very thankful that we have a Recompression Chamber in CWM Hospital. We are just wondering because they have a lot of diving incidents and problems in the West. Is there any thought of doing something similar in the West?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- There is one available at Black Rock in Nadi.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I have two motions from honourable Ravunawa with Activity 5 to be increased by another \$101,000 that is to do with Programme 2-5(5) - Crutches.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- With the increase in NCDs and the vast increase in amputation, there is a need for patient support with crutches.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- I second the motion.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- The allocation of \$10,000 is not enough considering the rate of amputation and the palliative care for the patients that are being compromised with their movement.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, it is to do with Programme 2-5(5) with Prosthesis Materials. This is to help artificial prosthesis for patients who have gone through surgical amputation at our hospital mainly due to NCD related cases, also some through the motor vehicle accidents and the same.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- I second the motion, Sir.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- The prosthesis material and support, we need a better allocation. Also, when I see SEG 5, I do not see wheelchairs. Many of the wheelchairs that we have in the hospitals are donated. That is why crutches, wheelchairs and all those supportive devices to help in the mobility of patients who are compromised need a better allocation than this.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Programme 2-7(7) - Outreach Programme. This programme for the health protection mainly deals with Health Inspectors or Environmental Health Inspectors. For an effective outreach programme, I move:

That we look into the allocation for this SEG.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- I second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Like last night, I like the teamwork.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, the Outreach Programme for Health Inspectors have a vast scope to cover and it is to do with health promotion and awareness in communities also surveillance in times of any outbreak of disease. The allocation of \$50,000, in my view, is merely not enough.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- This is on the Programme 2-7(5), similar to what was raised by honourable Ravunawa. This is on the Leptospirosis Control Programme together with the one on Dengue Prevention and Control Programme.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You seeking clarification?

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Yes, Sir.

I am seeking clarification from the honourable Minister on this amount especially on the threat that we know how this can be deadly diseases - Leptospirosis and Dengue. Only \$50,000 is given to Leptospirosis Control Programme and \$200,000 on Dengue Prevention and Control Programme. Honourable Minister, can I just see clarification on that?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, through you, this allocation for Leptospirosis, it is for its ongoing programme. In terms of the need, if there is an emergency outbreak such as the ones, we had in the last few weeks with typhoid in Labasa and leptospirosis in Kadavu. There is a special allocation in the Headquarters of about \$500,000 that they can come and get for emergency purposes. But this allocation is for their ongoing programmes, awareness, et cetera.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, is that the same with Dengue Prevention and Control?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- It is the same, Sir.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-7(5) - Food Unit. Sir, the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs when we met, we called Food Unit representative just to have a better understanding of their role and we found that one of the constraints they related to us was to do with funding.

Food Unit plays a very important role in imports and exports of food. They look after the standards, they control the quality of foods that is coming into the country, and they are always short staffed, they do not have enough people to do their job. We are very concerned that the quality of food sold in the supermarket is of such a low standard and during our discussion, the whole idea is to strengthen this unit. Currently with \$200,000, it is still not sufficient. I just wanted to flag this.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- There was no budget allocation for this before. This year, we have allocated \$200,000 and I think it will be enough for them to plan and if they need additional funding in the following financial year, they will get it.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, just a point of clarification. Last year, Food Unit was provided \$150,000 allocation. Just to clarify with the Minister?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- All that was raised by honourable Premila is to flag it, that is all.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- There was an allocation for Food Unit.

MR. SPEAKER.- We have another motion here from honourable Ravunawa – Programme 3-1(7).

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, the Northern Division from your beautiful islands, Outreach Programme of \$30,000 is merely not enough. I move that we increase that allocation.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Mr. Chairman, I seconded the motion.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- The Northern Division covers a wide area and I believe there should be a better allocation than this to be able to cover the three provinces of Bua, Cakaudrove and Macuata properly.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- As this is to do with an increase, we will now put that to the vote.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, 3-4(5) – Ambulance Services.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We are still on Activity 2.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Sorry, Sir. Programme 3-4(5) – Ambulance Service. I think this is for the whole Northern Division. I experienced a bit of problem in getting the patients from Savusavu to Labasa and around the other areas in Seaqaqa. I am not sure about this allocation whether this is enough. I know with this \$25, 000 you cannot even buy any, but I believe this is some kind of service outsourcing. I just seek clarification from the honourable Minister on that, please?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, this allocation of \$25,000 is for maintenance and repair of ambulance and pay for services provided by FNU or St. John Ambulance.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- We gave them two new ambulances in the last six months, so this is just for maintenance.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We have two motions. The first one is by honourable Ravunawa for an increase on staff clothing.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, I move that we increase the allocation for staff clothing.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 4-1(5), from experience, I know the staff clothing only covers the nurses uniform. We have the other cadres that are in the hospital, the practise at the moment, they buy their own scrubs in order to do their work in the clinical setting, Sir. That is why I move that we increase an allocation that is written before you Sir, to buy staff clothing for dental, physio, x-ray or all other health cadres under the Ministry of Health. Maybe the honourable Minister can also clarify that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- This is a motion honourable Ravunawa, we will vote on it first.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You were asking that the honourable Minister do some clarification or something?

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Yes Sir, if the honourable Minister can just confirm whether this staff clothing allocation is only for nurses, putting aside all other health workers?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Through you Mr. Chairman, yes, it is to cater for the purchase of staff clothing nurses, uniform shoes, dietician's uniform and laboratory coats. It does not include the scrubs, as you mentioned.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The other motion submitted by honourable Ravunawa is to do with an increase of \$24,722 for bedding and linen. May you introduce your motion.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, the need for bedding and linen is known in all our health facilities and with the expansion of converting the nursing station to health centre level, there is also a need for more beddings and linen. I move that we increase the vote, Sir.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Sir, I have elaborated a bit. Just with the expansion of service, the demand has increased hence we need an increase in the budget allocation for beddings and linen for all hospital facilities.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 4-1(5) - Infection Control Programme. I see an allocation of \$1 million. Honourable Minister, if you can tell us what was the utilisation of this amount last year?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, honourable Premila can I come back to you with that information later on?

HON. P.K. KUMAR.- That is fine, honourable Minister. The reason why I am asking is, normally people who visit hospital are always concerned about the infection control programme in the hospital. If you have a better infection control, then we will be able to reduce the number of people falling sick when they visit hospitals or even when they undergo operations. So, I just wanted little bit more details on this which I will have a discussion with the honourable Minister later on. Thank you.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 4-1(5) - Expansion in Drugs and Medical Supplies (\$78,000). Can the honourable Minister explain what this programme is all about?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- This allocation is for drug regulatory activities, for example, inspection of retail pharmacies, registration of exams of new Pharmacists, supplemented by fees from the Fiji Medicinal Board and Fiji Pharmacy Profession Board.

MR. SPEAKER.- That is your interest as well, honourable Maharaj?

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, Programme 4-1(5) – Laboratories Reagents, I seek clarification on the vast increase in this allocation from \$9 million to \$13 million. If the honourable Minister can briefly highlight and clarify the need for that increase.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, through you, the additional funding is aligned to the planned procurement activities to be undertaken by the Ministry in the new financial year to cater for the purchase of more than 800 items. Those are lab consumables, reagents for medical laboratories, et cetera.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- A supplementary question, Mr. Chairman, I understand there was a change with mindray machine and the lab biochemistry machines, hence there is a need to get new reagents for the new machine. At the moment, some of the machines that are sitting out in the peripheral clinics are not getting the reagents for the completion of their blood sample test and I also understand that reagents for the new machine is not in the country at the moment. If the honourable Minister can just elaborate a little bit on that.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Chairman, through you, this allocation of laboratory reagents, as the honourable Member has mentioned, one of the machines is mindray, currently at the moment, that lab equipment is one that is giving us headaches at the moment. So, in order to change that, specific equipment comes with specific reagents that is not compatible with the others. That is why the increase in that allocation.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, before we vote on Head 22, I just have one final question to the honourable Minister. Having gone through the Programmes and Activities, I see that there is nothing allocated for Rotuma Hospital. Can we assume that it is completed and are in the process of commissioning.

HON DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Yes, we are just finalising every detail in terms of moving. As I have mentioned, when we will open Rotuma, we will do it right, as compared to Navosa. So, we will shift all the new equipment and everything. At the moment, it is just the final touches and I have met with the Rotuma Council Members.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head 22 – Ministry of Health and Medical Services.

Question put.

Head 22 agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I intend to adjourn Parliament and this is for lunch break as well. So, we take both, tea and lunch in one go, and then we will come back. We will break for about an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.55 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 1.07 p.m.

Head 23 - Ministry of Housing

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That Head 23-2-1 (Housing and Community Development), be increased by \$5 million with respect to First Home Grant below \$50,000 and \$3 million in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000, and this can be increased by \$2 million.

HON. K.K. LAL.- I beg to second the motion.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, the reason why I have made this motion for an increase in grant by \$5 million is purely based on the economic activities that these projects generate. We have seen that when the Government invests money in this programme, the rate of return is eight times more because when people construct their homes or when they take loan from the bank, both the financial services sector as well as the construction sector does well. But what we have seen is that the money was diverted last year or early this year for something else which was around \$2.8 million.

What we have also noted is that there is a very, very high demand for this project. People are on the waiting list and sometimes at the end of the year when there is any money left within the Ministry, we used to assist these homeowners.

Mr. Chairman, from 2014, we have noted that more than 3,760 households were assisted. So, at a time like this when we are talking about recovery and rebuilding the future of our people, I believe that if we increase this grant, it is just going to contribute to the economic growth of the country.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That the allocation for Head 23-2-1(10) Housing Assistance to Fire Victims be increased by \$500,000.

HON. A. BIA.- I beg to second the motion.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, there has been an increase in fire to personal property and I think the value is still less. There is a lot of our vulnerable and poor hardworking citizens facing the unfortunate event, such as Mr. Mahendra in Labasa, so I think we need to provide more to our people.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, I have some questions for clarification. Programme 2-1(6) – Public Rental Board Subsidy (\$1,116,451), I see there is a decrease in the sum. If the honourable Minister can kindly inform us why the subsidy has been reduced?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Chairman, the rent subsidies that are given to tenants by Public Rental Board (PRB) are normally given to those tenants with household income of \$10,400 and below or earning weekly income of equivalent to \$200 and below. What happened was, after the survey that was done by the PRB, about 10 tenants have graduated from that level to the next and that has led to the reduction in subsidies as far as rental is concerned. So that justifies the reduction in subsidies.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, a supplementary question to the honourable Minister; if 10 people have graduated, surely the new ones must have come in to occupy those premises. How can you say that the subsidy needs to come down because it is based on the number of flats you have?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- The subsidy is not based on the number of flats, it is based on an income, so when the survey is done and confirmed that the tenants are earning above \$10,000 they will pay rent that is not subsidized, so they normally pay whatever rental that is offered at that particular time. Thank you.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you Mr. Chairman, Sir, Programme 2-1(8) – Improve Basic Amenities (Informal Settlement), I believe this is a new allocation.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I can answer that, Mr. Chairman. This is a new allocation, honourable Member, because there has been a lot of submissions about improving basic amenities within the informal settlements until such time that proper infrastructure can be put in place. So, simple things like footpaths, walkways, are things that people need to get by on a daily basis.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, in the last few days, we have heard about the development of informal settlements and I do remember that we have secured around 40 to 42 development leases. During the honourable Minister's speech, if I heard him correctly, he said that there were certain development leases that had expired. So, to renew that, where is that allocation reflected here?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, that is part of Formalisation of Informal Settlements (\$10,000,000). We have allocated a total of \$250,537 for the renewal of development leases for the following informal settlements:

- 1) Tore/Tukutora in Lautoka;
- 2) Uluisila in Sigatoka;
- 3) Vunarewa in Nadi;
- 4) Delainamasi in Lautoka;
- 5) Togabalavu in Lautoka;
- 6) Siberia in Labasa;
- 7) Solove in Ba; and
- 8) Tuatua in Labasa.

So, those are the eight development leases that have expired that we will be arranging for their renewal in the next financial year.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, again, I am seeking clarification, honourable Minister, on Programme 2-1(6) – Lagilagi Housing PCN Refund (\$150,000). If the honourable Minister can tell us:

- 1) how many applicants were refunded in the last financial year;
- 2) what was the value of the refund; and
- 3) how many are on the waiting list to be refunded this year?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, maybe just to enlighten Parliament on the Lagilagi issue, these are for the residents of Jittu Estate, off Grantham Road. I think the scheme came about in the 2021-2022 financial year.

Just a brief background on those people that have paid housing deposits to People's Community Network (PCN) but were not offered any flats based on whatever information that we received, it amounted to \$2.2 million and that is close to 336 households that have made payments to PCN.

To-date, we have assisted a total of 434 applicants or families/individuals with a total amount of close to \$3.4 million. We have seen the reduction of those who have paid and were affected that have come forward and produced their receipts, as well as a letter to confirm that they have made such payments to PCN. Based on the reduction in the number of families or applicants that we have received based on the enquiries that we have received, if you put an average, for those 434 families it is close to \$7,800. So, if you equate that \$7,800 based on \$150,000, so we expect close to 19 because the numbers have reduced. So, we are projecting to assist close to 18, 19, 20 or 30 people based on an average of \$7,800 per applicant.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- ...on the waiting list, like they have made their submission and they are waiting for the assessment and payout.

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- At the moment, all that we have received, we have processed and we have cleared. There are some that have come forward to us but the policy says if you pay, you must make sure that whatever narration in the receipt must say deposit housing. So, these are some of the things that we have clarified with all those that have come forward and lodged their applications with the Ministry.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 23 - Ministry of Housing.

Question put.

Head 23 agreed to.

Head 24 - Ministry Of Women, Children And Social Protection

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, Programme 1-1(7) - Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disability (\$10,000), I seek clarification from honourable Minister on the reduction of \$8,000.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, the reduction of that amount is based on the utilisation but we have allocated more to those programmes and organisations that are more active in this space. There has been an increase for the National Council of Persons Living with Disabilities and other programmes, like the Implementation of Rights of Persons with Disability Act which has gone up by \$20,000. So, again, it is based on the utilisation. We hope to have more programmes and outreach, but we encourage individuals to join organisations so that they can be part of their empowerment programmes.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, would like to request clarification from the honourable

Minister on Programme 1-1(5) – IT and Office Equipment (\$200,000). Can the honourable Minister provide clarification on why do you need the amount of \$200,000?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Sorry, can you repeat that?

HON. K.K. LAL.- Could you provide clarification to the amount allocated for IT & Office Equipment.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- \$200,000?

HON. K.K. LAL.- Yes,

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- What is the clarification?

HON. K.K. LAL.- Why do you need the \$200,000 for? Are you doing any renovation or any upgrade to your equipment and you need that amount of allocation?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- It is an increase by \$100,000. Again, based on the submissions made by our staff in terms of the need to upgrade our IT and office equipment. We have equipment that have been there for the last 10 years. A lot of them are obsolete and are actually sitting on shelves and need to be replaced.

It is the really need to upgrade our system. We are moving towards digitisation and so we are going to need more equipment. This is reflected in this amount that is increased.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Honourable Minister, on Programme 1-1(7) - Community Based Corrections Programme (\$70,000), could you just shed some light on this particular programme - what is it for, where is it?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, the community based corrections is the system that fosters community-based sentencing options and rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders. Under the Act, it requires the supervision of offenders when they are sentenced through community-based work.

The allocation under this particular SEG includes many activities which is implementation of the re-integration programmes and also the implementation of offender management programmes, engagement of judiciary and also engagement of community-based organisations.

We also would like to improve on the development of our volunteers because we have quite a few volunteers involved from the community, and the remuneration of volunteers. There is allowance that is given to them on days that they are engaged, say about twice a week. It is about \$80 allowance per day.

Even though the allocation is there, generally, I think this is the programme that may very well need to return to the Correctional Services because we are dealing with adults. We have the juveniles who are dealt with in the Juvenile Centre and then we have got this for the adults which is under our Ministry. So, this is something we will need to see if we can perhaps, move it to where it belongs and that is in the Correctional Services, but that is the discussion we are having.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, I have a supplementary question on that. We just need

some clarification. I understand what the honourable Minister said, but this would specifically be for women who have been convicted earlier or is it for everyone?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Women and men.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Women and men?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Yes, we are dealing with adults with community-based corrections in our Ministry.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(7) - Development of Child Care Policy and Regulation, through you, I would like to request the honourable Minister to provide an update on the status of the Policy.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- The Child Care Policy?

HON. H. CHAND.- Yes.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- The update, I think it is perhaps, a question outside of this particular allocation. The update on the policy is that, it is yet to come through Cabinet and there is Child Care Policy that is in process for child care to be provided at places of employment. That is something that the guidelines that are being put out, so that employers can provide child care in their workplaces. It is yet to come to Cabinet for approval.

We wish to explore this option because of the need for mothers to be supported when they are at work. It is a big undertaking by employers, they are willing to come on board to pay for it, so that they can have this part of the package for our women who are in the workforce. We hope to encourage more women to be able to make use of this.

It is a good policy to have and I thank the Government, that is, your Government at that time who brought it forward, so we are continuing with it. We thank International Finance Corporation (IFC) for their assistance in putting together this Child Care Policy.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Sir, my question to the Minister on Programme 1-1(7) – Special Support Fund (\$50,000), can she brief us on this Allocation?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, this is an allocation that has been from the previous year, there is no change to it. However, this allocation is always there to assist any member of the public that needs urgent assistance that cannot be catered from any other programmes. So, if there was a basic need item or immediate welfare needs, this usually comes through the Minister or any of our Field Officers who are out in the field and there are urgent needs for our clients or their families, then we have that provision for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Lal, just to inform you that whilst Parliament is sitting, there is no movement amongst the honourable Members within. We have the Orderlies here, they bring and take back what you want them to do, instead of us moving around.

HON. K.K. LAL.- That is noted, Sir, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You may go on to your motion now.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That Head 24-1-1(10) - Assistance to Fire Victims (\$100,000) to be increased.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Sir, it is a similar explanation that I gave for the previous motion that I had moved for increasing house fire victims allocation to the previous Head, so same explanation for this one as well.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, this is more in regards to clarifications. In fact, I can see under this SEG – 10, the motion raised by honourable Ketan Lal had an allocation of \$100,000 for fire victims.

Sir, I can see in that previous Head (Housing Authority), there is also allocation for same purpose for \$150,000. So, if we could merge the two – this is just a clarification from the Minister. Maybe they have some better ideas, but people can double dip Sir, they can apply here and there as well, so just clarification on that Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I am a bit lost, honourable Lal. Are you making suggestions or recommendation?

HON. V. LAL.- No, I am asking Sir, we have for the same purpose, allocations on different Heads. Sir, we have got allocation here and then in the previous Head, there was also an allocation of \$150,000. Why different Heads for the same purpose, Sir?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Can we just address what is there for the Ministry of Women because we missed that chance to ask the question with the Minister for Housing. Honourable Minister for Women?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, honourable Member, the clarification is that this assistance is only for our social welfare recipients, only for those in the system that lose a house in fire.

