

NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

DAILY HANSARD

THIRD MEETING – EIGHTH SESSION

THURSDAY 1ST FEBRUARY 2007

The Speaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter Kenilorea took the Chair at 10.00 a.m.

Prayers

ATTENDANCE

At prayers all were present with the exception of the Minister for Department of Provincial Government and Constituency Development and the Members for West New Georgia/Vona Vona, West Guadalcanal, East Honiara and West Honiara.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS
AND REPORTS**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Mr SPEAKER: Before Parliament continues with its business on asking and answering of questions, I just want to inform the honorable House that a technician would be going in and out testing our sound system. Please just take note of that and don't be worried about him.

**REPLACEMENT OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE**

1. **Mr HAOMAE** to the Honourable Minister for Police and National Security: What action(s) have the Minister taken to replace the Commissioner of Police?

Hon TOSIKA: Mr Speaker, as he is well aware, section 43(2) of the Constitution is the power to appoint the Commissioner of Police vested under the Governor General acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime

Minister in consultation with the Police and Prison Service Commission. The procedure is the same for termination of such appointments.

However, in accordance with the advice tendered by the Attorney General to the Government to advertise the post, actions taken to date by my Ministry is that documents containing relevant background information, responsibility, job description, qualifications and experience required in this regard to the post have been forwarded to the Public Service Division.

As I have said earlier, I do not have power under the Constitution to appoint or to revoke the appointment of the Commissioner of Police. It is the full responsibility of the Governor General and the Prime Minister in consultation with the Police and Prison Services Commission.

Mr KEMAKEZA: Can the Prime Minister or the Minister confirm to this House that section 44 of the Constitution has been fully complied with on this particular issue?

Hon SOGAVARE: Mr Speaker, I do not have the Constitution here with me, but if the honorable Member can read me the provisions of section 44 I may be able to respond.

Mr Kemakeza: Mr Speaker, what I meant is that the appointment and termination of the Commissioner of Police is under section 44 of the Constitution. Termination of such offices has to be complied with similarly to the appointment. Whether or not on the advice of the Prime Minister through the Governor General to officially terminate the Commissioner of Police which the Minister for Foreign Affairs did not allow to come into the country then you can advise the Governor General again to make a new appointment of

the Commissioner. The question is whether that section is fully complied with.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, that process is going ahead now. Submission has gone to the Police and Prison Services Commission to advise His Excellency to revoke the appointment of the incumbent. Only if that happens we can then proceed on to appoint a new commissioner.

Mr HAOMAE: Mr Speaker, I am well versed with the fact that the appointment of the Commissioner is done by the Governor General after consultation with the Police and Prison Service Commission but the actual recommendation for appointment is an executive function therefore it is done by the Prime Minister and I think the Minister for Police being responsible for national security and police will also have some views on the courses of action pertaining to the appointment of a replacement for the commissioner of police.

I want to ask this question for the Prime Minister or the substantive Minister for National Security and Police to answer. Does the government envisage that the new Commissioner of Police will be a local person or someone from overseas?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, that is an administrative matter. We will cross the bridge when we reach it but the first thing to do first is to officially get His Excellency to revoke the appointment of the incumbent first before we can deal with that question.

Mr Haomae: Does that imply that no action has been taken by the government to replace the Commissioner of Police?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, the actual process to replace the Commissioner has not happened yet although there are discussions going ahead but that is normal Mr Speaker, to look at names and things like that. But I want to assure this House that any appointment of a new Commissioner will have to be done through the normal process.

Mr Haomae: Mr Speaker, just in case the Commissioner of Police comes from overseas (an overseas personnel) can the Government guarantee that the Commissioner will not be declared persona non grata?

Mr Speaker: That is a hypothetical question and I will not allow it. It is asking for opinion and I will not allow it.

Mr Kemakeza: Mr Speaker, I am sorry I did not get the last part of the answer given by the Prime Minister on whether or not this particular provision of the Constitution has been followed.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, if the Member for Savo/Russells referred to section 44 of the Constitution then what I said was that the process is going ahead now. Submission has gone to the Police and Prison Service Commission so that it sits down and deals with this appointment because it is actually frustrated by the exercise of another power by a Minister of the Crown so that process is going ahead. Only after the Police and Prison Services Commission has finished with its deliberations then it will make submissions to His Excellency to revoke the appointment before we can talk about a replacement or recruitment of a new commissioner.

Mr Kemakeza: Mr Speaker, I am clear with the appointment but what about the termination of the last commissioner of police? Is this particular provision followed so that it is done according to our Constitution? That is the point I am driving at because as soon as that is cleared the government can do otherwise. That is the point which I want either the Prime Minister or the substantive Minister to answer.

Whilst I am still on the floor, Mr Speaker, I would like to say that the Minister for Police cannot be excused that he is not responsible. It is under the Constitution that in the absence of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Police has total rule.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, I do not know where we are taking this question to but I have

already answered it. On the process of terminating the incumbent, submission has been made to the Police and Prison Service Commission to deliberate on it, and then to advise His Excellency to revoke it. That is the process that His Excellency wants to follow. Mr Speaker, I think I have answered that question.

Mr Haomae: Mr Speaker, in fact I am entitled to an answer to my earlier supplementary question because precedence has already been set. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, and just add on to it, Immigration, so that he can go ahead to use it, has declared the Commissioner of Police a persona non grata. So it is a matter of national interest that the government must guarantee that if it recruits a commissioner of police from overseas it will not declare that commissioner 'persona non grata' again because the precedence has already been set. I am entitled to an answer to my supplementary question. The government must not brush this aside.

Hon Tosika: Mr Speaker, I think to further clarify the issue, section 44 in this case cannot be applied on the basis that the former Commissioner of Police has been by an ordered from the Minister of Foreign Affairs declared a 'persona non-grata' not to enter this country and therefore section 44 in this case cannot be taken into consideration. He was bound by the Immigration Act that he is not allowed to enter the country therefore the due process of appointing a new commissioner of police which comes under section 43(2) is the process the Government is looking at.