HON. V. LAL.- Thank you.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, I seek clarification on Programme 1-1(8) – Refurbishment of Ba Mission Hospital (\$710,801), my question to the honourable Minister which hospital is this?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Yes, it is part of the Ba Mission Hospital where we are looking at relocating the residents from the Lautoka Golden Age Home because it is unfit for them to stay there. So, we are in discussion with the Ministry of Health who have kindly let us use the Ba Mission Hospital to relocate them.

Previously, the policy from your Government was to relocate them to Labasa and it was just too impractical for the residents as well as the staff to move to Labasa. So, we thought somewhere closer would be more better for everyone. So, the Ba Mission Hospital Wing that is available, we are looking at refurbishing so that they can be moved there. HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman,

Programme 1-1(5) - Social Protection Programme Reform (\$210,000). Honourable Minister, if you can kindly inform us what kind of reform is begin undertaken and in which programme?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, this Reform which is being undertaken with the World Bank, we have currently a National Coordinator that is in place, funded by the World Bank, that is going through this Social Protection Programme Reform. We also have provided this allocation for salary expenses of three officers, who will be engaged in the development of the software system. So the reform is towards the end of the first phase, now we are moving to the next phase where there will develop the software system for the Social Protection Programmes with the assistance from the National Coordinator and the World Bank.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, honourable Minister.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(7) - Implementation of Rights of Persons with Disability Act 2018 (\$30,000), can the honourable Minister provide some information on that?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, there is an increase by \$20,000. Again, the implementation of this Act, we are committed to ensuring that the law is implemented. It will take some information sessions to inform our organisations and all stakeholders that come under this Act. We are the implementation Ministry, so it is our role to do so.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(8) – Refurbishment of Ba Mission Hospital (\$710,801), is that going to become an Old Peoples Home?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Just a temporary location. We have allocation for construction of a new Home in that same location because the current one is just infested by termites and they need to move. So, we are just relocating them to this space temporarily while we construct the new Home at the same location.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I was just worried that you are going to use that very old building to house them, but it is just going to be temporary. Thank you.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Yes.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, based on the same matter raised by honourable Usamate, I understand that you are going to refurbish Ba Mission Hospital to relocate them. But in SEG 10 - Construction of Lautoka Aged Care facility at the moment, \$250,000 has been allocated. To construct, you will need more money but only \$250,000 has been allocated. How are you going to use that money, honourable Minister?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, this is a capital project that will see to the preliminary work to be carried out for this Lautoka Aged Care facility. It is a new expenditure so it is intended to offer an appropriate structural proposal, aligned for an old age friendly design to be incorporated in the project plan for the construction of this facility and to better facilitate our older persons residing in the current Home. The scoping works that needs to be done, as you understand this is the initial phase.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you,

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-2(7) - Integrated National Poverty Eradication Programme (\$200,000), could the honourable Minister provide some clarification and if this amount is sufficient enough?

HON. L.D. TABUYA- There is no change from the allocation from last year. This particular programme it caters for the need for a national poverty symposium. This is something that needs to be done. As I had mentioned earlier in my speeches, poverty is a crosscutting issue, not just for our Ministry, so we need to have the symposium and *Talanoa*. The Unit then monitors and evaluates the impact of poverty alleviation programmes across the board.

In the previous years, their role is really to strengthen coordination between Ministers and ministries. So that is the information that they gather so they do go out and monitor programmes of Ministries, not just ours, to see if they are meeting the targets in terms of poverty alleviation. So, that is their role.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Thank you, honourable Minister, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, again on the same SEG 7, I note that now, the Strategic Planning Unit has been established. Any consideration for moving this Unit back to Strategic Planning?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD,- Thank you, honourable Leader of the Opposition, you are right. As the honourable Minister herself mentioned that there will be a very close coordination and part of the reason why we are establishing this very strong National Planning Office Monitoring Evaluation Unit is essentially to coordinate activities throughout the different Ministries and Poverty Alleviation Coordination Unit is very, very important because we found that there is a lot of disconnect and mismatch in terms of where the benefits go and who are the people. A lot of people actually miss out simply because activities are not coordinated. So, it will strengthen monitoring and evaluation and specific targeting.

Because we are putting in a lot of money this time within the Ministry of Social Welfare, increasing the allocations right across, we need to ensure that this is monitored and the right people at an appropriate time actually get the benefits.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That Programme 2-2(6) – Social Pension Scheme (\$78,156,000) allocation be doubled.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I beg to second the motion.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, the provision of social pension has been really a transformative way of trying to help our senior citizens in our country over the past few years. Unfortunately, the impact of being able to assist these persons has been severely depleted by the effect of the 6 percent VAT and all of these other changes that are taking place with inflation and what not. We believe, because of the importance of our senior citizens, we must be able to provide for them better. Thus, the reason for this motion.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That Head 24-2-2(6) - Food Allowance for Rural Pregnant Mothers (\$800,000) be increased by \$200,000.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I beg to second the motion.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Chairman, the proposed increase to this allocation by \$200,000 is to adjust the VAT increase and increase in other taxes, since there is an increase in the rate of VAT from 9 percent to 15 percent. This substantial increase in VAT will impact the cost of living for all Fijians, including the rural pregnant mothers.

There is increase in the allocations for Social Pension Scheme, Family Assistance Scheme and Child Protection Allowance without any consideration for rural pregnant mothers. There should be no disparity, hence I suggest an increase in this allocation.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, I seek clarification from the honourable Minister regarding Programme 2-3(5) – Procurement of Special Care Equipment (\$5,000). Can the honourable Minister shed some light on the type of equipment and purpose of this to the senior citizens, please?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, again, there is no change from the previous allocation from the previous year but this allocation does cater for the purchase of special care gadgets, such as wheelchairs, walking canes, walkers, hearing aids, glasses, showers, cardiac beds, hoists, commodes and bath chairs for the residents at the three Homes.

Mr. Chairman, what we found through the Ministry is that we have a lot of Good Samaritans who donate these to the Ministry and it goes straight to the Homes and we thank them for their assistance. They are always willing to come forward to donate these, so the amount that is there is really for when there are not any more Good Samaritans, but we do not run out of those.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, my question is related to Programme 3-1(7) - Women's Expo (\$600,000) and Women Economic Empowerment Programme (\$100,000). For Women Economic Empowerment Programme, how are you working with the Ministry of Industry and Trade to promote more women into businesses, because we can see \$100,000 is actually not enough?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, the work we do with the Ministry of Trade is actually quite well coordinated. In all of our Expos that we conduct, there is a Trade Officer who is present. That Officer works with our women on the ground at the Expos to collaborate, especially the women's organisations. We have quite a few registered under the Ministry, so with the assistance with the Ministry of Trade and their Officers who are very active, they come forward and assist us.

There is coordination between our Ministry and the Ministry for Trade in terms of MSME grants that are available for women who do want to take the next step or want to grow their business, then there is the availability. So, we have had some women who travelled with us to the Divisional Expos from the Ministry of Trade to assist in that regard.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Just a clarification, Mr. Chairman, Honourable Minister, I think the fact that you are working with the Ministry of Industry and Trade and connecting women to the markets, is a brilliant way of empowering women as well, but I understand Women Economic Empowerment Programme, if you can elaborate what are some of these programmes that you have in place?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Chairman, the allocation caters for grants to assist women entrepreneurs who are currently operating income-generating activities from home and in informal sectors. We look at single mums and to empower them, we have a number of targeted women entrepreneurs who want to start up their business. The grant ranges from about \$1,000 to \$3,000 to assist women to become those entrepreneurs. In this next budget, we hope to assist close to 100 women with the funding that is provided.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Honourable Minister, just the purpose of clarification and this is to do with SEG 6 - NGO Grants of \$200,000 and Women Institution of \$500,000. Can you just shed some light on which NGOs are eligible for this grant and which women institutions are eligible for this grant, or is it a process that they have to actually apply to get this?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Honourable Member, this is specifically for NGOs to assist the work of the Department of Women in carrying out their core functions. Organisations need to apply for these grants. As always, it needs to go through the process and then we hope that this grant will help up to 10 women-led organisations for up to \$10,000 each to support their work.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, to the honourable Members, this is an addition to women institutions. There are a lot of women's groups which may not necessarily be registered but they are working in different areas, and we have allocated this small amount, a maximum of \$10,000, but they still have to apply.

The Ministry will have to develop a criteria. For example, religious organisation women's groups, they do not get any kind of support but they do a lot of economic empowerment and capacity building work. So, this will be for that purpose and it will be monitored. We will see how it goes within a year.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- That was the reason for the question. Thank you.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to thank the honourable Minister for her previous response. I think it is really important to help the women-led organisations and I just want to add on to that - to coordinate with other Ministries because what I have seen is that opportunities are there but maybe they do not open the page of the Ministry of Women or Ministry of so and so. I think that coordination between Ministries is very important. I just want a clarification honourable Minister on SEG 6 – Women's Plan of Action (\$500,000). Could you, please, provide some clarification on that?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.-As you would have heard me present the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Girls which was launched earlier this year, there is a commitment from Government towards this Plan of Action which is to 2027. We have commitment from the four pilot Ministries so far. You would have heard the question go to the previous Minister about that line item. This is the Ministry of Health, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth. So, they have also committed a budget line. It is the first time ever we have had Gender Responsive Budgeting so that is something new that we are committed to. It was allocated \$300,000 last year so we have increased it to \$500,000.

This is also a commitment to match what our donor partners already assisted us with, including the Australian Government. So, this is definitely a commitment that we have to try to deal with this national crisis.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I move:

That Head 24-3-1(7) - Women Economic Empowerment Programme be increased by another \$200,000.

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. K. LAL.- Apparently, we have a lot of our very vulnerable women entrepreneurs in our informal settlements, our *naus*, aunties who are selling products from their nearby villages, especially my Cakaudrove region and whenever I go to Nadi or Tailevu, just selling all these products. Since there is a VAT increase, I would like to see some, sort of, assistance provided to these *naus* of mine when I visit them.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We will now put this to vote.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Sir, just a point of clarification, was there any guideline, the suggestions or motions for increasing the allocations whereby they should identify where it should be allocated from, or just explain the source.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We have discussed this in the Business Committee and we agreed that we no longer will be taking that stance that was dished out to us by the previous Government where you have to explain where you get the money from. We ended up talking a bit out of order in Parliament because honourable Nawaikula referred to the honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and said, “this is not your money, this is not your father’s money” and it ended up with the Speaker as well where she said, “I got no money”. Then honourable Nawaikula went further ahead and said, “I will get the money”, and this was during the late Jiko Luveni’s time.

The Speaker then, the late Jiko Luveni, raised that question because that was the process they had. She asked, “Where will you get the money from? He said, “I will get it from sacking that one (referring to the Minister of Economy) and sacking the Prime Minister”, and the savings from there will meet the cost.

(Laughter)

So, I hope, I have answered your question.

The Parliament will now vote on Head 24 - Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection.

Question put.

Head 24 agreed to.

Head 25 - Ministry of Youth and Sports

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(10) – Upgrade of Youth Training Centres (\$279,953). I believe that this would be for upgrade of existing youth training centres. I would like to take up the issue of the youth training centre in Yavitu, Naceva, Kadavu, for which

Government is currently paying a lease but it is not being utilized.

I would recommend and perhaps, the honourable Minister might look into how this facility that has been there for many years and provide a lot of training for the youth of Kadavu and the people from Vitilevu can be fixed and be reused again.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- So, he is just offering his suggestion there. There is no need for reply.

HON. J. USAMATE.- No, I thought he might have some plans.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I did not get that in the question that you raised.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, the fund that is allocated is actually for for upgrade of the facility in Yavitu, Kadavu.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, honourable Usamate has already asked the question.

HON. N. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, along the same line from honourable Usamate, I hope the Savusavu Centre is also included in this one?

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Yes, we have four youth training centres around Fiji, that is, Naleba, Naqere in Savusavu, Yavitu and Nasau. We will be looking at those that need to be restored, that is including Naqere in Savusavu as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, could we just hold back for a while. He has not finished his line of question. Honourable Tuinaceva, have you finished your question before the Minister replied.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- He has already explained, Sir.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, Programme 1-2(5) – Rations for Course Participants (\$124,000). I see there is a huge increase in this allocation compared to previous year, what is the reason for that?

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Mr. Chairman, the request for additional funds is to bring the average meal cost to, at least, \$1 per meal. At the moment, we are paying less than that for each students, that is why the increase.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, a supplementary question. It may have change now but the normal practise is because we are enrolling these participants free of charge. So, one of the requirement is that they should do their own gardening, plant cassava and all those things, so has that stopped now?

HON. J. SAUKURU.- It is still there.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Mr. Chairman, I have a motion. I move:

That Head 25-2-1(5) – Sports Equipment (\$20,000) be increased by \$80,000.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- I second the motion, Sir.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Mr. Chairman, to cater for the increase in sports interest amongst our youth and the increase in the registration of new youth clubs and sports clubs in the new financial year, the request for sports equipment by these youth will also increase.

I understand Fiji National Sports Commission gives out sports equipment as well, but it is not enough. Considering the new proposed VAT rate, \$20,000 might be just the price of two full sets of gym equipment and other sports accessories.

Mr. Chairman, it is very important to provide access to sports equipment to young people across Fiji. This will help them in their training and also boost the development of sports in these divisions. Therefore, I move that:

The allocation for the Sports Equipment under Head 25, Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG – 5 be increased by \$80,000 which is \$20,000 each for the Divisions – Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern Central Division.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Mr. Chairman, before I move second motion, I need clarification from the honourable Minister with regards to the allocation of \$5 million towards the overseas sporting tours on Head 25-2-1(6), whether this comes under Overseas Sporting Tours – the participation of youth and the athletes in the Pacific Games?

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Mr. Chairman, the funding allocated will support the following National Sports Organisations' sports events: Athletics (\$56,970); Bowls (\$76,251); Rugby (\$1.7 million); Cricket (\$143,000); Deaf Sports (\$95,000); Rugby League (\$560,000); Chess (\$50,000); Archery (\$97,552); Tennis (\$7,000); Surfing (\$90,000); Badminton (\$16,150); Outrigger Canoeing (\$43,430); AFL (\$321,042); FABA (\$62,345); Swimming (\$68,000); Hockey (\$240,000); Basketball (\$73,600); Yachting (\$263,235); Karate (\$49,720); Paralympics (\$131,500); FASANOC (\$1.3 v games preparation); Weightlifting (241,550); Gymnastics (\$251,410); Baseball (\$30,000); Taekwondo (\$5,390); Judo (\$45,000); Table tennis (\$75,000); Drugfree Sport Fiji (\$14,500); Fiji Triathlon (\$26,033); and Touch (\$472,325).

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Do you still want to continue with your motion?

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- I will withdraw that motion, but I have another motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Withdrawing this, then you have another one here. This is to do with the same SEG? Can you introduce your motion now.

HON. A. N. TUICOLO.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I move:

That Head 25-2-1(6) -Fiji Sports Council (\$670,000) be increased by \$330,000.

HON. S. KUMAR.- I second the motion.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Fiji Sports Council was established to foster and promote the development of sports and associate recreational activities in Fiji. As we all understand that most of our unemployed youth access these facilities on a daily basis. Therefore, the operational cost would be high as well. I understand they operate at a loss daily but providing service to the public and to

our youth. Instead of just providing sports facilities, they are helping Fijians in combating NCD-related disease.

Therefore, I move that we increase that allocation by \$330,000.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The Parliament will now vote on Head 25 – Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Question put.

Head 25 agreed to.

Head 26 – Higher Education Institutions:

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 1-1?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Sir, I am just taking time to write a motion. Is it alright if I can explain or I write it?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No , you just explain. We have done that before.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I apologise, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I did caution honourable Members on that yesterday.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I note that, Sir. If I run out of time to write a motion, I will just explain what I think needs to be done, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Sir, the motion, if it were to be allowed would have been to increase the allocation for the Fiji National University by \$1 million and to reduce the amount by the Pacific Polytech by \$1 million.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, that is because the Fiji National University has a long record of doing technical training. It has the facilities, it has the expertise. Organisations like Pacific Polytech, while I am very familiar with its principles and have worked with them before, a lot of them I admire, we have worked together, but it does not have those facilities. It does not have the kind of people that would be able to deliver the work that we need. So I believe that the best usage of this \$1 million right now is with the National Training Productivity Centre which has its training facilities all around Fiji. I think this is very important.

If you are talking about the importance of TVET training, you need to go with an institute that has a proven capability and competence to do it and that is the NTPC at the Fiji National University. So, if I had been given leave to write a motion that, Sir, would have been my motion.

Thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to express my views.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- He is just expressing his views here.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes, but I want to respond to his views, Mr. Chairman, because he has made reference.

The Fiji National University (FNU) is an important institution. The funding allocation, and honourable Minister for Education can add to this, is determined by the Fiji Higher Education Commission. Institutions are recognised and registered by Government through the Fiji Higher Education Commission.

The issue of technical education right now is a serious one because the Technical Colleges that were set up was a major disaster. We ended up wasting close to about more than \$25 million as of today. Those Technical Colleges were set up by the previous Government. It did not work, transferred to FNU, Mr. Chairman, ...

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- That is not the motion.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, no, I am trying to explain to what he said.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- They need to hear it because he said something which needs a response.

(Hon. J. Usamate interjects)

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- It's not a motion.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I am trying to respond to your statement. So, FNU was a disaster in terms of managing those technical colleges because they were not supported with any money. All the Colleges, Sir, were ruined, dilapidated shut down, thousands of students were left unattended, people lost their jobs and equipment deteriorated.

This group, Pacific Polytech, was registered and recognised in 2021. Under them, they tried to rescue and this Government has recognised that there are a number of players. If you go by his argument, he might tomorrow say, "close the university", which they are trying to do at USP.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- That is the logic.

So different institution, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we cannot just rely on one institution. We have a serious shortage. Employers are complaining, everyone wants immediate training, competency-based training and this is a Government which has handled that situation, this is not going to solve all the problems but the allocations to these institutions is not determined by the Ministry of Finance, nor determined by the Ministry of Education. It goes through proper vetting, process by the Fiji Higher Education Commission and that is how the Higher Education Institutions have been allocated this funding, including all the universities and institutions.

The Sangam Institute of Technology, we increased their budget by \$500,000 because they are giving an undertaking that they will take in more nursing students because we have a great shortage. So that is the situation with TVET and higher education training.

What you are saying honourable Usamate - coordination, integration, I agree, but right now, you cannot leave it to one institution, the more the merrier. Once, we are able to reassess this and have a handle on the human resource development strategy, plans, gaps, then we can rationalise this. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. J. USAMATE.- If I could be allowed to respond to that?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes, you can.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I just want to point out the fallacies in that argument.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Sir, can I talk on the motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- There is no motion. He was just expressing his views.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Yes, but I want to respond to what honourable Professor Prasad has just said.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.K. BALA.- No, no, just a matter of clarification, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Alright, unless your rise on the Point of Clarification.

HON. P.K. BALA.- A clarification, Mr. Chairman. Honourable Professor Prasad has just rubbished all the programmes that FijiFirst Government did, that is nothing new. But the institution that they are providing funding to - Pacific Polytech, the initial \$1.26 million that was given which is not reflected in this Budget, from that money that institution went and paid six months rental where there was no enrolment. What sort of reputation are you talking about in this institution?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Qualification.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Wastage of taxpayers money. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I think he is making defamatory statement.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Move on, move on!

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I have a motion here from honourable Ketan Lal. Would you like to introduce it?

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, before I move on my motion, can I ask a question to the honourable Minister for Education?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I thank the honourable Minister for Finance by saying that FNU is a very important institution. Can the honourable Minister for Education advise us how many programmes are approved by this new Pacific Polytech? I understand they were registered last December. Are their lecturers qualified? Has the Ministry done some assessment on them?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. K.K. LAL.- *Areh*, please, please.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Do not lie!

HON. K.K. LAL.- What am I lying about, I am asking a question.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, the assessment was done by the Fiji Higher Education Commission. They gave the registration on 30th November, 2022.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- There were eight programmes listed to be given by PPL under three Campuses – Nausori Campus, Tagitagi Campus and Labasa Campus. That was the basis of their approval.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, may I ask a follow up question?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Honourable Minister, could you also advise as to what are those specific programmes that this Polytech will be doing and is there a repetition of programmes which are already done by FNU, UniFiji, USP or any other tertiary institutions that are there? Is there any duplication, could you advise please?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- There is no duplication.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That Head 26-1-1(6) - Fiji National University (\$41,456,429) be increased by another \$5 million.

HON. A. BIA.- I beg to second the motion.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, as highlighted by the honourable Minister of Finance that the institution is very important and since it has been our one of the successes of FijiFirst and many students have graduated from that University and are working. They are workforce for the country, we need to provide more support for our national University. They are the pride of the Pacific and our nation.

At the same time, Mr. Chairman, our students and our University need the support with capital projects, hostels and also new lecture theatres all around the country, especially our Western Division, Northern Division and the Central Division.

At the same time we need to get more lecturers, we need to increase their wages and allowances who are working very hard for our students, at the same time, more and more support for our vulnerable students.

I understand, this Government has removed the TELS debt and converted into work bond, but we need more sporting facilities for our students. I understand the previous Government built a sporting gym at the Nasinu Campus. We need a sporting gym and multipurpose court in Labasa and also in the Western Division, Lautoka especially. That is the motion I have on the table.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. H. CHAND.- I would like to ask the honourable Minister if Pacific Polytech has been given the assets of the schools where teaching were discontinued? If yes, what is the basis of doing this rather than following an open tender process?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, that process is still work in progress.

HON. H. CHAND.- I think in some schools teaching has already begun.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- It is still work in progress, the transfer of assets.

HON. H. CHAND.- Are you sure?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- He is the Minister.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- You are asking me the question?

HON. H. CHAND.- Are you sure, Sir?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Are you content with that reply?

HON. H. CHAND.- No, I am just asking if he is sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The transferring of the assets is in progress.

HON. H. CHAND.- Thank you.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, just a supplementary question to the previous question, and then I have one new question. For Pacific Polytech, I would also like to know about the assets. The assets were bought by Government and the programmes are all advertised. How did the Ministry decide to give \$1 million when they did not have the assets? Where are they going to conduct all these training?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, just to answer the honourable Member, they had been conducting their programmes since they were registered in 2022. They were carrying out some of their programmes even without this. Because of the need to produce more qualified trade skills and the programmes that they carry out and the current labour skill shortages, the programmes they offer are competency-based training as compared to FNU trade certificate training. So these are short term programmes that will be needed to fill up the job market.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you honourable Minister for your explanation. But quality matters, therefore, any training programme without proper equipment, et cetera, can be disastrous. I will leave it to that, but I will move on to the next question.

My next question is on Head 26-1-1(6), we note that FNU's budget is reduced by \$2 million, is there any reason for that?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The FNU budget of \$41 million is to cater for the operational grant payment which includes operational expenses as per their request. There is another FNU-related grant – FNU Grant - Monash University (\$2,000,000).

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, even if you add Monash and operational grant it comes to \$41.4 million as compared to \$45 million given the previous year. I just wanted to understand what could be the reason there is a reduction.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The actual utilisation for last year's allocation was only 94 percent that is being utilized by FNU.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, on Programme 1-1(6) – Grant for Fulton College. Can I just ask the honourable Minister whether training is still ongoing at Fulton College? A supplementary question to that, if I may, a lot of trainings are done at Nadave especially for the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Culture, Heritage and Arts, if Nadave is also considered under the Higher Education Institution Grant?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, Fulton College \$103,000 was allocated last year. That was all fully utilized so we increased the allocation this year to \$159,598 just to cater for Operational Grant for the institution. For Nadave, it is not listed under Head 26, it is listed in the iTaukei Affairs.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister, the funds that the Fiji Government gives to various institutions, we always want to make sure that because it is taxpayer's funds that it is used in the purpose that it is meant for. And that when those funds are dispersed, they are used according to the dictates of good governance. Given the issues that we have had with the University of the South Pacific in the way that the funds were used there and the reports that we raise, and the fact that these grants have been given back, are you adequately satisfied that the governance issues that we are very worried about, the way those funds were used in the University of the South Pacific have been used in the correct manner? What you are doing here, you are giving \$50 million to the University of the South Pacific with less money to our own Fiji National University?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, the normal allocation is \$30 million, the other \$20 million is for outstanding payment that is due.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Can I just add?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- What honourable Usamate?

HON. J. USAMATE.- I was asking the honourable Minister, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You do not want this?

HON. J. USAMATE.- No, it is okay.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- He does not want to hear what I was going to say, that is his trouble.

HON. S.R. TURAGA.- Tell him, tell him.

HON. J. USAMATE.- That is clear enough.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I just wanted to say one thing that in the Council, the Fiji Government in the next council is going to ask the University Council to release the independent video BDO Report on the University.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have presented two motions to the floor. The first one is an increase of \$2 million to University of Fiji under Head 26-1-1, currently they are getting \$2,804,774. I would like an increase of \$2 million.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. K.K. LAL.- University of Fiji is also one of our very important local universities and they have two campuses, one in the Western Division and one in the Central Division. I think they have opened a new one as well, thanks to the previous government and also the University of Fiji administration.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is important that we need to support our students who are studying in the Western Division who are also vulnerable, at the same time the University needs to create more programmes for students instead of giving to new tertiary institutions like Polytech. We need to support our local universities like University of Fiji and I think by increasing \$2 million, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we can take away the million dollar from Polytech and give it to our local university.

We will be helping them by creating or giving them opportunities for more capital projects and providing the students with better classroom facilities, good lecturers can come in with a good pay from overseas especially the doctors who are studying in the Human College. Mr. Chairman, that is the reason why I put a motion for a \$2 million increase for University of Fiji.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 26-1-1(6) to be increased by another \$2 million with respect to the University of Fiji grant.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Ketan Lal your second motion.

HON. K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to move a motion to have a \$100,000 increase for the following tertiary institutions or higher education institutions under Head 26-1-1 and these are:

- 1) Corpus Christi Teachers College;
- 2) Fulton College
- 3) Montfort Technical Institute;
- 4) Montfort Boys Town;
- 5) Sangam Institute of Technology; and
- 6) Vivekananda Technical Centre.

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, thank you for the opportunity again, as I have been saying on and on these are our very local higher education institutions and it is important that we support them more and more. For Corpus Christi, I met previously with a lot of students from Corpus

Christi, Fulton College, Montfort Technical Institute and these student leaders have expressed the need for more facilities for their students and by increasing these grants allocation to them, they will be able to create more and more students related or extra curriculum activities or facilities.

It is important that our Government continues to support these institutions, not only with the grants that are available here but by the increase of the \$100,000 each. At the same time some of these colleges are also providing technical vocational education rather than giving Pacific Polytechnic Limited \$1 million, we can give to these local higher education institutes and help them grow more rather than giving it to these new institutions.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, at the same will be allowing our local students to engage more with our current higher high education instit. That is why , Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have requested the motion to have \$100,000 allocated to each of these named institutions - not USP and Pacific Polytechnic but the ones that I have mentioned.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I will now put this to vote on Head 26, to be increased by about \$100,000 each for five institutions and that is for Programme 1-1(6).

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

Question put.

Head 26 agreed to.

Head 30 – Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(10) - Agriculture Marketing Authority. Last year they had a grant of \$1.5 million and this year they have \$3 million. Can the honourable Minister provide some update with regards to the capital works that is required with this money allocated?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Chairman, just to let the Committee know that the honourable Assistant Minister will also be helping me in answering to the queries.

To answer that question, you are fully aware that the facility under which AMA is housed right now in Nausori is pretty old, but they own the facility. These funds will be used for the renovation of their property to fulfil the export requirements.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank honourable Minister for the clarification. Also in regard to Programme 1-1(6) - Navuso Agriculture Technical Institute, the allocation is of \$1.1 million, an increase from last year's allocation. Can the honourable Minister also provide some clarification on this, please?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Chairman, Navuso Agriculture School is expanding every year which is good for the agriculture sector, because one of the worries right now is replacement farmers. We have a lot of our young people who are leaving our shores under these National Employment Scheme to Australia and New Zealand, but what we are trying to do is to train the young farmers through both Navuso Agriculture Technical Institute and Tutu Training Institute in Taveuni.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(6). To the honourable Minister, could he clarify on the International Fund for Agricultural Development, they have \$100,000 and Food and Agriculture Organisation contribution have a \$60,000 allocation. Could the honourable Minister just clarify on what are the initiatives of these training programme and what do they have?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- These are purely subscription fees for our membership of this UN organisation.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman at the Programme 1-2(10), first we do appreciate the allocation given to assist commercial farmers to raise production to the next level. We have an allocation of \$500,000 on Commercial Farmers Equity Package and then \$2 million under Commercial Agriculture Development Programme and I have also noted, maybe this is the question to the honourable Minister. Under Head 50-7(10), there is another \$200,000 allocation on Commercial Agriculture Incentive.

We would really love to know the demarcation in these allocations and perhaps my question as well is, why is that \$200,000 allocation listed under Head 50(10), item 7 on Commercial Agriculture Incentive cannot be just included to Programme 1-2(30).

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Maybe the honourable Minister of Finance can answer your question, Mr. Chairman.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- That is an additional allocation in Head 50 for farmers who may be outside of the normal scheme that the Ministry of Agriculture has, so that is an additional allocation, but it is under Head 50 and will be based on what the Ministry of Agriculture comes up with as a new request. There are always new areas that farmers want to explore, so that is the possibility.

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- It is not a new thing, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No, it is not a new thing.

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- During the previous budgets, even the Goat Programme used to appear in Head 50 under your administration.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- I have a lot of questions but we will go ahead.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We thank you for that.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-2(7) - Public Consultation on Revision of Agriculture Laws. Just a clarification from the honourable Minister, on what scope is that agriculture law is?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Chairman, the Ministry for Agriculture has some very archaic laws. The oldest one is from 1900, so we are making attempts to review them. There has been some suggestions to have just a generic law for all of agriculture, but some are also of the view that that is impossible given the disciplines that appear within the agriculture sector. That is the review of those archaic laws.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, I have a query. Honourable Minister, earlier on you mentioned something about organic. I seem to be searching high and low with respect to anything in there that is organic and the only thing I can find is with respect to organic fertiliser. But if I could just give some background, Mr. Chairman, Fiji has a phenomenal potential with respect to organic.

This is why we had developed Fijian Organic labelling. There was work going on with respect to certification that needed to be done by the Ministry so that we could use that labelling and our products could enter certain markets whether it was the USA or Australia.

Without that certification, we really have to rely on PoetCom and other people who will actually certify. It becomes a difficult exercise. Organic for those that do not know our organic fruits and veggies are actually very high in demand. So how far have we gone with respect to it and I do not see any allocation there. Is there a specific allocation or have you put it under somewhere else to get that certification or become the certifying authority for our Fijian Organic label to carry it.

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- The organic labelling, we are still working with PoetCom on developing our own organic label. But what I had announced during the Budget is we are declaring research station as an organic research station which is Naduruloulou (on the banks of the Rewa River). We want to say how serious we are with regards to our approach in developing organic agriculture products.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, supplementary question. How far are we off getting that organic certification? I understand we are already exporting turmeric and ginger but just getting the organic certification out of someone else. One of the reasons why we started the Fijian Organic labelling was, it is a fantastic opportunity for all of us.

HON. V.T.T. K. RAYALU.- Yes, I agree.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Is it a long way off?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- No, it is not.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Sir.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Just for the information of the honourable Member, Mr. Chairman, there is \$300,000 allocated under Crop Research for organic crop development.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Sir, I think it has already been answered.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you, Programme 2-1(8) - Maintenance of Existing Rural Offices and Staff Quarters has been given \$1 million. Can the honourable Minister provide some background information on the number of existing rural offices and staff quarters that he is going to attend to?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Thank you, honourable Member. Mr. Chairman, I had made this known during my maiden speech where I had mentioned that our officers live under substandard housing conditions. The effort to improve the living quarters and the office is a continuous one. We are happy that we have been given this \$1 million allocation because we already have plans to renovate quarters in Koronivia Research Station, Vunidawa Agriculture Station, Lomaivuna Agriculture Station, Babavoce Agriculture Station and also the offices in Lakena and the maintenance of the Lakena Warehouse, fencing in Nayavu and the Naqesa Quarters. These will be the quarters and offices that we will be maintaining, some of them will be full renovation.

Perhaps it will be good for you to travel to some of the stations that we have already completed just to see the standard of quarters that we now have for our officers. What we want is, when we send our officers to the rural stations, it is for them to feel at home there and not run away after their

first day of posting. When we were posted to Wainigata, the first two weeks, two ran away and I was left on my own in that station.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We have a motion by the honourable Leader of the Opposition. Would you care to introduce your motion?

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, on Programme 2-2(10), I did include this in my contribution to the Budget debate on SEG 10 – Machinery Outsourcing. I know that it has been significantly decreased from the amount allocated last year. The honourable Minister has clarified that it was because of the tender process that the allocation was not utilised and that is why it was part of the school assistance. My motion, Mr. Chairman, is if you are not able to take it up to the \$6 million that was allocated last year, I am just suggesting an increase of \$1 million to that allocation.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Sorry, I have touched much on it but just to say, Mr. Chairman, that there is allocation on Farm Mechanisation and Procurement of small machines. However, machinery outsourcing is a different allocation altogether because most farmers without machines who cannot access the farm mechanisation and procurement of small machines because of the one-third and two-thirds contribution, they usually submit their request with the Ministry because the Ministry still provides the cheapest rate.

I am not sure whether that has been revised upwards but agriculture machines used to be \$28 an hour. This is why this outsourcing allocation was given so that if the agriculture machines are not available in the stations, they will subsidise the rate provided by the local farmers who have machines or the operators so that they can have access to this. It is important for agriculture particularly because of timings. We are approaching the ginger season now. If they are in the queue and without the availability of machines from agriculture, then they will be in the queue for a long while. This is why I have asked for this \$1 million increase in this allocation, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I now will put this to the vote and that is to do with Head 30 to be increased by \$1 million in Programme 2-2(10) with the respect to Machinery Outsourcing.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-2(10) - Land Clearing. We have \$0.5 million allocated. I know there is a lot of demand for land clearing, especially from our rural communities and villages. I would just like to request the honourable Minister to provide some information and tell us if that \$500,000 allocation is enough for that?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Chairman, there has been no change from the last financial year's allocation. So, I think we are content with the amount.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-2(10) - Fertiliser and Weedicide Subsidy (*dalo*, ginger, rice, cassava); \$1 million is allocated to this. I would like to convey to the honourable Minister that when you ask the health of a nation you are basically asking how healthy or fertile the soil of that nation is because the state of what we have is basically what we consume and the cultivation of crops. We make it easy to use chemicals in our cultivation, we would seriously have future health issues and that burdens the health care sector. Can the honourable Minister clarify that, if we are really to move towards organic because organic is sold very easily. Growing is one

aspect but you can grow in the way you store it with preservatives, again we add a lot of chemicals in our food and that is what we consume. If the honourable Minister can clarify this allocation and if we are turning away or turning to organic? Do you want to turn to organic or do you want to turn to an industrial-based and chemical-based farming sector and grow with these things?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Chairman, the alternative to chemical fertiliser is organic fertiliser, and there are organic fertilisers around, which the Ministry is encouraging farmers to use. However, we have to look at the cost side of producing these commodities. This project has come because of the cry of farmers on the high cost of inputs. It is a welcomed gesture by the Government to offer them a subsidy which will in turn have some relief in terms of the cost and can contribute to an increase in their profits. So, I guess with regards to the issue that the honourable Member is raising, the Ministry of Agriculture is working on the organic side of treatment with regards to weedicides, fertiliser and other inputs.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, I just need some help from the honourable Minister to explain a bit on these farming programme allocations, just some ups and downs. I have noted from the book that there is an increase in the allocation given to *dalo*, but with ginger and *yaqona*, it is still like the same from last year, and there is a drop on rice. Can I ask the honourable Minister to explain how he arrived at that decision? Ginger is really going up, we are getting into the season now but still the same kind of allocation has been given and the same with *yaqona*?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Minister, honourable Tuinaceva is asking for your help.

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Chairman, for *dalo* there is an increase of \$250,000 and for *yaqona* and ginger it is the same from last year, \$400,000. Some of these crops have become fully commercial and I think it is best left to the market forces to dictate how the commodities should be developed. *Dalo* for example, has been commercial for some time, same as with *yaqona* and ginger. I think it is best left to the market forces to dictate what happens to the change in the commodity. As for the funds that are given by the Government, really the funds are to complement those of our farmers who are mainly subsistence level. That would be the answer to the question.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, just a supplementary. The farming programme for ginger, during the earlier debate when we asked the question about the ginger market, I know there were talks going on seeking the intervention of the honourable Prime Minister and some talks where you were going to get the market from China. What is the progress on that?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- We have talked with the Australians. They came to my office after I raised it in Parliament. There are other forces at play when it comes to that level of politics. With China, getting fresh ginger across is quite tough, because of China's strict market conditions and the tariff. For us, you might notice, I have mentioned during my budget speech that I want to involve the private sector as much as possible. So, we are going to pump funds into agro-processing because that will have a direct effect on production. If one or two of the ginger processors in Fiji can take an extra 1,000 tonne, I think you will be laughing all your way to the bank.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, just a final one. Honourable Minister, the same with *yaqona* market. We discussed this because I was still touching on these farming programmes. What about the *yaqona* market, is it the same or are we getting markets too for *yaqona*?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- The *yaqona* market is the same like I explained. It has developed so much that the market forces are at play. Right now, the low prices of *yaqona* offered to farmers is because those *yaqona* growing areas that suffered during *TC Winston* are now back. Big producers like Koro, Taveuni, Coast of Cakaudrove, the honourable Leader of the Opposition in Saqani they

are all producing now, even Kadavu have recovered. So, it is like there is an oversupply of *yaqona* in the market which has resulted in the low price.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- One question coming from the farmers is about these middlemen who are taking all the *yaqona* and selling them at higher price. What is that?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Both come from *yasayasa*.