Mr Speaker: Subject to the Attorney General's assistance here, section 44 does not specifically refer to the appointment of a Commissioner of Police. It is just a provision for the Prime Minister and the Governor General to constitute further officers if they want to, and it is a general section rather than a section specifically referring to the Commissioner of Police's appointment.

In other words, under this provision the government can make appointments for offices of the government. But I suppose

Parliament cannot interpret its own law and so the Attorney General's advice might be useful here.

Mr Kemakeza: Mr Speaker, the last part of this particular section says "*may constitute offices for Solomon Islands, make appointments to any such office and terminate any such appointment*".

Mr Speaker: Yes, but it does subject it to this Constitution, which means that appointments of other offices does not necessarily come under this particular provision. Anyway would you like to make any comment A.G. to help us out? Otherwise we bush lawyers just confuse ourselves.

Attorney General: Just on the second question, the Chamber is not aware that the Commissioner of Police has been declared a persona non-grata.

Hon OTI: Point of order Mr Speaker, are we on my question now or are we still in the first question.

Mr Speaker: They are trying to help us clarify what section 44 of the Constitution is for.

Attorney General: Section 44 is basically a general provision which empowers the Governor General to make appointment and to terminate appointment upon the advice of the PM. It is not the relevant section to debate upon in this Chamber.

Mr Haomae: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for answering the question and the acting Attorney General.

I am only concerned about my last question on the persona non grata issue otherwise we are looked upon as a banana nation.

Mr Speaker: Maybe you can raise that in your question number two?

PERSONA NON GRATA – COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

2. **Mr HAOMAE** to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade: What is/are the reason(s), if any, for declaring the Commissioner of Police persona non-grata?

Hon OTI: Mr Speaker, I thank the MP for Small Malaita for his question. I have not declared the previous Commissioner of Police or the incumbent a persona non-grata, so therefore there are no reasons I can give in relation to this question.

Mr Speaker: The same reason why he has not declared the reasons for taking the action he did still applies and he does not wish to declare it in relation to this question.

Mr Haomae: Mr Speaker, I have just returned from my constituency and the radio waves always say 'referred to persona non-grata'. I will resubmit the question.

ROAD NETWORK – ISABEL PROVINCE

4. **Mr RIUMANA** to the Minister for Infrastructure and Development: Isabel Province is one of the main provinces in Solomon Islands with no road infrastructures. Can the Minister inform the Parliament if the Ministry has plans to develop or construct adequate road network for Isabel Province beginning from my constituency of Hograno/Kia/Havulei?

Hon SOFU: Mr Speaker, first of all I would like to thank my good Member of Parliament for Hograno/Kia Havulei for his unselfish concern for his constituency and to also put straight some facts concerning roads in Isabel Province.

Sir, Isabel Province actually has approximately 13 kilometers of road overall and therefore to state that there are no road is misleading.

Hograno actually has 13kilometers road from Kaevanga to Kolomola and with its high agricultural potential and also other important social services infrastructure, this particular road is a potential candidate for

inclusion in the Ministry's reconstruction program in the near future.

Secondly, it is the current government's policy to open up new development infrastructures around provincial economic growth centers. What this simply means is that economic growth centers will pull infrastructure developments even in large areas that are densely populated such as the honorable Member's constituency.

Building roads is an expensive exercise and therefore it would be irresponsible on our part to just build roads for approximately \$40million when there is uncertain potential return on such huge investment.

Mr Riumana: Mr Speaker, first of all the 13kilometer road from Kaevanga to Kolomola was built by manpower, which means no proper engineering work and so the road conditions are not safe for humans to travel on. Since there is no road, the coffee project in Kolomola finally collapsed. I would like to know the time frame for these roads to be constructed.

Hon Sofu: Mr Speaker, I would also like to thank the honorable Member. The 2007 recurrent budget, I think, caters for technical engineers to go out and do assessments work on new roads like the one you are talking about.

Mr Riumana: Mr Speaker, since Isabel is completely without road, can that study be prioritize for my constituency?

Hon Sofu: Thank you again honorable colleague for Hograno/Kia. Your point is well taken. I take note of it.

Mr FONONO: Mr Speaker, can the Minister inform the House as to why the Buala-Gozoruru road appeared in last budget but was not constructed and so it appeared again in this year's budget. This road is in Isabel Province which relates to this question -infrastructure on Isabel. What are the reasons why the government did not attempt at all to do a study

or even start working on that Buala/Gozoruru road?

Hon Sofu: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the honorable Leader of Opposition for that very important question.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Infrastructure is still waiting for more information about the road from the Provincial Government but it is yet to give us that information. Mr Speaker, we are still waiting for further information from Isabel Province.

Mr ZAMA: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the questioner for this question. Mr Speaker, I understand there are a number of logging companies currently operating on Isabel just like any other islands in Solomon Islands. Based on that, logging companies have built a number of roads along the coast and maybe into the hinterlands of Isabel.

Take a case in point, Mr Speaker, Rendova has had the same thing. (I have a map here that shows the island of Rendova) I am just taking a case in point whereby we have engaged a logging company and the island is crisscrossed with all these roads which currently are still being used.

What I want to raise here, Mr Speaker, is that we cannot reinvent a wheel in terms of these roads. What is the government's plan to assist Isabel with these logging companies and maybe some of the aid donors in trying to facilitate and maybe rehabilitate or improve the existing road infrastructure that is on Isabel now?

Mr KEMAKEZA: Mr Speaker I think the MP for Rendova/Tetepari is on the wrong boat. The question is straightforward just asking the Minister and the government.

The supplementary question is like this. The Minister has assured the House that a feasibility study will be carried out. What proportion of the 2007 development estimates is allocated for this particular road and the one he assured me for Savo/Russells too?

Hon DARCY: Mr Speaker, I guess supplementary questions that have been drawn into this question involved budgetary figures

and I suggest that any questions that may relate to the budget should be left to the budget when we come to discuss it so that Members will know additional information that may be required on questions of this nature.

Mr Kemakeza: Mr Speaker, in fact the question should be answered correctly. We are just asking if there is any allocation in this budget any proposal or plan for this road.