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, the answer to the honourable Member's query on *yaqona*, I had announced that one of the things will do is to buy *yaqona* pounding machines because that will allow *yaqona* farmers' cooperatives themselves to organise their own markets which is, they will get a much better price than just selling the raw product.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, Programme 2-2(1) on the Fertiliser and Weedicide Subsidy (a new programme). How will you roll out the programme because many will be listening in, will it be first come first served basis, what criteria when they would like to apply straight after the Budget is announced.

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- There are options available to us. We could just prepare a tender and suppliers can tender, we will give them the conditions and the kind of chemicals that they need to supply. That answers honourable Member's query on the organic part. We can be strict on what they order and what they should not order and then we roll it out, it is outsourcing. However, we could also just do it ourselves, but whether we have the storage, this is \$1 million worth. So, it would be a better option to outsource it.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, SEG 8 – Women in Agriculture Programme has been allocated \$300,000. To the honourable Minister and few other Ministers who are very passionate about the initiative in the Ministry, it is more of a suggestion and less or a question that we need to invest in the women of this country. The best way to do it, of course, is through agricultural programmes and trainings.

If this programme can coordinate with the Ministry for Women and Ministry of Trade because what I have learnt is, you can be a good farmer but you should be able to sell it and enter the market. So, if the honourable Minister can highlight more on the plans for the Women in Agriculture Training Programme and I highly suggest if it can coordinate with the Ministry for Women and Ministry for Trade so we can really create and cultivate locally led Fijians using Fijian resources and selling it globally and there is prosperity on that. But what other plans, if you can highlight on that?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- The two programmes - floriculture, which is one of them are both implemented together with the Ministry for Women. Even the Ministry for Regional is also involved in some way. That has been the norm, just to answer your question but you are correct. We would like more women involvement in the commercial part of things. Floriculture is a good one.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Chairman, if I can add on to what the honourable Minister for Agriculture had just mentioned. The Ministry of Agriculture has a policy for women in agriculture and as being mentioned, we coordinate work with other ministries and it involves a lot of activities for women in agriculture, we have a lot of respect for them.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Just to add a bit to that, the Assistant Minister for Women is very much right here and she is a great example of doing this. That is all I want to add from the Chair.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I just have quick question on Programme 2-

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I just have quick question on Programme 2-3(7) - Demonstration Farm and Regional Training Centre. Is Indonesia going to fund this in Fiji? Where will it be?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Chairman, it will be in Doboilevu because Doboilevu is an intermediate zone.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Head 30-3-1, I must apologise I have two here regarding Activity 1. The first one is from honourable Ketan Lal and the other one is honourable Viliame Naupoto.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I withdraw my motion.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I move that Head 30-3-1(7) be increased by \$50,000 with respect to Animal Welfare Programme - SPCA Partnership.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Sir, I second the motion.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- I know that agriculture, the two men are sitting to my left, but I am focusing to that corner of the other side of the House if the honourable Minister for Infrastructure can move this way a little bit. I know the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Deputy Prime Ministers and honourable Lenora is sitting at the back. This is the easiest motion that you can say no to because the beneficiary of this motion will never vote for you, never vote for anyone anyway. These are animals. Therefore, I am not appealing to your mind, I know your mind is full of dollar signs now. I appeal a little bit lower to your heart in this motion.

I talked about it yesterday during my response to the Budget. I would like to think that perhaps we had set a record in this Parliament, talking about animal welfare in one of the biggest events for Parliament which is the Budget. I thanked the Government yesterday for the provision of \$130,000 that you have given to SPCA. For those of you who have not been to SPCA, it is tucked away in Walu Bay in the industrial zone.

The area that they are operating in is so small compared to the number, so they cannot hold animals as shelter for the strays that are brought in. I know that the Ministry of Agriculture, if they trap dogs, they take them there, but they are so full that sometimes they will just neuter and then release them back. That is a big way towards controlling the strays and making sure that our attitude towards these animals are not as cruel as they are. They reproduce in a faster way, so it is always a catch up game.

I am asking that it be increased to \$50,000 and again I am looking at the corner there, the \$10,000 from someone's travel. I know that there is a Stray Animal Control (I am not too sure) in a later programme under Livestock, but if we increased what they do for SPCA is that they help out in the urban areas where they look after our animals that we are so cruel to. You see them walking around, no skin, injured, some with hot water burns, that extra \$50,000 goes a long way.

My only interest in SPCA is that me and my family, the little things that we can do, we help and take it down; very miniscule compared to those that also support that place. I am appealing to you for this increase for SPCA.

If you look at the minutes of our meeting from yesterday, there are two in there that says "agreed to unanimously". We can do this for our animals. It is only \$50,000 but I assure you Mr. Chairman that this goes a long way towards shaping the character of our society to be kinder to animals, at least we are not talking about killing them and selling them and money. This is for us not

to be too cruel to our animals.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will now put this to the vote that Head 30 to be increased by \$50,000 in Programme 3-1(7) with respect to Animal Welfare Programme and the SPCA partnership.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. J. USAMATE.-Mr. Chairman, question to the Minister of Agriculture. In Programme 3-2(8) we have a fund for Beef Extension Programme of \$170,000. In relation to this, is on the very next Programme 3-3(8), there is another \$1 million for Beef Breeding Programme. I have been very excited to read the developments that are taking place in agriculture for the new brands, breeds of beef that they are bringing through the Wagyu, Senepol and one of these might be the beef to the Droughtmaster.

I noticed that there is big money there in millions of dollars. We have been talking about this for a long time, but the money for the extension is only \$170,000. Can the Minister just highlight how fast the passing on of these breeds into the market, so we can begin to see their impact? Because I see far more money is there in the Breeding Programme rather than the Extension Programme. If you can just highlight how well these breeds are going out into the market for the beef sector.

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- I will let the honourable Assistant Minister handle that question.

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Chairman, let me elaborate on the two different programmes that we have. Beef Extension Programme is done outside for beef farmers whereas the actual Beef Breeding Programme is concentrated at research stations where infrastructure is required. We have some infrastructure for the Beef and Livestock Improvement Programmes. They are very highly scientific procedures that we will be following and it requires infrastructure that we do not have at the moment. That is why we have a lot of funding in that area and we will be doing all breeding and research programmes on research stations.

Before we provide farmers with improved breeds, they go through breeding and it has to be tried in our local situation. No matter how good the breed will be from outside countries, it has to go through other research to verify whether they can be distributed to farmers. Another is how they respond to climate, different feed and different management practises that we have and those have to go through a number of years of research. It has to be then crossed to local breeds because it takes time for the breeding cycles, normally it takes three years before the first drop calves will then reproduce and distributed to farmers. It takes long for farmers to realise the new breeds that has been introduced. The fastest could be after 15 years but we can start to have some crosses well within 10 years.

The last breeding programmes we have improved, genetics had been only in the last six years. We have had some that had crossed with our local breeds and had been evaluated with different management practises. Those are the ones that we can positively say that they can survive in our local conditions.

With the other programme, we assist farmers with infrastructural assistance in terms of farm sheds, fences on roadings, stock yards and other infrastructures in the farm. Why research is given a lot of funding is because we will have to be importing pure genetics and we will have to have specialised personnel to do the technologies for us.

With embryo transfer, because it has just been done in Fiji for the last years, we are still trying to train our officers to do embryo transfer, but at the moment we are also constructing facilities that we can keep embryos that can be used on farms. The actual set up will be expensive and it is going to take a number of years to complete the work.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Supplementary question. Thank you, Assistant Minister, for the explanation, so I get it from there that the Beef Extension Programme at the moment is more on fencing those sorts of materials whereas the new breeds moving out into the farms will probably take a few more years. Would that be correct?

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Yes.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Through you Mr. Chairman, on Programme 3-2(9) on Stray Animals Control Campaign. I would like to move a motion that the amount be increased from \$430,000 to \$1 million.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Chairman, I seconded the motion.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you, I know this is a real issue on the ground and the honourable Minister is also aware of this. Daily farmers are running to the Ministry of Agriculture Office or Police Stations trying to report on the damages done on their farms and the amount of money that is put in by the Ministry of Agriculture and the hard work put in by the farmers is gone to waste from the damages done by stray animals. We also see while travelling through King's Road, Queen's Road and all around Fiji what the motorists are also facing in regards to the issue of stray animals. These stray animal issue is not only in Viti Levu but in Vanua Levu and all our farmers are going through the same. So I urge that there should be an increase of \$570,000 to this.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I now put this to the vote. The motion has to do with Head 30 to be increased by \$570,000 that will take it up to \$1 million in Programme 3-2(9). This is to do with stray animals and the campaign about it.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I have a question and a motion is on the way. The question is to the honourable Minister for Agriculture and Waterways on Programme 5-1(8) - Drainage for Farmlands. Can the honourable Minister explain further and elaborate on this particular SEG.

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- SEG 8?

HON. K.K. LAL.- SEG 8 – Drainage for Farmlands (\$1.5 million).

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Chairman, there is an increase of \$1 million. The increase is to ensure adequate drainage works are undertaken on the farmlands in the following divisions:

- Central Division - \$500,000 for farms in Tailevu, Rewa, Naitasiri, Serua and Namosi;
- Western Division- \$500,000 for Sigatoka, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki; and
- Northern Division - \$500,000 in the whole of CBM.
- Total is \$1.5 million.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, can I have a supplementary question? The supplementary

question to the honourable Minister is, do this farmlands include cattle farming as well?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Include what?

HON. K.K. LAL.- Cattle farming like in Cakaudrove.

HON.V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Yes. Once the farmland is dry, it is really up to the farmer what he does whether he wants cattle on it or he wants to plan cassava.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You may introduce your motion?

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I move the motion on Head 30-5-1(8) for Coastal Erosion Protection Works. I would like to have another increase of \$1 million.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You may elaborate on your motion.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, our former Prime Minister was a climate change champion all around the world and Fiji has been affected. Our costal lines ...

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Are talking about him?

HON. K.K. LAL.- The Leader of the Opposition.

MR. CHAIRMAN- The champion?

HON. K.K. LAL.- Yes, our honourable Leader of the Opposition and also our former Prime Minister as well. Our country's name was there in COP23. Mr. Chairman, Fiji is affected with climate change, our coastal lines are being eroded and that is the reason I am requesting that another \$1 million is allocated for coastal erosion protection works especially for our upcoming towns and cities like Savusavu which is affected. We have some tourism projects coming up o Nawi Island so we need to beautify our coasts as well, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, in view of this motion, I want to put it to the vote and that is regarding Head 30 to be increased by another \$1 million in Programme 5-1(8), this is regarding Coastal Erosion Protection.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. R.R. SHARMA- Mr. Chairman, Programme 6-1(7) - Climate Smart Agriculture. Can the honourable Minister please provide some clarity on this and maybe the level of innovation and the projected implementation efforts?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Chairman, this project is on improving and retention of soil logging organic matter content – soil carbon, soil health, soil fertility and water management. It also includes agriculture drought management on degraded land through Climate Smart Agriculture. This involves replanting of trees in dry areas. As you know, Fiji is signatory to the three Rio Conventions - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Convention on Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Convention on Biological

Diversity (CBD). This programme works in collaboration with these organisations.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, a supplementary question please. Is there any level of innovation or any automated systems or any digitalised systems because it is climate smart. Basically, we are working within the parameters of certain things to get an outcome and output. So any level of technology?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- This project makes use of technology but I will have to get the information and then come back to you, honourable Member, through you, Mr. Chairman.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 30 – Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways.

Question put.

Head 30 agreed to.

Head 31- Ministry of Fisheries

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1, it is listed there as Aid-in Kind - Project on Pacific Islands Capacity Enhancement for Achieving SDG14 (Life Under Water). Can the honourable Minister elaborate on what sort of work is undertaken in the Ministry together with JICA?

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, please may I come back to you on that?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, I would just like to request that, the Standing Committee on Natural Resources had the opportunity of meeting with the fisheries sector. There were a lot of issues that were brought up there. I am just trying see the forums that are available to the Ministry to be able to talk to its stakeholders. We have a Fisheries Stakeholders Consultation of \$30,000 in Programme 1-2(7). I would just like to know exactly how this will be undertaken and where it will be undertaken? What sort of issues will be addressed in that stakeholders' consultation?

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, I think there is no change to cater for any promotional show and awareness activities done for fiscal reason.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Is it more of the Ministry showing what it does or it is about actual engagement with the various stakeholders in the fisheries sector which is a very important sector?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The honourable Member is right, it is for stakeholder consultation.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Programme 1-2(7) - Trade Shows. I need clarification on the Trade Show, how many Trade Shows are planned ahead, what are the investment returns of these Trade Shows and the evaluation done to determine the improvement if needed?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I think the discussion with the Ministry was based on the plans to develop some promotional activities and awareness in a number of areas, for example, beche-de-mar exports and production. Some high value products need that kind of exposure as well. So, Trade Shows includes some of those activities, so we have allocated a small amount to see what they do in

this financial year.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-2(6) - Annual Infofish Subscription. I know that we have been a member of Infofish for quite a number of years. Can the honourable Minister tell us what sort of benefits are we getting out of Infofish?

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, this provision is the payment for annual Infofish Subscription for Fiji. The Infofish International is an inter-governmental organisation for marketing information, technical advisory services for fisheries products in the Asian and Pacific Region. The Ministry benefits from this through provisions of fisheries market statistics and promotional programmes and through ongoing training and capacity building.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, that is exactly my question. It is all textbook explanation. The Infofish is based in Kuala Lumpur, and we have been a member for quite a number of years. Exactly in what areas, you have talked about marketing and technical assistance, what have we benefited from as a result of our membership?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The honourable Leader of the Opposition would know that some of these memberships subscriptions, I just want to add because this is the discussion, it is statistics. A lot of the statistics are not compiled domestically. So, if you want to look at national and regional statistics, these are databases that they create and they do it for Fiji as well and other Pacific countries. There is a benefit to being a member of this. As we are with all other organisations, you know that we have been paying this subscription for a while.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Would you like to make some comments, honourable Prime Minister?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Chairman, it is a useful organisation to be in. This week we have been talking about PAFCO workers being laid off because of the reduction in fish produced for PAFCO. When I asked whether we can increase our intake of purchase of fish, I was told, “we get the migratory species we offloaded in Fiji?” How do we increase it? Can we keep a track of those things? A lot of flak was fired against Fiji Water.

The amount of money they have put into Caltech and in space research as it includes monitoring the fish stocks of the world which we can benefit from. The improvement or increase in their commitment to Fiji agriculture, aquaculture and our marine industries will help us develop this keep us even ahead of the Kuala Lumpur organisation.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-1(7) – Inshore Compliance and Enforcement. We had the opportunity to visit fishing areas all around Fiji and if there is one thing that people are always complaining about is ensuring compliance inshore, not only inshore but offshore. You know there is a lot of illegal fishing that takes place, people’s *qoliqoli* are being exploited. We have set up systems of fish wardens, et cetera that sometimes do not seem to be working as well as we would like it to.

I would like to have an update from the honourable Minister on how well this inshore compliance and enforcement is going and if there are new measures that Minister of Fisheries is looking to bringing into being, perhaps working in partnership with communities to try to make sure that there is stronger compliance and enforcement of the usage of the *qoliqoli* areas that we have all around Fiji.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- *Iqo koya ira dau caka white bait tiko e loma ni noda iqoliqoli. Eso na kena i vakaraitaki ya.*

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The programme has two components – the Marine Stewardship Council (MCS) certification for the certification of fishing vessels and meeting international standards and to get a premium export market price. With the premium export market price, companies will however need to meet the eligibility criteria which includes Marine Stewardship Council (MSCS) certification in environment standard identifies sustainable fisheries, encourage good stewardship of fisheries resources. The programme will promote future health of tuna stock in the region and better price in a domestic fisheries sector.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I think that is offshore fisheries, but this is inshore compliance on Programme 2-1(7) – Inshore Compliance and Enforcement. Tuna is offshore.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- They come for their bait – white bait. That is the *qoliqoli* areas. How do you get rid of these people. The big fishing boats.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, we have just started with inshore fisheries legislation, started off with a new budget for this year, as you can see in the budget allocation. We are trying to work out and monitor these vessels coming into Fiji on engaging in illegal fishing in our shores.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, just one last supplementary question on this same issue.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Could I give the floor to honourable Semi Koroilavesau before I come back to you?

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I just want to help the Minister in clarifying those issues since he is quite recent introduction to the Ministry of Fisheries. Firstly, the inshore fish although headquartered in Malaysia, the annual meeting is held in Bangkok, Thailand. The benefits that Fiji gets out of it is very wide - marketing, resource protection and the various industries also include the technical experts that come into these conferences help with monitoring the various fishing sectors that is involved both in the Pacific and Asian region.

For inshore compliance, we have purchased inshore fishing protection vessels. One is based in Lautoka for the Western Division, one is in Labasa for the Northern Division then we have got Fisheries Wardens which we rope in to report to Fisheries and then Fisheries goes out and assists them in the protection of inshore fisheries.

Unfortunately, inshore is not well protected like offshore which is covered by the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Navy and also, we have got the monitoring section within the Ministry of Fisheries that have the same satellite equipment that attract every fishing vessel outside, around the EEZ for tuna industry. But inshore it is a development. The honourable Minister is right, it was developed about two years ago. There is more left to be done, New Zealand assisted us in providing us the legislative requirement to do the inshore fisheries but it is development in progress.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you for your intervention, honourable Semi Koroilavesau.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Supplementary, Sir. I think one of the useful thing that is being done in the past for the inshore fisheries compliance is the development of fish wardens. As we go to these villages, there is one constant complaint that they have, sometimes they are appointed but they do not have the boat et cetera, would that be included as part of strengthening of the inshore compliance of making sure that the fish wardens in the various *qoliqoli* have the equipment that allow them to carry out their job.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- The wardens boat that you had promised we are now funding through small grant.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, for offshore fisheries, this is one of the sectors that has been suffering greatly these past few years. Part of it is due to the change in migratory patterns of tuna and other fish but there are a lot of other challenges. In our meetings with them as part of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, they were looking for avenues, a lot of these companies if you go to Walu Bay the boats are actually anchored. Sometimes if they have ten boats, one will go and if they cannot find the fish then it comes back. So, they were looking for ways in which they can get access to finance and other support to sustain them. I am trying to look at this whether some of these programmes that you have here, I do not see any programmes under this particular programme to Activity 2 that might try to assist the revival of this sector.

I know it is dependent on migratory fish pattern and they are competing with companies that are subsidized by mother country. They are competing with all these, they have high freight cost to the places that they go to. So, they were telling us that they were talking to the Ministry of Fisheries to deal with financial institutions to give them some sort of assistance. I do not know where that could come under this particular programme, but with your permission, Mr. Chairman, if the honourable Minister might be able to update us on how well those discussions have been going with those offshore fisheries companies, Ministry and Fiji Development Bank, I think, to get them that assistance.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, discussions have been done with FDB regarding the issues raised by the honourable Member. Also with the tuna industry, in establishing a tuna hub in Fiji which will bring back those boats and also feeding our local factories like PAFCO. For the past couple of years, there was a levy given to the fishing industry which is US\$450 per tonne which drives them away from Fiji, so we are trying to get them back. We need to get the tuna hub to Fiji where they can prepare their boats, refuel and re-stock their boats before going back fishing. It is understandable that we have some old-aged boat anchored at the Suva harbor and we have been discussing with financial institutions to give them extra loans so as to repair or buy new boats.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, Programme 2-3(8) and probably I will link that too with the Naduruloulou Freshwater Research Centre on SEG 4. This is all linked to my previous question too involving inshore fisheries. This Fish Cage Culture Research Project is something that will also make significant improvements in our food and nutrition security and, of course, economic security as well. My simple question to the honourable Minister is, I assume that this is freshwater fish cage culture and perhaps my other question as well that I wanted to raise with the honourable Minister through you, Mr. Chairman is, just like animal health, nutrition is something that will significantly improve our aquaculture production in Fiji.

As I have alluded to already in this august Parliament, unfortunately when it comes to feed, the feed that is provided in Fiji is produced by livestock feed specialists namely Goodman Fielder and Pacific Feed. Perhaps if certain efforts can be also made on nutrition development for our fish farmers.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, we are working on feed research right now. We are using the same old feed protein which is 24 percent and we are looking for a binder and a floater. We have everything in Fiji, the minerals are available here but we have to get the binder from overseas.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, just a quick question to the honourable Minister, in Programme 2-3(8) is Pearl Oyster Research and Development Programme (\$378,000). I am just

wondering, when pearl started in Fiji, it was one of the well-known pearls in the world. Justin Hunter is well known around the world and therefore a lot of research and development into pearl oyster has been done, in my view, and that is why we have the Fiji pearl high up there in the world. I know too, honourable Minister, that we are trying to help our locals that those farms. I just have a query. Is there a special area that the research is in or you are just trying to help those local small scale pearl farmers to develop?

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, we have small subsistence pearl farms, but the problem has been the hurricanes which has been affecting the pearl industry for the last few years. The objective of the programme is to support the development of pearl farming through the identification of new sites, technical training, advisory support and expert community-based specifications collection. The focus is on research and culture oyster projects. Right now, these are the two main commodities; black pearls and oyster. We are concentrating on black pearls and we have sites identified and specifications collection have already started in Vanua Levu.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, thank you again honourable Minister for your responses. Just are few issues in relation to research. I think for research in the fisheries sector, the key is the Naduruloulou Freshwater Research. The other one that we have seen for brackish water has been Galoa Research Station. What I have noticed in this facility that it really needs a bit of upgrading, but I noticed in this Budget that we only have money for maintenance and operations.

The other one that I am wondering why it has not been covered here is Caboni. I think Caboni is the one that is excellent. In order for Caboni to be able to expand, it requires an infusion of capital to make sure they get more seawater into that facility and it is the one that stands out. The other research facility or hatchery that we really need to get going is the one that services Vanua Levu, which is Dreketi. I am just wondering, honourable Minister, do you also have plans to vamp up Galoa, to get Dreketi fully functional and to ensure also that Caboni, in partnership with Taiwan can be expanded so it can meet its full potential.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, now we are trying to improve those two hatcheries; Naduruloulou and Galoa. We want to extend the Galoa one into a research centre but not a production centre.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-6(8) on the On-going Construction of Multi Species Hatchery – Ra as elaborated by the honourable Minister in Caboni. Honourable Minister, what would be the timeline, when can this construction be completed in Caboni in Ra?

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, the Caboni is almost completed now. I think the last phase is going on with quarters to be constructed. We are on the last phase for Caboni now.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you honourable Minister. As you said the current phase in Caboni is almost coming to an end. I was trying to mention that the next phase that they need to go is to get more seawater into that facility, which means they need to dig under the road and get more seawater in, so that they can expand. I can understand that that it is probably not covered in this one - \$860,000. That infusion of water is not covered under this \$860,000. Would that be an additional programme in the future?

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, I will come back to you on that.

HON. J. USAMATE.- *Vinaka.*

Question put.

Head 31 agreed to.

Head 32 – Ministry of Forestry

HON. J. USAMATE.-Mr. Chairman, on Programme 2-2(8) on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD Plus) - \$832,000. Can the honourable Minister just explain exactly what that will cover and what it will deliver?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We still waiting for our royalty.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, through you, REDD+ is a world bank component. That allocation was mainly for readiness phase and emission reduction, Reduction Programme. In 2023-2024 financial year, the Ministry will focus on the full implementation of the Emission Reduction Programme of \$1.2 million with the completion of readiness phase. This allocation will fund the implementation of Emission Reduction Programme covering 20 Districts and nine Provinces.

Mr. Chairman, the breakdown of \$832,000 are:

- 1) Management and Emission Monitoring - \$170,000;
- 2) REDD+ Development - \$230,000;
- 3) Campaign Medium - \$150,000;
- 4) Safeguard FTRM - \$12,000;
- 5) Consultant Awareness Campaign - \$30, 000;
- 6) SFM \$50,000, CA Agro Forestry - \$30,000;
- 7) CA Repairing and Rehabilitation - \$50,000;
- 8) CA Livelihood - \$60,000;
- 9) Forests Protection - \$50,000;

Total of \$832,000.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-3(5), honourable Minister, there are two items there. The second one is Forestry Warden Support with \$50,000 allocation. I just want to ask as to how many Forestry Wardens are there? Who looks after the security at Colo-i-Suva Forest Park? There has been a lot of muggings that is happening in there, are they part of the Forest Wardens to look after the Forest Park in Colo-i-Suva and they provide the security as well? It is a two-part question.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, can I request honourable Naupoto to repeat the question, please.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Honourable Minister, Sir, I was asking about the Forest Warden. How many Forest Wardens are there? Because I see there is \$50,000 for their support (Forest Warden Support). Who looks after the security at Colo-i-Suva Forest Park, are they the Forest Wardens you are there or is there a special security arrangement? If you do not have the statistics there, honourable Minister, you can give it to me later.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, we have 17 Forest Wardens in Colo-i-Suva.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Total in Fiji the Forest Wardens?

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Honourable Member, it is only for Colo-i-Suva.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Aright. *Vinaka*, honourable Minister

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-7(10) - Commercial Maritime Pine Subsidy (\$1,400,000), at the moment, one of the most matured Pine Plantation in Fiji is on Lakeba. I am just wondering whether these includes the harvesting and value adding of products out of the Lakeba Pine.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, yes.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, while still on Maritime Pine, Mr. Chairman, Cicia, Gau and Kadavu. We know that Gau and Kadavu has already started. If the honourable Minister can provide an update on Cicia because I know that in Cicia. there was some dispute about it being declared an organic island. That was one of the delays on this programme in Cicia. So, I just wanted the clarification from the honourable Minister on how far this has progressed.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, we have a subsidy for Maritime Pine Harvesting that will be starting early, I think after this Budget announcement, which includes all maritime islands such as Kadavu, Cicia, Lakeba and Gau.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, honourable Minister on Programme 2-8(8) - Upgrade of Forest Parks (\$170,000), I know of the Colo-i-Suva Forest Park, can you just enlighten us on the other forest parks that are designated forests. I know Colo-i-Suva is one, what are the other ones?

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Mr. Chairman, the answer to the question is we have the particulars of the breakdown of the forest parks. We have forest park reserves, including Bouma in Taveuni. Mr. Chairman, can I come back with the information later on?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 32 – Ministry of Forestry.

Question put.

Head 32 agreed to.

Head 33 – Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources

HON. S.S. KIRPAL- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-1(8) – Groundwater Assessment and Development – Large Islands (\$2,500,000). Can the honourable Minister highlight which larger islands will be included in that allocation? How many households and communities will benefit from that allocation?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Small islands or large islands?

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Large islands.

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Chairman, larger islands are mainly Viti Levu, Vanua Levu and Taveuni. So these are groundwater assessment and developments in all those three islands, that deal largely with red zone areas, which are not accessible to the supply root of Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) or where there is specific requirement that comes from a particular community. In the last Budget, \$2 million was allocated and in this year's Budget, there is an increase of \$500,000

simply because we found that now we are working on backlog on a lot of requests from areas that are inaccessible to WAF services.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Honourable Minister for the large islands, would you already have a list of actual sites for assessments and the ones for development? I know for some, you will be doing assessments and developments.

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Chairman, in Viti Levu, there are nine and in Vanua Levu there are four for assessment. The ones that are ready are 13 in Viti Levu and five in Vanua Levu. I can provide you with the list of all these.

HON. J. USAMATE.- And for the small islands?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- And small islands as well.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Chairman, my apologies, I had raised my hand earlier. I just wanted to ask the honourable Minister on Programme 2-1(9) – Purchase of Research Vessel. The amount written there is \$560,000. Am not sure what type of vessel is this, perhaps this is an initial money to be used to build the vessel? Research vessels are quite costly. We had *Bulikula* which was later from the Marine Department which was later transferred to the Navy and renamed *HMFS Latui*. It is quite a substantial vessel. It does not cost \$560,000. I just want the clarification may be this is just the initial process to build the whole vessel?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Chairman, the allocation of \$560,000 is for the purchase of a research vessel that is probably not as huge as what you would have as a research vessel, probably the size as the ones the Police presently have. It is simply to facilitate geological research and to allow our staff to do coastal assessments.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 3-1(7) – Schedule A Rentals (\$174,858), I just need a clarification from the honourable Minister. I understand that all Schedule ‘A’ land have been transferred to iTLTB, so can the honourable Minister give some clarification of the rental which is \$174,858?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Chairman, this is the allocation that caters for the payment of premium fees and charges, that secures the Schedule A and B lands which are still leased by the State.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Mr. Chairman, I understand. That land is leased by the Lands Department?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Yes, the Lands Department.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- You are still leasing those lands from iTLTB?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Yes.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 3-2(8) – Upgrade of Geodetic Datum (\$175,033). I remembered you made a Ministerial Statement earlier on our progress into WGS 84 which is the World Geodetic System. Can the honourable Minister just enlighten us on the progress of that transition with the new one - WGS 84?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Chairman, I think with the eight core stations that had been built, the project pretty much has been fulfilled. So, it is now just making sure that maintenance is provided for. The hardware updates are also performed at real time. There is quite a number of upgrading that needs to be done so that our inflow is commensurate with the inflow that we output to our stakeholders, but it is just a running cost on how we complete the entire project.

HON. F.S. KOYA.-Honourable Minister, just some clarification, again, under the Geospatial Information Management in Activity 2. We are still not able to successfully use the GPS in our cars because of the difference in the systems that we are having, but we are actually using the Fiji Map Grid System and the systems used by Google. How far are we of getting that right because I know there were some metres off in terms of the actual....

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- 20 Metres.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Yes, something like that.

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Chairman, from the briefing from my staff, it is probably not going to be as soon as. I think it is going to be work in progress in this financial year.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- But it is being done?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Yes.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Sir.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, in that same SEG on the Survey of the Mahogany Plantations, I know this is a really tough job that the staff of the Ministry do - they camp out in the middle of nowhere doing these things but, of course, it is very important for the landowners where the mahogany plantations are because no one really knows the boundaries of their land which then affects the income that they have. I know that fund is here, can you just give us generally, I know it is a big are that needs to be done, roughly how many more years does the Ministry look to complete the whole survey of these mahogany plantations?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Chairman, the total area that is to be surveyed is 58,860 hectares which are held by 105 landowning units.

The total area that has been surveyed is 53.6039 hectares which is equivalent to 72 percent completion. The total leased surveyed is 20 leases equivalent to 6 percent completion. So, there is a number of parcels of plantations, not all of which have been surveyed in complete because as you have identified, that is just impossible, in terrain-wise and weather-wise to get there in time and get the job done.

But we work on a 10-year programme that has been started by the previous Government, so every year once we get the money from the Ministry of Finance, we try and push the mark as much as we can to ensure that we deliver this to the landowners when the lots are ready to be harvested.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 3-3(7) - Formulation of Valuation Act, I know it is something that the Ministry has been looking forward to, the beginnings of this, so given that \$10,000, I assume that that does not mean the completion, it is just the initial start, is it?

HON. F.W.R.VOSAROGO.- I think it is the initial consultation as well as in-house, as well as stakeholders consultation, in which we have completed the in-house part of it. Once we do the

consultation with the stakeholders, then now with the setup of the Fiji Law Reform Commission, that becomes a founding document of what we would then pass off to....

HON. J. USAMATE.- Is there any target for the completion date?

HON. F.W.R.VOSAROGO.- What we want to do, honourable Member, is to pass what are our findings are from our stakeholders meeting and our in-house consultation to Fiji Law Reform by the end of August. I think that was the target.

HON. J. USAMATE.- *Vinaka*.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, first on Programme 3-4(7), let me acknowledge the work undertaken on the State Land Use Master Plan and, of course, the Review of State Land and Land Use Act.

However, my question is on Programme 3-4(8) - Maintenance of Existing Subdivision and Development of State Land. Can the honourable Minister elaborate on the two programmes, particularly for the Development of State Land, whether this a new one and where specifically?

HON. F.W.R.VOSAROGO.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, with the maintenance of existing subdivision in the North, we are looking the construction of the Vitadra Informal Settlement Access Road and upgrading of Baubale Residential Access Roads. In the Central, we are looking at 36 lots subdivision - drainage maintenance in Naitata in Navua. Those are the ones that come under the Maintenance Scheme. In the Western upgrade, the access road to Nacobi and upgrade access road and drainage systems at Rakiraki.

With the development, the project focus of the completion of the pending work is in relation to the settlement at Field 40 in Lautoka. There is just one aspect of that which has remained outstanding for quite a while now and so that required a payment of \$107,000 which, from last year, we are going to shift into the next financial year, and we can make that payment. Those are the two.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Motion by honourable Maharaj.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That Head 33-3-4(8) - Development of State Land (\$390,415), I request an increase of additional \$1 million.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- I second the motion, Sir.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, before I talk on my motion, I would like to thank the honourable Minister for mentioning that he is finally going to make the Vitadra and Baubale Roads. Vitadra was done three-quarter way, a quarter is still left - until Mr. Jai Narayan's place so, please, ensure that this time it is fully done.

HON. F.W.R.VOSAROGO.- The one that was constructed is repaired again.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you.

With regard to this \$1 million, Mr. Chairman, there is 51 hectares of free land sitting between Bulileka and Basoga in Bulileka, Labasa. Slowly squatter settlements are creeping in, most likely one or two hectares is now occupied by squatter settlement but because it is an empty and vacant

land, I think it would be good if money can be allocated to develop that land because once squatter settlement does creep in, it becomes very difficult to develop a particular place. It is quite central within three kilometers radius of Labasa town and if you are able to develop that piece of land, there will be high demand as a lot of land is needed and people are looking for developed land and that is why I am requesting if \$1 million can be allocated to develop these 51 hectares of State land.

MR. CHAIRMAN.-Now, I will put this motion to vote.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, Programme 3-5(10) - Land Bank Investment (\$120,000), in relation to land use, I am glad to see that budget is still being given for the Land Bank, but I do notice there has been a reduction of \$80,000 for that. From what that has happened so far, I think the Government is still committed to Land Bank, so I am glad to see that. I just want an explanation for the reduction in the Budget for SEG-10?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Chairman, I think this is the work programme that we have carved out for this financial year. It is not necessarily meaning that we are downsizing the importance of having that investment. I think it is the work programme that we have put for this year that is going to cost us less than what the budget was for last year.

HON. J. USAMATE.- ...the whole work plan for the year in this budget?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Yes.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Honourable Minister, the land on which the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) and Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) assets are, I am just wondering whether they have finally been managed to be transferred across to those statutory bodies or not?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, at the moment, there is still talks ongoing or how we manage that because now we have the Public Works Department (PWD) back, but we will get it sorted this year. From the Ministry's side, we want to hand it over, it should no longer be in on our asset inventory.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 33 – Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources.

Question put.

Head 33 agreed to.

Head 34 – Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, on Programmes 2-1(7), just a clarification on the new Film Tax Rebate. Can the honourable Minister clarify if this is for new claims that will be coming in or this is for the claims that have already been made?

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Thank you, 40 is for the whole staff – that is the \$200

million I was talking about during my speech and five is actually for the provision for the new productions coming up. What you have to understand is that a production may happen this year, but the payment can happen 18 months after. That is why five is low but that will wrap it up as we go along.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman through you, are we going to follow the same policies that were in place or are you going to develop a new policy because the old policy was heavily criticised?

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Basically, right now, the rebates have been reduced. At one stage, it was high at 75 percent I think, and it has now come back to 20 percent on a cap of four. The problem was, prior it was \$18 million, so it was too generous.

Obviously, from my overall standpoint, it is probably not as attractive as to honourable Koya's point, even though it is not as attractive as it was before, but there is a lot of still interest in Fiji because it is a very viable location for films. For us, we want to just manage and see how this \$200 million noose around our neck and then try and build the industry with the opportunities that is there.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, honourable Minister.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- In a nutshell, you really lowered the rebates going out.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Now, we will go to a motion by honourable Koya.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, I move a motion on Head 34:

That it be increased by \$300,000 in Programme 2-1(7) with respect to the Ministerial Trade Delegations.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You may elaborate on your motion.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Sir, if I may elaborate a little bit, I do understand how critical a component as this and how important it is that our Minister for Trade be present at and be a part of quite a number of things that are on Fiji's plate. I think it is important that everyone understands that he has IPAC to deal with, WTO to deal with, he has UNTAC, he has the regional agreements to deal with, he has the EU to deal with and Fiji, Mr. Chairman, has a front seat at all of these obligations that we have and it puts us in front with respect to literally everything around the world, one of the most important places being WTO.

Bearing that in mind, Sir, I think the Ministerial presence is actually required here, he should probably be one the most travelled Ministers at the moment because of the status that we have around the world. I am sure the honourable Minister will not argue with me but I am not sure if the honourable Minister for Finance will agree with that, but that is the reason for it, Sir. It is not all just the Minister, it is the very important team that needs to be with him at all times, Sir, because of the additional things that need to be attended to.

MR CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the motion on Head 34 as submitted by honourable Koya is proposed to be increased from \$100,000 to \$300,000 that is for Programme 2-1(7).