We have in the budget the Buala-Gozoruru road but this particular road being questioned is not in the budget. If the Minister assures Parliament that there is an allocation, it appeared in the 2006 budget but the Minister failed to implement it. That is why I am asking this question on what proportion of the \$16 plus million which appears in the development estimates would be considered for the Hograno/Kia Havulei road. And then I just add on Savo/Russells because the Minister assured me as the MP for Savo/Russells that my road will be in the 2007 budget. That is when I will question the Minister because his letter is already with me.

Mr Speaker: Could we restrict our questions on road to Isabel Province and not on Savo/Russells?

Hon Sofu: Mr Speaker, I would like to answer the question asked by the Member for Rendova/Tetepari earlier on today.

Mr Speaker, it is in the policy of the government that existing roads constructed by logging companies must be permanently constructed to the required standard.

I think it is very important for any logging companies that construct roads to construct them to the required standard. Thank you.

Mr Fono: The Minister earlier on informed the Chamber that the reason why they did not implement the development budget estimates for the Buala-Gozoruru road is because they are waiting for information from the Province.

Can the Minister outline what sort of information is he waiting from the Isabel Provincial Government so that if they are listening in they can provide that information.

I say this because the implementation of development budget estimates for Buala Gozoruru road in 2006 was not done.

What sort of information is he still waiting from the provincial government?

Hon Sofu: Mr Speaker, the Buala-Gozoruru road is still waiting for the Province's engagement with one of the logging companies in Isabel that is doing that project. My Ministry is waiting for invoices to be sent to us in order for us to make reimbursements.

Mr Fono: Is the Minister saying that the logging company will construct the road and the government reimburses the company? Is that what he is saying rather than the government committing its own funds to build that road?

Hon Sofu: Yes, an arrangement was made between Isabel Province and the logging company to construct the road and the Ministry will make reimbursement payments.

Mr Zama: Mr Speaker, I am not quite pleased with my colleague for Savo/Russells for injecting into my question. But I thank the Minister for answering the question.

Mr Speaker, like I have said, not only this government but previous governments do not have the capability and the capacity to effectively construct or even to supervise roads in the provinces. And that is why I am asking the honorable Minister if his ministry can work closely with provincial authorities and donors.

Many of those logging roads are very good roads – they are properly surfaced and so I would like to know what is the government's plan in terms of getting our donors and the operators together as this bottom up, partnership, people participation kind of approach to seriously look into road issues like this.

Mr Riumana: Mr Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the Minister for using the logging companies to construct roads. However, we must be very cautious because sometimes these logging companies use that as an

incentive to import machineries on duty remission but in turn use them for logging.

Does the Ministry have any mechanisms in place to ensure the machineries are used for road construction?

Hon Darcy: Mr Speaker, I thought the Minister has already answered the question. The way the government finances these roads is on reimbursement basis and not through duty remissions.

Duty remission is different from reimbursement of the cost of the construction that companies normally request reimbursement from the government.

But in the case of companies that have been granted remission and have used them for other purposes, we are not aware of that. It is good that the honorable Member has sounded it out so that we can extend our monitoring system to cover such an abuse.

Mr Zama: Mr Speaker, I want the Minister of Works and maybe Finance to clarify this one.

Can the honorable MP for Kia/Hogran/Havulei go ahead to engage private contractors and then come back to the government for reimbursement for constructing the roads in Isabel?

Mr Darcy: Mr Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure has already stated that we are encouraging provinces that would want to build roads that they see as absolutely essential for development in their province to go ahead with that kind of arrangement and the government will assist on reimbursement basis. The Minister has already stated that and so that is the policy we will embark on.

Mr Kemakeza: Mr Speaker, next time do not rule off Savo/Russells because I am entitled to an answer in relation to the same subject matter.

Mr Speaker, the point raised by the MP for Hogran/Kia/Havulei is a valid point, but the MP for Rendova/Tetepari confused the whole thing as well as the Minister for Finance.

I want to know any monitoring mechanism by the Department of Finance and

Treasury that is complementary to the point raised by the MP for Rendova, which I do congratulate him for raising that point.

I think the question is, what are the mechanisms so that when the Minister of Finance gives logging companies a certain percentage of exemption the exemption is for a particular road or clinic or school. Because if there are no mechanisms in place it is very likely to end up in the hands of landowners like what has happened to Rendova and sometimes ends up in the nightclubs. What are the mechanisms purposely for development purposes in a particular area?

It is a very good strategy and the Minister of Finance is a logger himself and he has done several projects with his logging company. It is just the mechanisms that we want to know, which is the point raised by the MP for Kia/Hograno/Havulei and also the MP for Savo/Russells.

Hon Sofu: Mr Speaker, the Ministry or the Government for that matter does not have any arrangement with loggers. No. For this particular case on Isabel Province, it is an understanding between the Province and the logging company for the company to carry out the work and then invoices are to be sent to the Ministry for reimbursement.

Mr GUKUNA: Mr Speaker, the problem with this is that it looks like this arrangement to involve logging companies as getting very attractive and we are shifting the responsibility of the government to logging companies.

My concern is that Rennell has no logs and so that kind of arrangement is very difficult and we will have to depend on central funding for construction of roads if it is going to be built on my island.

My question is, and that government must answer this straightforward. Is there money for it or not? If the government has money why not construct the road itself?

Hon Darcy: Mr Speaker, I think we are drawing this question too far to point at logging companies. This is not a logging company issue. It is the question of financing road construction in the provinces where they

believe it is absolutely essential for the development of the provinces, and the Minister has already answered it that if the provinces find a contractor to construct the roads the government will reimburse them. It is basically a financing arrangement the government has entered into.

On the issue of duty remissions to logging companies is a separate issue altogether from this question but because the MP for Savo mentioned it, and you have allowed him, let me just tell this House that the conditions for granting exemptions normally includes the monitoring of how the recipients of remissions use the concessions, and we follow them. The last government did that. It dispatched a mission to go and monitor how the applicants use the remissions. But this government does not grant any exemptions. It has strictly enforced guidelines to ensure that whatever remissions are granted will pass certain tests, which is not an issue for this particular question. But let me just say this because we have never granted any exemptions to any companies in the nature that the MP for Savo has mentioned. Thank you Mr Speaker.