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We have another motion here by honourable Ketan Lal. You may introduce your motion.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That Head 34-2-1(8) - Standardised Roadside Stalls be increased by another \$400,000.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, this was something successful under the FijiFirst Government and thank you for continuing the initiative. The roadside stalls if you go to Nadi and along King's Highway, you see our citizens are using this to their best level. I think we need to further install or construct some along the Vanua Levu Hibiscus Highway from Savusavu to Labasa and maybe some in Taveuni as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Now, I will put it to the vote.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, I have a motion here by honourable Premila Kumar.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Sir, I move:

That Head 34-3-1(7) be increased by \$500,000.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You may elaborate on your motion, honourable Member.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, this \$500,000 that I am requesting, if that money could be given to trading standards. Currently, the amount allocated for trading standards is only \$100,000 so by giving extra \$500,000 will be strengthening standards development in the country.

Unfortunately, for Fiji, we are focusing on standards, particularly looking at our export markets but not imports that we are making into to the country. There is a dire need to develop standards for all other products that are entering Fiji so that our consumers are protected and we get value for money. So, it is for that reason I am proposing an increase by \$500,000. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.,

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I intend to put this motion to vote.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That Head 34 be increased by \$300,000 in Programme 6-1(10) with respect to the National Export Strategy.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Member, you may elaborate on your motion.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, this particular component of the Ministry is very, very important because it has offered a lot of assistance to our small time exporters. They apply for this particular grant sometimes to obtain a freezer truck or freezing machine or whatever it is that they actually require to get their exports done.

In light of the fact that we need to be diversifying and getting more exports out. I think this particular provision, although I agree with the fact that it has been doubled from the last Budget, I still think that it probably needs a little bit more because we will get a whole lot more people wanting to get more exports out and we will require assistance in terms of getting that particular machinery that they require.

We have had examples of people that are even manufacturing doors here and sent out offshore. In fact, I also recall that a particular member of a political party on the other side whom the honourable Minister of Finance knows quite well who was also a recipient of this particular National Export Strategy Grant. So, it is a very important component, Sir, I think that extra dollars into that particular provision would help.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, I intend to put this to the vote.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- There is another motion here from honourable Ketan Lal.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That Head 34-6-1(10) - Young Entrepreneurship Scheme (\$100,000) be increased to \$500,000.

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You may elaborate on your motion.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, this is a very successful scheme was developed by the FijiFirst Government. During COVID-19, we have learnt a lot, our young people opened their own businesses and I think we need to support them. Such entrepreneur scheme with the support from the Government will continue to harness that calibre of becoming better business people.

Mr. Chairman, that is the motion on the floor, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, we will vote on the the motion.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, on Programme 6-1(10) - Trade Enhancement Programme (\$300,000), I request the honourable Minister to illuminate us on this allocation as to what this exactly entails.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Mr. Chairman, this is one of the five programmes that we are running at the moment which we have inherited from the previous Government. This one is a bit more targeted and it is a maximum assistance of \$500 and essentially looking at microbusinesses. The rest are, sort of, a bit more bigger-sized businesses. It is very good for any micro-enterprise such as sewing, creative arts, floriculture - those kind of businesses. It is quite a helpful programme and as I have said, it targets those who are just aspiring to start up a small business.

Yes, it is a full grant. Apology, Mr. Chairman, most of the other programmes is actually a one-third two-thirds contribution. This one is just an outright grant and is monitored as well.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, can the honourable Minister explain the last item on Programme 10-1(7) - Fijian Vaccine Pass System (\$50,000)?

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Mr. Chairman, this programme was something that happened during COVID-19. At one stage, if you all recall, there was an intent to actually introduce COVID Passport. That project has since been decommissioned. There was some equipment that we are still storing and that \$50,000 is just to actually try and keep all the equipment together safely, while we redeploy them to other Ministries for use. The actual equipment is a lot more valuable than the \$50,000, but we want to make sure that we hand that over to other Ministries and I think some of it will be very useful for the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration, such as scanners, et cetera.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, just a clarification on Programme 10-1(7) – Ease of Doing Business, does online search of companies actually fall under this particular SEG?

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Yes.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, I see \$9 million allocated for this one, please, do check because people have been complaining that online search is not working for a couple of months now. They actually have to come to the office. Although it is provided online, it is not functional.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Mr. Chairman, we have had some issues a couple of weeks ago. Currently, it is fully operational. Honourable Lal had actually mentioned something as well and I am going to write him a formal response with some of the facts we have, which probably is not aligned with what he is thinking. That is alright, but be assured that we are trying to also introduce some escalation procedures because it is very important for users when there is an issue with the system, that a trigger is sent to some of the key people including myself. That was never happening in the past, so I have introduced that to try and make sure that the service standards are improved.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, through you, thank you very much, honourable Minister, and because \$9 million is allocated, may be a Ministerial Statement in the next sitting would be good to actually elaborate what all is going to be covered under this.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Mr. Chairman, we are happy to do that, no problem.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 10-2(7) – Cyber Emergency Response Team Plan and Cyber Security (\$180,000). Can the honourable Minister elaborate on this?

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Mr. Chairman, the Cyber Security Response is a very fundamental part of the monitoring over cyber security. Under the Budapest Convention, having this emergency response team is actually very important. So, the money is set aside to actually make sure we resource that up well and have it in place as soon as possible, given the lot of threats that we are experiencing at the moment round the globe.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, Fiji Police has got a Cyber Security Unit. Is there a thought of shifting this to them or are you going to have the dual responsibility of cyber security because in our sub-committee, there is that recommendation from them that this be shifted across to them. Is that a thought or is it going to remain as the two?

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- That is certainly an active discussion with the honourable Minister for Home Affairs and myself. At the moment, legally, it sits under Communications, that is why we have put the money in. Ultimately, we will do what is right for the country, so whether it sits with us or with the Minister for Home Affairs, that will be discussed in Cabinet. In certain countries they have their cyber security shift to the Ministry of Communications, some have them sit in one of the Disciplined Forces but we will sort that out once we wrap it altogether.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head No. 34 – Ministry of Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications.

Question put.

Head 34 agreed to.

Head 35 – Ministry of Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Chairman, I just want to ask the honourable Minister on Programme 1-1(7) – Manual Harvesting Support which is designated here for \$1 million. I just want to ask the honourable Minister, is this manual harvesting support being injected here because of his intentions to withdraw machinery assistance, like cane harvesters from the industry?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, this grant is being specifically for the cane farmers who have cane on the hilly land. We want to support them with the manual labour so the additional grant will be given to cane cutters.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, during his response, the honourable Minister said that ...

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Which SEG?

HON. P.K. BALA.- can you keep quiet, let me speak, please.

He said that they will increase the cane payment to \$90, so now I am coming to the point. I just want to know where is that allocation in this programme?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, in fact, if you see there is an allocation of \$1 million in SEG 10. The idea is this, we have quota incentives for the farmers that \$85 is a guaranteed price. If a farmer supplies green cane to the mill, he gets another \$5 per tonne extra. The idea is to give

incentives to cane farmers to supply green cane. We have a big problem in the industry with burnt cane and quality of sugar does not come right.

The other incentive is that, if a farmer has produced 500 tonnes of cane in the last season, and if he produces another 250 tonnes, that we give him \$5 extra on the 250 tonne in that year. So, it tops up to \$90. We want to get the farmers to work hard as well, we do not want them to just simply give them \$90. I will tell you another problem.

What has happened, the farmers had discussed with me. If we raise the price to \$90 or \$95, then the cane cutters will demand more money. They will expect more money as well, then the cane lorry operators will be demanding more money. So, whilst we agree on \$85 there as guaranteed, we will be giving them \$5 on burnt cane and \$5 additional for planting of cane, which will then be separate like a bonus.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, Head 35-1-1(10) – New Farmers and Lease Premium Assistance (\$2,000,000). To the Minister, we all understand that sugar was Fiji's backbone decades ago, and we all know the reasons why the industries is what it is today.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Why?

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- So, there is a generation gap that exists whether it is agriculture or sugar. So, under this New Farmers and Lease Premium Assistance, and looking at how our generation does not really want to get into sugarcane farming, honourable Minister, if you can highlight on any initiatives or strategies. First, please, clarify this the New Farmers and Lease Assistance Programme and if there are new strategies to get the young generation for sugarcane cultivation.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Again, there are a lot of farmers who are interested to come back to the farm but their problem is finance, of paying the premium or the lease. So, this allocation that we have done that there will be a 50:50. If it is a \$20,000 premium, our Ministry will pay \$10,000 and the balance of \$10,000 to be paid by the farmer in a five-year period.

Just as I mentioned, like Ratu Josaia, who is interested to do farming and he has got a big piece of land in Ra. Now, obviously he needs financial assistance there so we will be targeting farmers who are genuinely interested. There are some farmers who are hobby farmers. So, we will try to give incentives to the farmers who are generally interested and we will assist them through this scheme.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Thank you, honourable Minister.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, Head 35-1-1(5) - National Training Productivity Centre Levy (\$5,229), I just want a clarification, is this levy only for the Ministry staff because certain amount of it is also going to ACCF, or this levy also covers the farmers and the canecutters? I believe farmers do not pay levies on behalf of the canecutters and ACCF is doing a wonderful job, so if farmers and canecutters can be covered through such levies.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is a legislated expense calculated on 1 percent gross salary of the staff.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- So, any accidents happening in the farm with regards to either farmers or the canecutters, they can claim ACCF?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Yes, we are also having a special programme through the Growers Council to cover the farmers.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, Head 35-1-1(10) - Sugar Individual Small Grants Scheme has been allocated \$500,000. Something I would like to add on before I ask the honourable Minister, personally, I came back to Fiji after studying on a scholarship and through a government grant assistance, I was able to start up my farm. So, I know the value and importance of what these grants hold.

Just a clarification from the honourable Minister for Sugar of how gender inclusive this programme is and what are the partnerships with other Ministries, like Ministry of Women (the Minister has spoken about), Ministry of Agriculture, et cetera? If you could, please, highlight more on the gender inclusion and more of what the focus of the Sugar Individual, Small Grants Scheme is.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Are you talking about the Sugar Individual Small Grants Scheme?

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Yes, \$500,000.

HON. C.J. SINGH.-This is a new allocation, honourable Member. The programme has been re-introduced with an allocation of \$500,000 which aims to enhance support to farmers by way of livelihood support that will assist the farmers to diversify and not to live only on sugarcane income. This will assist farmers with the following issues:

- stray animals, the Government will provide fencing materials; and
- irrigation issues, farmers will be supplied with water-pumps to ensure their farms are irrigated.

Apart from this, other livelihood options will be looked into so that farmers do not rely on sugar. The Ministry will also help and support farmers diversify into other areas where they can earn additional income.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I just want to add on to that, yes, diversification is very important because you cannot just rely on one crop. So, is this just for those who are already sugarcane farmers? Do you need to own a sugarcane farm, own the lease to qualify for this or a new person who is interested in farming? The reason is because I have had many cases after people saw that I am a farmer, they like say, “we need to be farmers in order to access this grant. We need to own land to access this grant.” So, if someone who has interest in farming but does not own land and has not planted sugarcane before, do they qualify for such grants?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, I think we are currently concentrating in the sugar industry. My idea is to increase the yield. Now, as far as the other support, I think the honourable Minister for Agriculture might be able to help on that side but here, the farmer must have a sugarcane farm to qualify for this grant.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Thank you, honourable Minister.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- I just want to ask a question because I see it is not included in Programme 1-1, this is concerning railway lines. The honourable Minister is well aware of this - the need for the upgrade of railway lines, particularly there are 56 kilometres from Nubu to Labasa Mill and, of course, the areas in Batinakama, Vunimoli, Waiqe, Wailevu and Tabia.

I am told that the honourable Minister of Finance is also aware of this request from farmers

because cartage is important and, of course, minimising the cost as well for the farmers, their preference is railway system. It is not there. What assurance can you give the farmers, honourable Minister? When are you going to do this?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Thank you, honourable Member, you are a cane farmer, I understand your plight, however, there was a study done for the railway system to be basically upgraded. I think that was done I think about four years or five years back and now that we have come in, we are going to use the same company to give us a new quotation and prices as to what the cost of the upgrade. Once that is finalised, then of course we will come to the Minister for Finance for funding.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is actually a major issue within the sugar industry because in the last so many years, basically no investment has been made and, in fact, the incentives provided to farmers, lorry drivers and others, actually moved away from rail but now it is very clear that the farmers realise that the best and cost effective means of transporting cane was rail. I think it would require a huge investment. We have had good discussions with the honourable Minister for Sugar, the stakeholders and once the study is completed, we would have an idea of the true cost and see how we can start in certain areas where the cost is a major factor to ease that. So, that is what will have to be done.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, just to add on, there is also a problem of railway in Sigatoka. So, we are looking at that side as well but if you see in the allocation, we have got cage bins, which means that we are serious to go back on rail.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- No, Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is unfair probably to the others, but I am asking Vanualevu specifically because I am told that you, the Minister and the honourable Prime Minister are from Vanua Levu, so there is a lot of expectation on this.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- No problem, no one will be left behind.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(7), I can see there is an allocation of Sugar Cane Growers Council Election. Is there any timeframe for this and under which electoral system we are going to hold this Council Election?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, the Cabinet paper will be submitted next week. Of course, we have been discussing with the growers as well. Previously, there used to be 35 to 40 Councillors. Just to get the cost down, we will still maintain eight Councillors - one per district and the election will be just like what used to happen before. Growers can stand if they qualify, if they have their cane contract with them and whoever gets the highest vote ...

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Motion by honourable Pillay.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, through you on Programme 1- 1(10) - Fertilizer Subsidy, there is \$20 million allocated and last year the Fertilizer Subsidy was \$25,340, 847.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I move a motion that the amount should be increased by \$5,340,847.

HON. K.K. LAL.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Chairman, as we all know that fertilizer is very costly and the cost of production, harvesting and cartages have all gone up. As the honourable Minister for Sugar has alluded, they do not want to pay at one time, so that the harvesting cost will go up, but it has already gone up from \$20 a tonne to \$25 a tonne, \$30 a tonne; the cartage rate has gone up. The machinery

which is being supplied by FSC, they are charging more and the short payment of fertilizers will put farmers in problem if those fertilisers are not provided on time.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I move that:

Head 35-1-1(10) - Sugar Cane Development and Farmers Assistance be increase by another \$1 million.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Through you, Mr. Chairman, thank you honourable Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar. You elaborated very well today, thank you very much, but I think we need to continue supporting more for our farmers and that is why I requested for another \$1 million increase.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, just seeking clarification from the honourable Minister. Anything to do with health and hygiene, I will be keeping my finger on it. This is to do with Head 35-1-1(4) - Sanitary Service.

Earlier this morning, I moved that there be an increase of this particular service in the Ministry of Health. It is a big Ministry, mainly dominated with quite a big number of females.

Here in the Ministry of Sugar, they hold a budgetary allocation which is almost half of what was accepted for the Ministry of Health. Just a clarification from the honourable Minister on the correlation of this figure and maybe, help the honourable Minister of Finance in improvement later on.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, this sanitary service allocation is the same with last year and basically it is about allocation of fees and charges paid to Rentokil to ensure personal hygiene in the office is maintained.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chairman, a supplementary question. The Sugar Industry dominates mainly male and I would like to seek clarification, again, from the honourable Minister not to rely on old figures, but be realistic in your budgeting.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Noted.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, I would just like to correct the honourable Minister of Finance when he said “ that no investment has been made”. I would like to remind him that the former Prime Minister and the former Minister for Sugar, Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, kept this industry alive and through the pandemic.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- ...At a loss, big loss, look at the loss, come on man...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I was talking about railway, you did not get it.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- You said 'no investment'.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Before the motion, can I ask a question to the honourable Minister? It is related to the motion, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You love doing this, fires the question and then another supplementary question and then the motion.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You take all the chances that is available.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Can the honourable Minister explain or provide clarification for Programme 2-1(4) - Security Services (\$70,000). I understand that this is a new Ministry (Multi-Ethnic Affairs) but we are allocating \$70,000 directly as a start off. What is the purpose of that allocation?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, the allocation of Security Services at the Bali Towers, the office that we occupy.

HON. K.K. LAL.- So \$70,000 in a whole year?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Yes. It is a big building.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Just a follow-up question, so the honourable Minister for Sugar and Multi-Ethnic does not have the separate office?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- No, no, it is in the same building.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I withdraw my motion, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Maharaj, may you introduce your motion?

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, I move:

That we decrease the Ministry's Budget by \$2,150,200.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Chairman, I second the motion.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Why? Come on, think of the farmers.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Hold on, I will explain.

Mr. Chairman, the rationale behind asking for the removal of the full budget for the Ministry of Multi-Ethnic Affairs is that, if we actually look at SEGs 1 to 8, 50 percent is Operational and 50 percent is on R. The two values that are sitting under R is Language, Culture and Arts which is also with Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, and the other one is Preparatory Works for Gas Crematorium that can be conducted by CIU which is based at PSC.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- If not then PWD, so over here we have a Ministry with Operational Cost ...

(Laughter)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Who is providing the motion? We have written records here.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Having said that, Sir, if these two Programmes can be carried out by other Departments, why are we actually wasting taxpayers' money of \$1 million just to pay for the staff and Operational Cost? Maybe we can actually save this money, do some better preparation, do some strategies and perhaps, also develop the mission and vision of the Ministry itself and later on maybe next year, you can actually come up with this Ministry. At the moment, as we see it, Mr. Chairman, this is a waste of money. That is why we are asking to remove this Ministry completely. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, honourable Maharaj has filed this motion to do away with Head 35 and they want to take away all that is under Programme 2-1 to the amount of \$2,150,200. This is to do with the operation of the whole Ministry. I will put it to the vote, honourable Members, this is to do with Head 35 to be decreased or totally taken away that is Programme 2-1-1 to 8, it is to do with the whole Multi-Ethnic Affairs operation.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman, just seeking clarification from the honourable Minister on Sanitary Services of \$4,000. For only one Minister, that Sanitary Services allocation of \$4,000 that is too much.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, we have staff there who also use the washroom.

(Laughter)

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Chairman, just a follow-up question. On the Ministry of Sugar, we also have the allocation on Sanitary Services there.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- No, there are two levels of office. So, there are staff on both levels.

HON. A. BIA.- My apologies, I thought the \$4,000 was only for you.

(Laughter)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, you have engaged in the running commentary and I am sitting and listening to you both exchanging ideas of the worth of sanitary that is worthy for one or for 10 and the worth of it is \$4,000 plus dollars.