Mr HUNIEHU: Mr Speaker, I think the Minister of Transport and Works needs to inform Parliament just to quantify his statement today because the only allocation for infrastructure development in the development budget is the \$10.8million which will be funded by ADB and whether the project of my good friend here is part of that program. This is already a negotiated work program and so whether this project is also included in this program.

Hon Darcy: Mr Speaker, as I have said there are a number of supplementary questions that pointed to some of the issues that will be dealt with during the debate on the budget itself including the Rural Road Transport Plan and the fund that is envisaged from donors. To give justice to possible questions that may arise, perhaps we should leave it until the budget is presented so that we can all have the benefit of those information. Thank you Mr Speaker.

Mr Huniehu: Mr Speaker, I am sure the Minister did not answer my question. I just want the Minister for Infrastructure to quantify his statement. He has already informed this Parliament that the program for Isabel in terms of road development is now on. In the development budget only \$10.9million was allocated for road infrastructure and normally when aid donors are identified in the development budget, it means the programs have already been negotiated. My question is whether the project of the questioner is part of the project program.

Hon Sofu: Mr Speaker, we have not yet debated the 2007 budget. But to answer the honourable Member's question, \$1million is in the development budget for this particular road in Isabel that we are now talking about.

Mr KENGAVA: Mr Speaker, my question comes with a comment. I think from the answers we are getting, it is clear to me that the government has no policy on how and what procedures to follow in the construction of roads in rural areas. Therefore, I would like to ask whether the government will come up with a policy to look at constructing of roads in rural areas accommodating logging roads.

Hon Sofu: The present government has policy on the construction of roads in the rural areas. This comes under the National Transport Plan of the present government.

Mr OLAVAE: Mr Speaker, before I ask my question I would like to inform Members of Parliament that the colonial masters ruled us for 85 years and all the roads we are talking about need improvement because they have been built for the last 85 years and they are now in deteriorate state. And not Isabel alone wants improvement to its roads.

When we talk about roads, we are talking about billions of dollars for improvement of roads throughout the country. We want a recovery program to improve the deteriorating roads throughout the country.

This government is talking about the bottom up approach and the growth centre to

start stimulating rural development and so we have to start somewhere, and not necessarily a 30km road for the government to fund. May be a 5km road where the growth centre will be to start off so that the people mobilize themselves to start revitalize commodities like copra, cocoa.

My question is, does the government for that matter already negotiated with donors because we are talking about billions of dollars here, not ten million because it is for roads throughout the nation. If we are really serious in revitalizing the rural economy we are talking about billions of dollars for the 50 growth centres. Has the government already looked ahead five to ten years plan down the road?

Hon Sofu: Mr Speaker, I think the questions we are asking on the floor of Parliament on roads have been there for a long time now. Successive government comes and goes and this present government is only in office for about 10 months and it has put in place a policy to provide road access to our rural dwellers in terms of infrastructure, which my Honorable colleague is talking about.

I mentioned already in my answer that we have created a National Road Plan where each province comes up with its own plan on their priorities so that we can work according to the plan so that when any aid donor comes along it will pick it from there whether it is for this province or this area.

Mr Kemakeza: The Minister mentioned aid donors. Is there any consultation by the Minister with aid donors on this particular sector?

Hon ABANA: Mr Speaker, the Ministry of Development Planning has had its first consultation with donors a week ago and this will continue on six weekly basis.

Mr Kengava: I think the National Road Plan mentioned by the Minister is a welcome. My question is whether there is consultation with the provinces in drawing up the National Road Plan because if the national government had

done so then I am expecting to see the road plan for Choiseul too.

Hon Sofu: Mr Speaker, I think it is very clear that when Cabinet passed the National Transport Plan last year, we contacted the Provinces whereby the Provincial Secretaries and Chief Planning Officers came and attended a workshop.

Mr TANEKO: This question is very important to the nation as a whole. Since the good Minister is new in that area, I want him to tell the House whether before the Budget was set he consulted his colleague ministers of the nine provinces on the roads throughout the nation because the topic raised on the floor of Parliament today is about roads.

I want to inform the Minister that we must be serious to consider building roads in the rural areas. In Shortlands when logging companies left the roads are no longer used. I want the government of the day to commit itself to this budget, and not only for roads but shipping as well.

Mr Speaker, the Minister must know that the strength of the nation is in this Ministry. When you talk about copra you have to have proper roads everywhere in the rural areas.

I want the new Minister to consult with his provincial ministers of road infrastructure to have strategic plan everywhere. TA's must be sent everywhere throughout the nation to identify where road is needed because that is the strength of the nation. So many TA's have been allocated millions of dollars. The nation needs TA's to go down to the rural areas because both the previous government and this government are talking about the bottom up approach. We want to see TA's to be in the rural sectors to identify where roads are really needed.

Mr Speaker, as I stand here, how are my thousand bags of copra going to come up here? I want my Minister to hear me.

I want the Minister to construct roads in every constituency in Solomon Islands.

Hon Sofu: Mr Speaker, thank you for that question or statement, I am not sure. Sir, I

think I have made myself clear today that this present government has put in place a national transport plan.

On participation of provinces, I sent letters to provincial governments and even to Members of Parliament. I would like to thank the Honorable Member for Central Kwara'ae because he is the first one to respond to my letter.

Hon Speaker: Could we restrict ourselves to Isabel again please, honourable Members. It is a network on Isabel Province that we are asking questions on.

Mr Riumana: Mr Speaker, I wish to thank the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Development for his answers and may I on behalf of my people thank him for his assurance that it is a blessed New Year's news for my people.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT – MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

5. **Mr RIUMANA** to the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock: Can the Minister inform Parliament of the rural development concept to be adopted by the Ministry?

Hon KAUA: Mr Speaker, the general policy of the government to assist rural development concept to be adopted by the Ministry is like this. This time we would like to involve the rural people to participate. The general policy of the Ministry is that we will enter into a partnership approach where rural development resource owners participate with the government and we will enter into a MOU in any program that involves the people. That is the process policy that we will adopt to involve rural people in the first place.

The Ministry provides technical assistance and resource owners on their part secure land before any activity or project can be entered into with resource owners so that the onus is on resource owners to start developing their own projects in their area. But in other areas this policy is well featured in the development budget and the budget itself, and it would be remissive to preempt what is

going to be highlighted by the Minister of Finance when he delivers his budget speech.

Mr HAOMAE: Will the concept be plantation driven or smallholder driven?

Hon Kaua: It will be both, smallholders and big plantations. But we will also adopt the subsidy system like before for coconut and cocoa.

Mr Haomae: What would be the ratio of emphasis? Would it be on smallholder or plantation? Because it is both, what would be the ratio of emphasis?

Hon Kaua. It will be both. The ratio will depend on the volume of activity that is going to be adopted whether by smallholder or the plantations. The same process and policy will apply to both.

Mr Riumana: The current extension approach has shown no significant impact to rural development farmers. Does the Ministry any plans to change the extension approach?

Hon Kaua: Certainly, this is an area that is very important and the Ministry is seriously addressing it to find where it would be much more appropriate to apply this system in order for it to work.

Mr Kengava: I think any rural development concept especially in agriculture requires a strong and very active manpower down in the provinces, like the Agriculture Division. Are there any plans to accommodate and strengthen that capacity? At present that is the greatest weakness in the provinces and that is why agriculture development really goes down.

The Agriculture Division in the provinces is not working. For example, my rural development program under the RCDF requires people to get recommendation or report from Agriculture Officers, but the Agriculture Officers instead tell people that that they do not have canoe, engine and money to inspect their projects. This is where the problem is, and because of that I cannot

implement the RCDF effectively because government officers in the provinces are not working or may be they are not capable. We should put senior capable officers in the provinces and expand the role of the Agriculture Division in order for the new rural concept to work.

My question is, what are you going to do in relation to that to make this concept work?

Hon Kaua: Yes, certainly the Ministry is aware of the problems affecting the past and we are aggressively addressing manpower strengthening so as to give the right people to the rural area to do the work.

I can assure you that this is an area the Ministry is addressing very aggressively with the Public Service to ensure right people are placed to carry out rural services in the rural areas.

Mr ZAMA: The rural development concept is very much at its infant stage at this point in time. What has been experienced in the past is the lack of coordination in the provinces and the national government and by different departments and sectors.

Mr Speaker, what is the Government going to do to really drive this concept? The issue here is that people in the rural areas would want to work but they find extension officers, whether it be agriculture or forestry or fisheries, not at post or are almost non existent, those extension arms of the government.

In order for the government to really drive this concept, there has to be well focused coordinated approach to really drive this rural development concept. What is government at this stage has in mind or plans to have the ownership in driving this program?

Hon Kaua: I think I have already answered that question because that is what the government is looking into at this time. You cannot do any work if you do not have tools and the manpower to carry it out, and therefore the government is making as part of its policy tools and manpower to ensure the right people are recruited to do the work because we want to see action. There is enough of talking,

enough of planning and we want to see action at this time. In order to do that you have to have the right people and the right tools for the people to do the work.

Mr Huniehu: The development budget is already given to Members of Parliament and there are statements made by Ministers against the development budget already.

The Minister for Agriculture stated this morning that the Government has established new work based on a memorandum with our rural farmers and they have only allocated about \$3million for this program to kick start cocoa and coconut investment, and we must be fair to our people. How could this new policy initiative work with that kind of money?

Hon Kaua: As I said earlier on, anything that concerns money will come at its right time. When we debate the budget we will then see how it will work because money will come from that side. At this point in time, as I said, it is not appropriate for us to preempt things that we will talk about in the budget because the answer is in the budget.

Mr SITAI: This supplementary question relates to the strategy in applying this rural development concept. The question is, will this be applied on a national basis or will it be worked out on a first come first serve basis?

Hon Kaua: As we can see, the constituencies too have their plans to make it happen. But I hope this policy will help to make the stages apply the same thing to meet the different areas that needs to be developed.

Mr KEMAKEZA: I am happy that the Minister is looking at manpower strengthening for this important rural development. Commercial undertaking has stopped. It almost died out and similarly smallholders. What is the Government's position on new crops and the legislation part because that is part and partial of this drive towards rural development in agriculture. Staff training is fine right, but new crops and also reviewing of

legislations is what I would like to know. What is the position of the department?

Hon Kaua: Those are areas the government is looking into at the moment. How are we going to make these things work? Therefore, we have to address manpower, logistics and so on. These are part and partial of the whole process in order to implement the policy, and the government is conscious of this and is currently addressing it at this time.

The government is looking at some of the failures we have done in the past and try to remedy it. How would it be possible to short circuit some of the things we find are wrong in the past and put them right? This is part and partial of the whole process the government is looking into, to implement this policy.

Mr Kemakeza: Mr Speaker, the Minister has not answered my question. The program of the department is diversity bill as well as a bill on quality to assist smallholders in the rural areas. How far has the Department in preparing these important legislations to take care of this important development?

Hon Kaua: As I said that is part and partial of the whole preparation. If the bill needs to be changed because the bill will address these things but it does not do what it is supposed to be doing then certainly it must be changed. This is part and partial of the whole thing that we are looking into.

Let us not forget that these things do not happen in the past. In terms of regulation to make it work we have to change the regulation so that it makes the situation we face to work. We just cannot delay because of the bills. The Ministry and the Government is working on this at this time because we want to see things happen. We just do not want to talk about them and we do not want to see this only happen on papers. The government is conscious of all these things and we hope these things will be addressed before things can happen.

Mr TOZAKA: In relation to the coordination and implementation of this policy, in the past the functions of Agriculture were devolved to

provincial governments, but today the functions have been centralized. Because of this situation, the staff at the rural level are waiting for instructions to implement the policies from the Ministry. Is the responsible Minister aware of this deadlock?