Honourable Members, again, the day has been quite long and I understand how tired you are but, please, let us keep the discussion at the senile level, otherwise we will drift away with the way we have just finished with your exchanges. Let us keep it at that, honourable Members.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-1(7) - Language, Culture and Arts, if the honourable Minister can provide some update in terms of how this money will be utilised.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, this new allocation with a budget of \$500,000, this will help preserve and protect our traditional practices, customs, language and artistic expressions that are passed down from one generation to another. It ensures that the culture, tradition and identity are safeguarded and valued, contributing to the richness or the diversity of our society.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, just a supplementary question to the honourable Minister, I mean, I had raised the same topic earlier and I was told by the honourable Minister of Finance that in this financial year, they were going back to the drawing board, they are going to plan what Ministry will actually do. Based on all that, the Multi-Cultural Centre from iTaukei Affairs probably will move to Ministry of Multi-Ethnic.

My concern is, when we just very broadly say that this money will be used to preserve culture, I am sure before you come to the drawing board with a \$500,000 billed to the Minister of Finance that this is what I want so I will be using it, there must have been some work done in the office to say which ethnic group you are looking at, what is the focus that you have at the moment, considering that you are also having multi-cultural centres. So how do you intend to do that?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Before the honourable Minister replies, I would like to contribute as well to this very important topic and this is not new. It has already been undertaken by the Ministry of Fijian Affairs and I was even working with the Ministry. We had one of your former the late Bainivalu, who studied in India used to be with FijiFirst, he used to take classes for us about 30 officers from the NLTB to go and do training in Hindi - the basic Hindi, how you converse with the Indian farmers, not so much using the Fijian-Hindi. It is the basic Hindi which he learnt and was qualified in India. That is the very thing, I hope, you are trying to revive again here. But they will need someone like that to be undertaking that and the training was done at the Natabua Teachers College. We spent every week day there, just to learn the basic Hindi, especially conversational Hindi. The one that has respect in it. When you say “up” – *konchi hai* . I will give the floor to the honourable Minister.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Chairman, under Multi-Ethnic comes Solomons, Banabans, Kioans, Indians, apart from iTaukei. So, obviously, we would like to interact with them and promote their culture as well and that is the allocation.

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

Question put.

Head 35 agreed to

MR. CHAIRMAN.- I intend to adjourn Parliament now as it is almost 6.00 p.m. We are kind of drifting away as well in the exchanges that I have been hearing, but I hope you will bear with it honourable Members. This is one time but just to have to do our sacrifice for our nation.

I will now adjourn Parliament and we will resume after one hour. Dinner will be served in the Big Committee Room.

The Parliament adjourned at 5.47 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 7.09 p.m.

Head 37 – Ministry of Local Government

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, just one clarification on Programme 1-2.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- We have gone past that.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, just the clarification from the honourable Minister. I will not be moving any motion, it is just the clarification. This is with regards to the dump site at Sigatoka, which is sitting at a proposed heritage site. If there is any programme or proposal to actually move that site from the proposed heritage site, because it is affecting the sand dunes, and if there is any proposal to move it to some other ground?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Chairman, through you, Sigatoka Rubbish Dump is also one of the dumping sites that we are trying to relocate. That is something that we are seriously looking into. There had been discussions on the issue. I just want to inform the honourable Member that discussions are ongoing and, hopefully, we will relocate that in future.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Head 37 agreed.

Head 38- Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, query to the honourable Minister. In comparison to the Department of Tourism budget last year, if you take out the \$30 million Marketing Grant for Tourism Fiji and the Operating Grant of \$7 million, you will be left with about \$7 million with respect to the running of the Ministry of Tourism, as opposed to it being run on a \$520,000 budget previously last year.

That is a very rudimentary way of doing it, I know, but in rough, that is the guidance that we actually get in the figures that you have given. If you take that \$37 million out from the \$44 million that has been given to tourism, that leaves you with about \$7 million to take care of all the tourism activities that are being undertaken. As opposed to \$520,000, which was to take care of all tourism activities as a Tourism Department within the MCTTT on the last budget. Can you explain the big difference in it? What are we looking forward to in terms of the extra budgetary requirement that has been given?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Chairman, this is totally starting almost from scratch to resource the Ministry. We are rebuilding, we know that we wanted that more, but with pressure on the finances, we are happy to start off this way. We are comfortable with what we have in the allocations here, honourable Member. Of course, you combine it now with Civil Aviation budget, they are both....

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I have not included that.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes, I hear what you are saying, but we are alright with what we have here. For instance, we inherited about 10 staff members, we are now up to 15. Ideally, we would like to have more than 30 staff in there, but with the way we are budgeting and with the tight

financials that we have, we are okay with this for this time.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, might I understand that \$6.5 million is being utilised for extra staff? Are there any other extra activities being undertaken by the Ministry in comparison to last year?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- No, not really. The main one that we have is the Vanua Levu project where we get \$5 million to set up the Vanua Levu Project Phase 1. That would be the main item for us for the next 12 months.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, honourable Minister.

Mr. Chairman, once again, the same question in comparison to last year's budget, the Department of Civil Aviation then, there is a surplus of about \$900,000, if you take out the Operating Grant for Civil Aviation and the Domestic Air Services Subsidy, you are getting of \$900,000 or more. Again, same question, what are the extra activities being undertaken or is it for new staff, or more staff?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Civil Aviation needs about 75 staff members and there sitting were about 50, so we have to recruit about 20 odd new staff. As you know it is part of ICAO rating every year that we must be fully staffed. The allocation is there now to hire and make up to the full complement of the Authority.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 2-1(6) – Domestic Air Services Subsidy of \$1.9 million, I would just like to get clarification, mostly this is for maritime zones. One of the scenarios that mostly people from the North face, if there is a death in the family and the last moment booking with Fiji Link, we all know how much do we actually have to pay. So, in such a scenario when there is a death in the family, provided if some kind of evidence is provided, if it is an immediate family or the first cousin, if there can be any subsidy provided in near future? If that can be considered? It is both from Suva to Labasa and Labasa to Suva.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Are you suggesting a special charter for someone?

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Not a special charter. For example, my father passes away in Labasa and the funeral is tomorrow, the last moment booking is mostly \$300 to \$400 one way.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- To subsidise the airfare on Fiji Link?

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Yes, depending on the situation, especially if there is a death in the family.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- We can put that across on compassionate grounds, but right now, this subsidy is for Cicia, Kadavu, Koro, Lakeba, Rotuma, Vanuabalavu and Gau. We will also be adding Ono-i-Lau over the next year. But I hear what you are saying, the subsidy to apply on emergencies and compassionate grounds.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, just a quick question to the honourable Minister. This is a general question to both of his portfolios. I just looked that he has got tourism grant. Is there any possibility that the grant be given to the Fiji Sevens Team under that grant because they do quite a lot of marketing for Fiji when they go out and play around the arena in the international sevens rugby. It is just a suggestion

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, quite a number of suggestions have been made to us in that area but if you notice, they wear the Fiji Airways Number on their chest. That is already a tourism related name and indeed most of our marketing, quite a bit of marketing relies on the input from Fiji Airways. The answer right now is no, because we need to recover where we left off during COVID-19. We know during COVID-19 we went down to \$22 million, we brought it back to \$30 million from marketing because we are now going into China, Japan and Korea and we are also looking at three points in USA - Seattle, Dallas and Chicago. So, unfortunately, we cannot do that right now.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 38 - Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation.

Question put.

Head 38 agreed to.

Head 40 - Ministry of Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, just a clarification in relation to Programme 2-2(9) - Upgrade of Radar at Nausori. Given that we are close to the cyclone season, would it be safe to say honourable Minister that by the time we get to the cyclone season that all three radars will be fully functional; Labasa, Nadi and hopefully the one at Nausori after this \$2.36 million upgrade?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- On the upgrade of the radar in Nausori, we have allocated \$2.3 million, it is a rollover project and in terms of the timing we should significantly progress that this year but I can get back to you on the completion of that.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hopefully it will be ready before the cyclone.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, Programme 2-2(4) - Maintenance of Hydrological Equipment. It is important, Mr. Chairman, Sir, but question to the honourable Minister is, what plans that are there in the Department of Meteorological Services and of course in the Ministry about further extending this programme particularly how it links up to our Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and the Sendai Framework because early warning systems are so important. Let us not only concentrate on maintenance but we need to install more. So, my question is, what are the plans in the Ministry to address this?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Thank you honourable Member, yes that is an important question in terms of maintenance of meteorological equipment. At the moment that is what that is there for maintenance, but we are also engaging with development partners in terms of enhancing and as you have mentioned, to further improve on the equipment and bringing it up to-date.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, Programme 2-3(9) - Supply and Installation of Water Level and Rainfall Equipment, once again related to that hydrological question. I think as we all come to realise the biggest problem in this country is floods and the importance of having all these equipment up and running at locations and also to make sure that they are also sending information. Sometimes we put them up because sometimes we put them up and then they do not send information and people have to go there and physically check. So, I am just wondering in terms of all that you plan to have in place before we get around to cyclone season, with this investment, will they all be in place, and will they all be sending information to Centre (Nadi) so that the information can be quickly collated and analysed.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- In terms of that particular SEG, that involves the location in various sites, in terms of water level and rainfall stations and the 273 there is basically to maintain those.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Maintenance?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes.

HON. J. USAMATE.- So no new ones, just maintenance?

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Chairman, still on Activity 3 on Weather Forecasting. I just want to make a general comment here, honourable Minister. You do not have to look at your book, it is the translation from the very technical weather forecast that comes from Nadi and then changing it into layman's language that goes out to the public. It is one area that is not handled properly is the translation of the technical weather forecast that comes from Nadi.

Some people understand the technical jargon that comes but when it is sent out to the people, it has to be interpreted into the vernacular. I have listened to the *iTaukei* translation, and given that I can understand the technical information, the translation is so bad. It is an area that I think that we can improve on. I am not too sure whether you do it from Nadi or you leave it to whoever is on duty at the radio station to come and do the translation then go out. It is important because those are the people that need it most. I hear it all the time because I can translate that technical weather information, when it goes down to the people, even the directions are all wrong. It is just that concern, I think it is an area we can all do well with.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Thank you honourable Naupoto, we will take that on board.

Just on the question by honourable Usamate. Let me just clarify on the issue of Supply and Installation of Water Level and Rainfall Equipment, that is under "R". Some of them will be purchase of equipment and other associated costs for installation of water level and rainfall equipment at Saliadrau, Wainimakutu, Namoli, Nadralla, Nakoro and Sigatoka Catchment.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, just one final question. I have looked at the previous programme and Activity 2 and looking at Programme 2-3 as well. Some of these stations are located in agriculture estates throughout Fiji because agriculture is a big user of the meteorological data as well. I am just interested in who is responsible for its maintenance, whether its Meteorological Service or the Ministry of Agriculture. I do not see it here.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- The ones which we have here in our list are the ones which Meteorological Service is responsible for. You are correct, we have a list and we can provide that too.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Sir, just an addition to what I said. I just want to give you an example. Now if it comes from Nadi that there is a low pressure. You will hear on the radio they will say, "*e dua na uwa ni draki malumalumu.*" When you say, "*e dua na uwa ni draki malumalumu*" they think nothing about it, but really *ya na uwa ni draki ca.* That is worse. It is low pressure. But because the word "low" pressure then *draki ni uwa malumalumu*, okay nothing to worry about, but that is bad weather. *Ya na uwa ni draki ca.* Just to give you an example.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- I will note that and liaise closely with the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs on the proper expression in the *iTaukei* language rather than like expression. We hear on the

FM Radio and maybe with some of the staff who might not be speaking proper iTaukei. *Sega ni vosa vaka Viti matau e tukuni tiko.*

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 3-2(7) - Establishment the Public Works Department. Sir, this is a decision that has been made by Government and we notice the reasons for it that are outlined on Page 263. Maybe two to three things that I would like to know, Sir. What exactly will be this \$5 million used for? What will be achieved say by the end of the year or by the mid of next year out of this or will this also include outsourcing for the purchase and use of materials?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, Programme 3-2(7) on the Establishment of Public Works Department. For that SEG, we are looking at through the Programme to re-establish PWD, that is, the purchasing of plants and equipment including graders, excavators, trucks and bulldozers.

In addition to that, there will also be staff which will be included in that. I know that they have been concern about duplication. The PWD as it is, we are now consulting closely with FRA to complement each other. Where there are gaps, we will come in, mainly in the rural roads where some areas have been neglected, not only there but also in some of the access roads and roads in some of the institutions. Basically, areas which have been classified or known as non-FRA roads.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Supplementary question, roads is covered under Roads, Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development. When everything was under FRA, FRA was like the central repository of everything to do with roads.

(Honourable Government Member interjects)

HON. J. USAMATE.- I am not talking to you.

With this central repository and looking at the overall road asset of Fiji now be within the Ministry, are you going to develop that or is PWD purely operational?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- In terms of strategic infrastructure policy, that is what we are looking into as a Ministry from the policy side, but in terms of cascading down to the operational level, that is what I am explaining. The FRA have their own (I suppose) portfolio which they are currently looking at which we can look at after this and the PWD has its own.

At the moment it is in transition. As s I had already explained, FRA is at the moment also being audited both technical and financial. In that transition we will identify and also look at the strategic planning on what exactly we need to cover. That will be completed in the next two months and realigning it to the core role and then from there, it will be clear towards the end of this financial year what the new setup will look like.

Definitely, there would not be any duplication. We are looking also at the processes within, in terms of the contracting, monitoring and all that so that what happened in the past does not happen again. Also, we try to cover all our financial liabilities, get over that stage then we move forward in terms of not only formulating the new strategic infrastructure or road plan and cascading that down to the strategic plan and dividing it that way.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Mr. Chair, this is to help honourable Tuiwailevu. On Programme 3-3(9) - Purchase of Equipment for New Power House at Nabouwalu Government Station. Seeking clarification from the honourable Minister on this project whether it is to complement the current powerplant or expansion of power supply for the township of Bua.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Purchase of Equipment for New Power House at Nabouwalu. This is to cater for the purchase of new equipment including the RGS Control Board, covering labour materials and also the new 500 kVA transformer. Unfortunately, the generator, as you may know, there was a lightening incident which damaged the generator. So, this will cover for the replacement of that and the equipment to bring back into normal operation.

HON. A.A MAHARAJ.- Mr. Chairman, just a general comment with regards to Programme 4-1(10) - , House wiring for Completed Grid Extension Projects and Solar Home Systems Programme.

In general, if the honourable Minister can provide us with a listing of how many houses are going to be wired. I do not want to ask this in future heads that we are going to debate on. So, for grid extension, solar home system programmes, water projects and road projects, the norm during the Budget session that we get the list from the Ministry on how projects are going to be taken in the next financial year. Can the honourable Minister provide us with that listing, please?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- You are querying about SEG 10 - Grid Extension. So, SEG 10 on Housewiring for Completed Grid Extension Projects. This allocation is to cater for the house wiring and connections of the grid extension projects around the country, a total of 5,572 households will be assisted.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, this is just in line to what honourable Maharaj asked. I am concerned about Programme 4-1(8) - Grid Extension Project of about \$4 million. I just wanted to get clarification from the honourable Minister where this grid extension will be conducted?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, this is payment to EFL for the Grid Extension Project, a roll over payment from the current financial year, 111 projects with a total of 1,539 households located in the four divisions. I have not got the exact locations, but I can provide that later.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, just a question to the honourable Minister. This is on SEG 10, again on the Grid Extension. Honourable Minister, can you just confirm if you have included the Wailevu West (Cakaudrove), all the villages from Natua right to Valeni in Laucala (I forgot the name of the village) may be the honourable Assistant Minister for Education can help me on that. The issue there is the grid currently goes right up to Uluivalili Secondary School, all the villages down the coast have missed out on this and there are a lot of concern and complaints coming from them. So, it just trying to pull the grid down to those villages (I think about four or five of them down the coast); are they included in this programme, honourable Minister?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- I am sorry, I do not have the list number now but I can provide it.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, I wish to state that I may indeed pleased to see the amount of renewal energy projects that are appearing in the various Heads and Programmes. As I stated in my contribution to the debate, this is a good potential area for investment because it will bring a lot of savings for us in the long-term and of course good for our commitments to the Paris Agreement as well.

Just a quick question on Programme 4-1(7) - Local Funding – Climate Change Resilient Renewable Energy Development Project – 1.55 MW Solar Project in Taveuni. If I am correct this is the one in Mua and will it be connected to the main grid as well or is this operating on its own? I am not sure whether this is probably the right programme where I raise this question as well, the progress

on photovoltaic. Sorry, I think it is in the other.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Aid-in-kind.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- That is the one in Bureta?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, it also includes the Mua Solar Project which will also be connected to the grid. That project started about two months ago.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, I just want to thank you, honourable Minister on behalf of the people of Kadavu Koro for the rehabilitation of the Hydro System. Just one question, do you still intend to fix the Hydro at Buca in Vanua Levu?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Which one?

HON. J. USAMATE.- It is not there, I am just asking.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Okay.

HON. J. USAMATE.- There is a whole hydro in Buca Village that was done by the Turkish but there were plans for rehabilitating that also. Is that still in the pipeline?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, definitely the repairing of some of the old solar projects will be looked into. If you look at SEG 4, there is a maintenance of our Home Solar Systems there of \$400,000.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- This one here is hydro?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Sorry, Sir.

HON. J. USAMATE.- That is an old hydro in Buca, honourable Minister?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, we can also look into it. If you make a motion to increase the budget, we will include it.

(Laughter)

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, just another question to the honourable Minister. I forgot to include this to my earlier question. The grid is, I think it is up to the junction that goes up to Saqani, and the one that goes right down to Naweni. It has been like that for many years. Is there a plan now to get the grid to Kasavu, and the one that goes up to Nasinu Village and all those villages up the road?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Unfortunately, I do not have the specific details, but I will provide it with the ones honourable Maharaj requested.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- *Vinaka*, honourable Minister.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Chairman, on SEG 10, it is not a question, just a suggestion for the Solar Home Systems Programme if the Ministry can. See when you put in batteries, when you make batteries, the carbon footprint to make these batteries are extremely high. Just a suggestion, when you look at the batteries, they do have a lifetime. So, if the Ministry can also look at the

recycling and reusing of these batteries and the disposal mechanisms because the last thing we need is to implement solar which is good but Fiji should not be a dumping ground for these batteries because it contains a lot of acid and chemicals. Again, our future generations are going to suffer.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- It is currently part of the discussions with the private sector and also international development partners regarding the recycling and disposing renewable energy batteries.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, that is on Programme 6-1(6) - : Shipping Services Subsidy for the outer islands. I move a motion if we can increase the allocation. I think there has been a reduction on the allocation, it is going to affect shipping for the maritime zone.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Mr. Chairman, I move the motion.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- It just the reduction on the Shipping Services Subsidy. This is the Shipping Franchise Programme, I noted a \$200,000 reduction on that. The concern is, it is it going to affect the shipping movement under that programme. Most of these outer islands depend entirely on this franchise programme. I think even with that small amount, it is going to affect the shipping programme. Most of these islands are only surviving on one shipping service a month. I do not know how will they cope with this. Maybe some will only be able to make it like one in every two months, but I am not sure about that. This will affect the people of Lau, Kadavu, Lomaiviti and all those who are depending on the franchise scheme for their shipping services.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, the motion submitted by honourable Tuinaceva is in regards to Head 40 to be increased by another \$300,000 and it is in Programme 6-1(6). This is to do with Shipping Services Subsidy.