Hon Kaua: We already have people in the provinces that do not have work. And so I hope this time we will make them work by giving them these things to work on. If there is need to go back to what is workable in the past, certainly we will look at that to make it work because we are the ones to make it work. If it needs new people or injection of equipments and all that then it is something that we have to look into. This is part and partial of the whole process to make the things we want to happen must happen.

Mr FONO: This rural development concept has been very widely publicized. What makes this new concept different from previous rural development concepts by successive governments since independence? What are the expected outcomes that the nation would anticipate in implementing your new concept? Can the Minister inform the House and the nation?

Hon Kaua: The only difference is the involvement of resource owners in the first instance. The resource owners work in their own areas and the government helps them to own those things. That is the difference.

Resource owners are involved in it and it does not involve people from outside coming in to do it. It is the involvement of resource owners themselves to own things and they work on it and manage it. That is the ultimate objective the government wants to see so that resource owners own the things and they work to own those things and whatever money that comes in from their work is also owned by them. That is the difference

We are not giving it to different people to own it. We are now changing the policy from the third person to become the owner or resource owners to be the owners of the things that we want to do. That is the difference from the past and previous government's policies.

Mr Fono: Mr Speaker, the Minister did not answer the other part of the question as to the expected outcomes of this new concept. In the agriculture sector smallholders is owned by local people. That is not new. May be this is new in your constituencies but not in my constituency. Local people own agriculture. They export cocoa and copra.

The question that other colleagues raised was how that will translate into the budget. That is what we failed to see with only \$3million for cocoa and copra. What are the expected outcomes if the Minister can inform us with his new concept because agriculture is predominantly smallholders, local people own it, and only plantations are owned by overseas investors?

Hon Kaua: Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for informing us of this very important issue. I think I have said that the outcome is that they will have money and they will fully contribute to the national economy. That is the outcome.

You made an example in your constituency. I hope the people own the money and not somebody else owning it and the people working for him. If that is the case then it is not the outcome. The outcome is that people should have the ownership and economically they have money and they are masters of their own sweats. That is what we want from the outcome. We should not work for someone else and he gets the benefit and we sweat for nothing. That is the outcome, and I hope I answered the question by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Kemakeza: Mr Speaker, what will be the difference with the scheme that is currently operating in the former SIPL and the proposed plan that is intended for Auluta Basin and Vangunu as well as other major undertakings? What is the difference in the new policy that the Minister is starting to preach about? What is the difference here?

Hon Kaua: The difference is that land will no longer be alienated land but it belongs to people. That is the difference on what is

happening this time. The government is intending to give back all alienated land to the owners so that when projects are developed, the owners will benefit from it.

I think we have recognized what is happening this time at Gold Ridge and that is why landowners are still asking to get a full share. Not just one or two person but the full share. That is the difference on what is happening now and what we want to do and see happen.

The total ownership of things becomes the resource owners', the people of this nation, the people of this country, those in the community because that is what we want. We do not want it to be half, half and people just go on crying. That is the difference.

Mr Kemakeza: Mr Speaker, the Auluta Basin program is not on alienated land as the Minister may think. It is fully customary in a cooperative manner. Let alone SIPL and Gold Ridge, which is water under the bridge. The future is what the Auluta Basin is driving at. Is that the approach the Ministry is taking?

Hon Kaua: Mr Speaker, this is the intention for the Auluta Basin. The oil palm will be first acquired by the government and then after acquiring it, it shall be given back to landowners to carry the perpetual land title, so that the process of taking it back to have this idea of ownership will be the end result of it. That is the difference we will be seeing with the Oil Palm here and Gold Ridge. The acquisition will be taken by the government but the perpetual title will be given back to the landowners. It means the land is given back and the landowners must develop it. That is the process we are going to do with the Auluta Basin.

Mr Kemakeza: Mr Speaker, on small holders. People are already cooking copra, cocoa is being cut, fishing and timber are going ahead and the list goes on and on. The only problem is capital to run. Is the approach the present government is taking to give smallholders money to go ahead because some of them are already running? Is the approach of this

government is to give money to smallholders to run things themselves?

I am already satisfied with the diversity bill the Minister has assured us that he is going to look into it. But in this case, people in this country, farmers and smallholders are waiting. That is the difference, let alone what has gone through the constituencies where Savo/Russells has given quite a lot of copra buyers to buy copra out of this. Not only engine and roofing iron because roofing iron will rust and so we must give some money to buy copra, cocoa, fish or timber.

Hon Kaua: Mr Speaker, you will see provision for that in the development budget. When the development budget comes, certainly. But you need to have a good house too before you can do these things, so roofing iron is needed too. May be you will provide it for the people of Savo/Russells to have good housing first before they can do those things. I hope the honourable Member for Savo/Russells takes into consideration to give roofing iron to his people so that they live in good houses before they can take the projects.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Speaker, I totally agree with you on work. We have been talking too much and not putting this development concept into action. To give a time phase on this, Mr Speaker, what sort of timing are we talking about to implement your program?

Hon Kaua: Mr Speaker, the time frame is when funds are approved we are going to start. What are we waiting for? Start now and stop talking. Let us start. Setting the time frame will depend on when the budget is approved for us to start.

Mr Riumana: Mr Speaker, does the Ministry of Agriculture have support of development partners to physically address his rural development plan?

Hon Kaua: Mr Speaker, certainly the Ministry has support in the development budget to make it work. I think there is a little bit proportion in the development budget for

agriculture because we want the activities to happen.

Mr Riumana: What is the time frame for the ministry to formulate the rural development concept?

Hon Kaua: If you look at it properly I think we are making it to go into strategies for implementation. We must not wait. It is already in the strategy to be implemented and if you see that it has been reflected in the budget it means that it is now time for implementation because the concept is already finished.

Mr Kengava: I think the new concept implies that alienated land will have to be returned to landowners in order to participate. I can see a little bit of problem in this one, and I want the Minister to further clarify whether what he said that alienated land will be affected. Are there criteria or conditions or regulations that will regulate the return of alienated land? Otherwise landowners will want to get back land that schools are on to do development? Or clinics to do agriculture development or even church land where mission stations are on.

Hon Kaua: Mr Speaker, we know that land that is good for agriculture is what we are talking about. Land that is not good should be left out. If there is land that is good for agriculture then certainly that is what we are going to address. Other land for other things should be left out.

Mr Kemakeza: Supplementary question for the Deputy Prime Minister. This government is now one year but it is still living on last government's budget even at the beginning of the first quart of this year.

Mr Speaker, what will be the difference from that budget you are living on to that of the new one that is going to come?

Hon Kaua: Mr Speaker, as you rightly said, right now we are waiting for the budget. And this is the budget that belongs to this government. What we are working on this

time belongs to the previous government. So until we pass this budget and if you look at the development budget it has some big money there. That is the difference. We will sure that what is in the development budget is going to be implemented because the money is there. It is not going to be like before that we talk about something in the development budget but there is no money attached to it and as a result projects that over the years are over and over again. But the difference between this budget is that what is in the development budget is definitely going to be funded because the money is there. That is the difference.

Mr Speaker: The Honourable House is still very interested but I thought in terms of the concept of development of rural concept, we seem to have properly answered the question.

Mr Zama: Mr Speaker, firstly I wish to thank the hard working Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture.

When we look at Solomon Islands we have the 50 constituencies, and this rural development concept is to cover the 50 constituencies in Solomon Islands. If you look at the geographical location of all these 50 constituencies, not all 50 constituencies are good for agricultural development. Take for instance, Malaita Outer Islands, is far too remote and may not be good for agriculture but may be good for other things. VATTU is so faraway and maybe other outlying constituencies or even constituencies just like Central Guadalcanal, which is very difficult to have access to.

Mr Speaker, I want the Minister to make it clear, what is the government's plan to evenly distribute developments in the 50 constituencies because when we talk about rural development all these 50 constituencies are separate entities and that the engine of growth must participate to wrap up this whole bottom-up rural development concept. What is the government's plan to evenly push these developments into the 50 constituencies?

Hon Kaua: Mr Speaker, we have almost covered everything on rural development. I thought we were talking about the agricultural

sector but nevertheless it is an interesting area that we want to cover. To answer the honourable Member, if you look at the appendix of the development budget, it spreads out areas the government wants to develop across the provinces in different sectors and all that.

I hope as the Chairman of the Public Expenditure Committee, he should have already realized that under the budget. But certainly these are areas we are looking at now to sectorise things and to proportionate them in the different provinces. They are already inside the development budget. I hope with that answer it will complement what is already in the development budget.

Mr Speaker: I wonder whether in view of the fact that a lot of these debates will come again during the debate of the budget whether the honourable Member for Hograno could accept the fact that at least the concept has been well covered of his question and he might wish to now thank the honourable minister.

Mr Riumana: Before I thank the Minister for Agriculture just allow me to make a brief statement. Judging from his answers it is very clear that there is no development concept in the Ministry and they are only talking about implementing strategies. Before and after independence and still now there is no farmer in Solomon Islands that turns commercialized despite millions of dollars therefore it is a crystal clear message that rural development concept needs to be reformed and restructured. With that I encourage the Minister for Agriculture to reform the Ministry and I thank him for his answers.

Hon Kaua: Point of order Mr Speaker. Can I just thank the respondent for his comments? I would like to thank him because he was in agriculture before, and he should have looked at these things. Since he was with agriculture and he just finished last year why didn't those things happen? So the onus is on the person who works there, I just came in this year. And if there is anything that has not yet happened which you have not seen any tangible impact

in the Ministry then I think you are part of the group that needs to make it happen.

COSTS – SUSPENDED ATTORNEY GENERAL

6. Mr FONO to the Prime Minister:

- (a) Since the appointment of the Australian to the post of the Attorney General, is it true that the Solomon Islands Government is meeting the cost of his stay in Solomon Islands?
- (b) If Solomon Islands Government is meeting the cost, how much has it cost the government to meet his cost of accommodation, food, telephone bills etc since his appointment up until the end of December 2006?

Hon. Fono: Mr Speaker, was there any agreement signed as an employment contract with the suspended Attorney General and the Solomon Islands Government?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, yes I can confirm that there is a brief agreement signed between the SIG and the Attorney General, but the legal advice we got was that though suspended by the Public Service Commission, he is still the Attorney General, not until his appointment is being terminated or provoke until he will not be entitled to his accommodation bills paid by the Government.

Mr Fono: Further supplementary question. When was the agreement signed?

Hon Sogavare: As soon as the Attorney General signed it was sent to him by fax and he signed it. The fact that he is purportedly suspended by the Public Service Commission, the Public Service Commission agrees that he is duly appointed.

Mr Fono: Can Parliament be given a copy of that agreement for purposes of transparency because there are allegations that the post was offered to him but there was no contractual

agreement to formally appoint him as a public officer or Attorney General and now the Government is continuing to meet the cost? Can Parliament be given a copy of that agreement Mr Speaker?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, the fact that formal institutions in the country continue to entertain issues about this man, it is just common knowledge that there is a document like that. But if Parliament wants to see it is a simple document that the government made and signed to inform the government that he accepts the job on a fixed salary and that agreement also stated that his other terms and conditions will be dealt with as soon as he formally signs the full contract. Mr Speaker, we can make that particular document available to Parliament if you desire so.

Mr Huniehu: Mr Speaker, now that he is suspended has the government any plans to terminate him?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, the process is still going on. He is still challenging in Court his suspension and until that process is completed before we can decide what we can do next.

Mr Huniehu: Mr Speaker now that he is suspended and yet he is incurring committal and legal expenses for the Solomon Islands tax payers to pay?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, the legal opinion I got was that the appointment, as I mentioned already, until all issues surrounding his suspension are dealt with by the Court because he is challenging that, at this point in time we are advised that it is perfectly legal to continue meeting his bills.

Mr Kemakeza: The appointment of the suspended Attorney General was done when he was abroad overseas and at the same time whilst he was still overseas certain commissions revoked his appointment. Who executed that contract on behalf of the government abroad? And if it is so how did they legalize this?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, to correct the Member for Savo/Russells, the appointment was not revoked. Under Section 42(2) only the Prime Minister has power to advise the Judicial and Legal Services Commission. I do not want to go through these things, Mr Speaker to advise the Legal Services Commission to make appointment or revoke it. These are issues before the Court.