Question on amendment put.

Motion lost.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Programme 7-1?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 7-1(5) – Apprenticeship Scheme (\$50,000). I assume this is for the apprentice on the GSS boats, if I am not mistaken? But I will also be interested to know that since you are extending PWD, you will have tradesmen there, what do you think of extending apprenticeship to PWD? It is a good place, I know, for training trades people for this country.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- You might as well declare your interest as a former Head of TVET.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Chairman, he definitely has a long institutional knowledge and also sharing his know-how with me and I acknowledge that. That is an area as we go through the change management process, an area we would like to strengthen, given also the challenges we are currently facing in the skills gaps in terms of the trade skills, as a lot of our experienced trades people moved to Australia and New Zealand, we need a new cadre to build up, at least to serve our nation for the next 10 years. If they want to move then it is up to them.

So the Apprenticeship Scheme will be extended. At the moment with the current budget, we will start on a small scale and as the new structure becomes more certain then we will look into that in terms of long term planning and policy.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Chairman, honourable Minister Programme 7-1(8) - Construction of Retaining Wall at the Government Wharf - Phase 2 with \$2.5 million. Before I actually get the query, this is the one that is sinking at the front of the office of GSS?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- That is correct.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Will this be finished in this financial year, because it says Phase 2?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, the explanation there is the redesign and construction. So, I am assuming that we should finish it.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- It says Phase 2 so there are no more phases?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, from what I have seen, that will be the final one, but I can confirm later.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to ask the honourable Minister on Programme 7-1(4). On that SEG, I understand, as I understand it is to deal with Government Shipping Services. I just wanted to suggest, if you look at it, there is also Shipping Services Subsidy of about \$3,210,000 million, Maintenance and Operation at \$1 million, then other headings within that SEG. I have always wondered why the Government Shipping Services does not follow what the commercial shipping services in Fiji are doing?

There seems to be a disconnection with the design of the vessel that is used by the commercial shipping entity, which they operate under strict commercial conditions to be able to remain viable and the Government seems to differ in the way they purchase vessels, which is basically, if you think of it, if the commercial companies are running specific type of vessels, then they have proven themselves that this is viable. It is a normal commercial activity. I just thought that the honourable Minister could look at it. You have shipping companies in Fiji that are operating commercially viable. It is just a suggestion, because looking at the expenses and then you have a shipping subsidy again, maybe you should consider that looking into the future.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- We take note of that, but the two are serving different clients. The Government Shipping Services is also serving a lot of the ministries, which they pay the GSS. I do not have the figures for the revenue but, yes, it will be interesting to look at the revenue and expenditure and compare it to the commercial operations. The commercial operations prices also is on the high side, given, I think there is lack of competition right now given the limited market. But, we will look at it and the figures.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 40.

Question put.

Head 40 agreed to.

Head 41- Water Authority of Fiji

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Chairman, Programme 1-1(0). We note there is an increase in capital grant of about \$7 million, so just a clarification from the honourable Minister. Some areas in Sigatoka, with metered water in Barara, and then three kilometres away from Barara is Nadave and Bilalevu, Nabaka and Tuvu and there are 100 households. Similar situation is in Natadola with metered water, there is a direct pipe from Cuvu to Natadola InterContinental Resort(honourable

Gavoka will know this), and it passes through the community of Muka, Naidiri and parts of Malomalo where there are 60 households and two villages.

Another situation is in Waibogi, that is, off Queen's Road, close to Malaqere. There is metred water in one household and there are only 30 houses in that area. With the \$7 million extra, I just wanted to find out from the honourable Minister if these areas can be finished? Areas of Nadave, Bilalevu, Nabaka, Runitogo, Muka and Naidiri and parts of Malomalo. For Muka and Naidiri, the main pipe goes through Muka and Naidiri and to Natadola, so it will be easy to connect there, hence for Waibogi also. During dry spell, these areas are hit very hard and carting water to these nine settlements is a challenge.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- If you look at the overall Water Authority of Fiji budget, there is a substantial increase, as you can see there \$191.3 million to \$250.8 million with operating expenditure \$118.1 and capital expenditure is \$132.7 million. There is a general note here for the specific areas and I will advise because there is a rural programme as you can see on page 277 of the Budget paper. Some of the areas which will be covered are there and of course some of those areas where the network will be extended will also be covered, which is I think what you are talking about. But I will get back in terms of the specific.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Thank you, honourable Minister.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 41 – Water Authority of Fiji.

Question put.

Head 41 agreed to.

Head 43 - Fiji Roads Authority

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Chairman, in relation to the operating grants, honourable Minister I have read through the list of the bridges that you intend to complete. There is one bridge that is missing in this list that I can see of incomplete bridges and that is the bridge of Naseyani, further up the road from Fiji Water. So, I hope it is not an oversight. The other bridges that are listed here, most of them have not been completed but that would be the other one unless it is a mistake. It is half-complete bridge. So, I thought I would bring that to your attention.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Noted, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 43.

Question put.

Head 43 agreed to.

Head 49 - Peacekeeping Missions

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 49.

Question put.

Head 49 agreed to.

Head 50 - Miscellaneous Services

HON. J. USAMATE.- SEG 7 from Nos. 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16. There are a number of things there that have been stopped – the outsourcing of general practitioners, dental practitioners scheme, medical laboratories. I just want to clarify whether it has been taken out of here or put somewhere else or is it completely taken away.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is still under Head 50, the outsourcing of some of these activities, for example, PPP started during COVID-19, it continued. We are in the process of reviewing, we have made some changes as to the eligibility but some of the outsourcing of the tests, medical laboratories are still continuing until such time that the Ministry of Health is able to fully equip and ensure that hospitals and Sub-Divisional Medical Hospitals are well equipped and they are able to provide all the services 24 hours.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Sir, a supplementary question, eventually this subsidized service for the private sector would be taken away and substituted in the government facilities?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- As I said this will all be reviewed. We have the Public Private Partnership with Ba Hospital and Lautoka Hospital. Aspen is an issue that we are dealing with on top of that, all these other private providers and the model will have to be reviewed because some of it seems to be taking on a life of its own and we feel that the expenditure trend is just on the rise. That is one of the reasons why we have put out a criterion in terms of those who are access it, but that will come under full review in the current financial year.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Chairman, Sir, SEG 7 No. 26 - Review of Fiji Roads Authority and Other Major Programmes. I am just wondering if FRA is still involved in this Load Management Programme to protect our road services. I hardly see the enforcement going on the road to check on this extra loading. Is that kind of programme included in this programme as well.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I will ask the honourable Minister to answer that question

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- That is currently being undertaken by LTA and the LTA budget is also increased to increase the number of enforcement officers. Not only for that but also you have raised the number of road accidents, et cetera and we are very pleased with the number of enforcement, the budget, the road safety education has increased and the services will be further enhanced.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Chairman, SEG 8 No. 9 - Special Funds for Maintenance which is \$5 million. If I can get some breakdown of how that money will be used and it will be used particularly for maintaining what?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is a good question.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- This is a kind of new initiative that will deal with the maintenance of Government assets. One of the things that is quite evident throughout the country is the big deterioration in the Government assets including public buildings, quarters, hospitals, health centres, schools and other assets.

This funding will be coordinated through the new Strategic Planning Office and apart from those that have been allocated within the different Ministries, that will also be coordinated together with this funding so that we are able to fill the gaps which certain Ministries and Departments may not be able to fill and that is why it is under Head 50, and we will be coordinating that. Because what

we found is, I think as the as the honourable Minister said, the Public Works Department as an entity will also have a good role in terms of overseeing some of these routine maintenance and sometimes it does not require a lot of money. For example, we went to Dreketi Health Centre. We went to the market. When we asked them why the doctor's office was full of dust, there was no tiles and the place where the patients used to come and wait was all dilapidated. So they were saying that a new hospital or health centre would be build and that will take two or three years.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, honourable Minister when you had explained that earlier on.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD. - Can you let me finish?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- No, that's the only clarification I needed which you have clarified and I appreciate that. Thank you very much. Let us move on.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Chair, I was just explaining

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I understood.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.-...in a small amount of money...

MR. CHAIRMAN. - Almost finish again.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ...we were able to do that in about a month. Some of these maintenances will be coordinated through the Strategic Planning Office. In fact, it was done through the Strategic Planning Office. You should appreciate that.

HON. P.D. KUMAR. - Mr. Chairman, I over understood what he has said.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- That is your problem.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Sir, on SEG Nos. 2 and 3 - we are vehicle leasing which is \$36 million but at the top on No. 2 we have purchased of vehicle of \$2 million. Can I just ask what vehicles are we buying?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- If I tell the whole story about vehicle leasing then

(Laughter)

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Which vehicles are we buying?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- That allocation is for vehicle leasing. There are some departments which own vehicles because it is not based on leasing so that is why that is that provision.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Chairman, I just have a few questions on SEG 10 No. 1. There is an allocation there for Northern Division Projects. We have the Northern Development Programme allocation. Can the honourable Minister clarify what else is this Northern Division Projects, allocated a sum of \$1,955,827.

I need confirmation as well on No. 9, the Ongoing Contingency Funds for Disaster Risk because \$1 million usually goes every year to the Prime Minister's Trust and then we have a separate

allocation, as sort of emergency funding which usually is parked under Head 50 as well. But I am not sure whether there is another separate allocation or not.

Finally on No. 11, the Nadi River Flood Alleviation Project. Is this part of the JICA Programme or is this just the continuation of the Nadi River Basin Flood Management where we were to do retention dams for the tributaries and rivers that feed into the main Nadi River?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- That is part of that programme. You talking about No. 11, right?

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Yes.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes, that is part of that project.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Numbers 9 and 11.

No. 9 - Ongoing Contingency Funds for Disaster Risk, that is fine, that is part of the Nadi River Basin River Project. In fact, the JICA Programme did not happen. There is a new feasibility study, in fact, a lot of work has already been done by ADB and we are in the process of making sure that that project gets underway but that is where the allocation is.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No. 1 - Northern Division Projects?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The FDB subsidy on interest on agriculture loans and the economic rehabilitation, the Northern Division Projects. That is part of the continuation of the scheme where Government continues to subsidize loans to Fijian citizens in identified focus sectors under various schemes. They include agriculture loans including forestry and fishing, micro credit and agri finance under Social Banking Scheme, some to manufacturing, mining and quarrying, SME micro-loans in professional and business services, SME micro-loans in transport and storage and SME micro-loans in wholesale, retail, hotels and restaurants.

In the 2021-2022 Budget, interest rates subsidy for agriculture loans by the Fiji Development Bank actually increased from 6 percent to 8 percent and still is 8 percent and increase in the loan limit for the subsidy from \$50,000 to \$100,000. The Northern Development Projects is an additional allocation for those categories of enterprises especially in the Northern Division.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, through you, my question on No. 9, is the \$1 million allocation the one that goes into the Prime Minister's Trust because I do not see anything in Head 18-4-1 under NDMO on the contingency of funds. We are going into the El Nino cycle. What have we got to prepare for a disaster if it does come, apart from that, the \$1 million that usually goes into the Prime Minister's Trust?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You mean to say ongoing Contingency Funds on No. 9 - \$1 million for Disaster Risk. That is a separate allocation for the projects that come under the Prime Minister's Small Grants Scheme as well. But there would be specific Disaster Risk Projects.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- They are two totally different activities altogether. I mean the small grant does not handle disaster but there is a trust in which the allocation goes yearly and it is usually \$1 million.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes, that is the allocation.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- So, what else have you got to prepare us, this is one of the questions that you used to ask. What else is there to prepare us for the next one apart from this \$1 million?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Honourable Leader of the Opposition, there are allocations in all the other ministries too.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- There is no money.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, there are allocations in the other ministries, you know that.

HON. J. USAMATE.- On SEG 10 No. 4 - Fijian Scholarship Scheme. If you look at the notes on the right, the last one there is Apprenticeship \$330,000. Is this a summation of the little apprenticeship amounts that are contained in the rest of the Budget or is it an additional fund?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So what is your question?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Is this a summation of the little apprenticeship budgets within the rest of the Budget or is it something in addition to those ones?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- These are actual scholarships. So all the allocations under the Scholarship Scheme are scholarships, whether it is apprenticeship, whether it is going into a specific skill programme, they are all scholarships. The allowance and the tuition fee will depend on the institutions and the specific course that the students would do.

HON. J. USAMATE.- The next one is No. 25 - Jobs for Nature (\$4 million). I would just like to ask where we can get people to go and ask for access to this particular programme. Is there a particular Ministry or is it the Ministry of Finance?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- That is a World Bank Funded project but within the Ministry of Finance.

HON. J. USAMATE.- No. 37 - Fijian Drua Support, reduction of \$2 million. Is that going to have an impact on the Drua or is it in keeping with their plans?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Government is a majority....

HON. J. USAMATE.- No, I am just asking. It will not damage the Drua chance of winning the Super thing next year?.

(Laughter)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Not at all.

HON. J. USAMATE.- The last one, No. 41 – one of the things that we are promoting very strongly is moving away from fossil fuel based energy to renewal energy and moving transport away from fossil fuel to electricity, hopefully renewable energy. We are pushing for electric vehicles, but this electric vehicle subsidy is being taken away for \$500,000. Just wondering, is that going to hurt that drive towards moving transportation out of fossil fuel towards electric usage.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Not really, I mean we are kind of reviewing all these

investments and programmes. What we found that while the stated objectives are there, targets are there, when you actually get down to doing it, there are a lot of complications. While the focus is on mitigation, the focus is on renewable energy, if you look at the international funding agencies such as World Bank, ADB, DFAT, the whole debate really is about whether we should go for more adaptation or mitigation.

The developed countries, the international partners, there seems to be a lot of preference for mitigation projects but less on adaptation and the mix of adaptation and mitigation funding is a debate that is going on. So some of these small projects like pilot projects, they are fine but they are not sustainable. So renewable energy in a way that is sustainable would be the best way to go, whether it is solar, whether it is hydro that is an area where Government would focus.

Electric vehicles, public private partnership, there are funding available and we are building capacity within the Climate Change Division which is now fortunately under the Prime Minister's Office. It gives a much bigger international focus and our ability to source additional funding specifically for those kind of projects would be in my view is quite or would be greatly enhanced. That is what we will be exploring in this financial year.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Honourable Deputy Prime, there are two commitments that Fiji has made:

- 1) 100 percent electricity renewable energy by the year 2030; and
- 2) Zero carbon by the year 2050.

That means for the zero carbon, the big challenge will be converting travel, cars, vessels to convert from using fossil fuels towards electricity. So, change electricity to renewable energy by 2030 and then move all the transport to use that renewable energy. All of these little projects move us towards that target of 2050, getting into green on our transportation. I understand what you are saying. That is the context of which I was asking those questions.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I think you are right but I think if we can get there, Fiji is actually in a much better position because of the hydro project that was conceived in the early 1980s and thankfully we have that. More than 50 percent of our energy sources already come from renewable energy and we in the international scheme of things, Fiji is much better.

We have to focus a little bit more on looking at possibilities of more hydropower schemes while we are pursuing in solar, electric vehicles, this would be part of the overall objective of achieving what you were saying. I agree with you, but I think we have to make a choice, decarbonisation is the goal, but we have to make a choice, there has to be a priority. We cannot do everything together.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Just to add a short note to that, that we are currently doing a feasibility study in terms of e-vehicles and the infrastructure with KOICA through the national energy policy, attached is the matrix for the actions to be taken to achieve what you are describing.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to ask about No. 22. What is the meaning of Non-Commercial Obligation for Energy Fiji Limited? SEG 10 – No. 22.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- That is for the rural electrification programme which is provided as a contribution by the Government where EFL is not able to undertake those projects.

HON. J. USAMATE.- For grid extension is provided in Head 40, we have just gone through

it, it is \$4 million. That is the grid extension that Government pays to EFL to extent the grid. That is covered in Head 40.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- This is additional non-commercial obligation for Fiji and Energy Fiji Limited to provide subsidies.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- A supplementary question, Mr. Chairman, so where does electricity subsidy that we give to the households below \$30,000 come in?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- That is within the social welfare....

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- That is the one.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- That includes that as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Parliament will now vote on Head 50.

Question put.

Head 50 agreed to.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, please take note that Heads 51 and 52 are Standing Appropriations or below the line Appropriation. Head 51 lists all the pensions that are payable. These are a charge on the Government finances. Head 52 are the charges on account of public debt. These numerous pages lists all the information on interest and loans, neither Head is voted upon because they must be paid and are therefore already catered for.

Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of the Estimates. We shall now proceed to considering the Schedules and Clauses of the 2023-2024 Appropriation Bill 2023 (Bill No. 3 of 2023) as required by Standing Order 101. I advise the honourable Members that as we have not amended the Estimates, Standing Order 101 prevents any amendments being moved and made at this stage. Standing 101(3) also prevents any debate on these questions.

Schedule 1

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

Question put.

Schedule 1 agreed to.

Schedule 1 stands part of the Bill.

Schedule 2

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

Question put.

Schedule 2 agreed to.

Schedule 2 stands part of the Bill.

Clause 1

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

Question put.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 1 stands part of the Bill.

Clause 2

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

Question put.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 2 stands part of the Bill.

Clause 3

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

Question put.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 3 stands part of the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, as no Member opposes the Head is agreed to unanimously and that brings us to the end of the Committee of Supply. We have now concluded voting on Heads 1 to 50 as well as the Schedules and Clauses of the 2023-2024 Appropriation Bill 2023, (Bill No. 3 of 2023) and therefore I will now resume the Speaker's Chair.

The House resumed:

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the Committee of Supply has agreed to the 2023-2024 Appropriation Bill 2023 without amendments.

On that note, I now call upon the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics to move the third reading of the Appropriation Bill.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr Speaker, Sir, I move:

That the 2023-2024 Appropriation Bill 2023 (Bill No. 3 of 2023) be read a third time and be passed.

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

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes - 29
Noes - 24

Motion agreed to.

[A Bill for an Act to appropriate the sum of Three Billion, Seven Hundred Sixty-One Million, Nine Hundred Seventy Nine Thousand, Four Hundred Four Dollars for the ordinary services of Government for the year ending 31st July, 2024 (Bill No. 3 of 2023) enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. (Act No. of 2023)]

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members Parliament has now passed the 2023-2024 National Budget as I had alluded to earlier.

(Acclamation)

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the week-long Budget process is essential and vital for Parliament to fulfil its constitutional obligation. On that note, I take this opportunity to thank all honourable Members for your contributions during this integral process.

I also congratulate the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics on the successful passing of the 2023-2024 National Budget. Thank you, honourable Members.

Honourable Members, that bring us to the end of the sitting today. Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 8.39 p.m.