I do not know whether you want me to go through discussing things that are before the Court. His appointment was not revoked and the only person that has the power to advice on his revocation is the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

On the contract, yes it was signed by me, I sent it over and he signed it, and the legal systems of Solomon Islands accepted that one. The fact that he is suspended, as I mentioned already, the systems in Solomon Islands recognized that he is duly appointed.

Mr Tozaka: In the light of capable Solomon Islanders who can fill this post substantially. One of whom is now acting and one is administering the Attorney General.

Mr Speaker, suspension means there is a question attached to his character. If we have our own Solomon Islanders who are capable, they are available in the government. Can we give this post to them, to our Solomon Islanders, Mr Speaker?

Mr Speaker: It is a totally new question Prime Minister. If you want to want to answer you can answer.

Hon Sogavare: It is a totally new question and I think it is intruding into the area that only the government can decide on those matters. I would rule that question out.

Mr Haomae: Mr Speaker, I have not heard the Hon. Prime Minister well, but in terms of the bills, telephone bills etc, whether the suspended Attorney General is paid salary from public funds.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, that is an issue too. He is suspended without pay.

Mr Huniehu: Can the acting Attorney General give legal clarification to this issue where the Prime Minister of the nation signed an Agreement with someone who is holding a constitutional post and where the Public Service Commission failed to appoint him.

AG: Mr Speaker, I cannot clearly hear the question. Can the Honourable Member repeat himself please?

Mr Huniehu: Mr Speaker my question is that the Prime Minister mentioned that he had an employment agreement with the Attorney General. According to our constitution this is supposed to be appointed by the Public Service Commission. Who has the power to make the appointment?

AG: Mr Speaker, the legal position in relation to the appointment of the substantive AG is that he did enter into a contract of employment with the SIG. The issue of whether he was legally employed or not is a non issue on Her Majesty's Government. It has never been challenged. The issue now before the Courts is his suspension. And that is a matter which the Court is yet to decide on and pending the outcome of any court ruling, I cannot dwell on details in relation to his suspension. But the issue of whether he was legally appointed or not is a non issue as far as Her Majesty's Government is concerned. It has never been challenged at all whether the substantive AG was constitutionally appointed or not.

Mr Speaker: Excuse me. I am now being enlightened by the explanation that in fact we are discussing an issue before the Courts because you are referring to suspension and apparently it is a suspension issue is being challenged. At the moment I cannot allow continuing debate on the issue of suspension of the AG because it is apparently before the Court.

Mr Haomae: Mr Speaker, I am not talking about the suspension but the cost implications as envisaged by the question. It is a precedent in the Public Service that when public servants

go on suspension are they are half pay or full pay. I think the Prime Minister said its cost implication is without. What is the difference as a matter of precedent?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, I have said already he is suspended without pay. But in terms of the costs that he incurred in here in bills and accommodations, we are legally advised that it is appropriate for the government to continue meet them until his issue of suspension is dealt with.

Mr Haomae: I know that but the other public servants, for purposes of applying the law across the board, it applies to all public servants that when they go on suspension they receive half pay or full pay. What is the difference here, Mr Speaker? That is the point I would like explanation.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, I am not worried about the other things but the question is about the suspended Attorney General and I can only answer on the basis of legal advisor tendered to me.

If you want to question other public servants then that is not the issue here. Mr Speaker, if you are aggrieved by this decision then take us to court.

Mr Speaker: As far as the present procedure is concerned and as far as I am aware, suspended officers can be paid either on half pay or full pay until the issue is clarified.

Mr Huniehu: Mr Speaker, just a point of concern, and the precedent now is that a suspended public officer without pay can continue to incur costs on the government.

I hope that this is not treated in the future with our local Solomon Islanders and even with expatriate officers employed by the Solomon Islands Government.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, this is not a new precedence because people suspended are still occupying government houses, and so it is not a new thing.

Mr Speaker: The point should be clarified that a suspended public officer who is on half pay or not paid is still an officer until his case is fully dispensed with.

Mr Fono: Mr Speaker, looking at the cost incurred during the two months of November and December, it is now costing taxpayers SI\$50,000.00 for that cost.

We anticipate him to remain in the hotel in the next couple of months and so within one year or 12 months he could be incurring more than \$300,000.

Can the government look at the possibility of providing him a residential property so that it is cheaper in the long run?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, we will take note of that.

Mr Huniehu: Mr Speaker, this is only addressing the cost of accommodation in Solomon Islands. What is the cost of bringing him over here in that military flight?

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, that is a new question and I don't want to answer it.

Mr Tozaka: Mr Speaker, we used to be very mindful of costs when suspending public officers. Sometimes they were advised to go back home but on full pay so that we don't pay expenses like this.

In this case can we make decision like that in the interest of cost to the government? In the light of the Leader of Opposition's question that we look at alternatives so that we can save money like we used to do to our public officers.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, the government also does not want to incur costs if his coming is not frustrated by some people. We are forced into this situation Mr Speaker to be like this. We will take note of the comments by the MP for North Vella but as I've said we are forced into this situation and it is not something that we want.

He is taking this matter to court and it might end up with the government paying a lot of compensation on this matter. We could be

talking about more than \$50,000.00 because somebody forced us into this situation.

Mr Fono: Before I thank the Prime Minister for the answers, this is a concern to us because his parents are with him already and the government has allocated a government vehicle to him. So to double this cost is a concern to us as national leaders. What is so special that we are incurring these costs on this suspended Attorney General? Given the situation we have gone through there are qualified lawyers that we can employ at a reasonable cost.

With these few comments, Mr Speaker, I thank the honorable Prime Minister for his clarification and answers.

Statement of Government Business for the week ending Friday 2nd February 2007

Bills – First Reading

The 2007 Appropriation Bill 2007

MOTIONS

Hon Sogavare: I beg to move that this House do now adjourn.

The House adjourned at 12.00 pm