

## WEDNESDAY 11 NOVEMBER 2015

The Speaker, Mr Ajilon Nasiu took the Chair at 10.03 am.

Prayers.

### ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Ministers for Education & Human Resources Development; Fisheries & Marine Resources; Culture & Tourism; Women & Children Affairs; Foreign Affairs and External Trade; Mines, Energy and Mineral Resources and the Members for Savo/Russells; Ranogga/Simbo; North East Guadalcanal and North Guadalcanal.

### **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS**

- The Solomon Islands Electricity Authority 2014 Annual Report. (*National Parliament Paper No.13 of the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the 10th Parliament*)

### **STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER**

#### Statement By the Prime Minister

Civil Aviation Airport Contracts

**Hon MANASSEH SOGAVARE** (*Prime Minister*): Thank you for giving me the opportunity to clear the air in relation to a news item that went out from the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation saying that the Prime Minister has direct vested interest on airport contracts which is the reason why the former Minister for Civil Aviation was reshuffled from that ministry. Since the allegation was directly against me and the news said to the effect that I denied it, I need to clear the air on the reason why certain decisions are taken when it comes to ministers of the crown.

When it comes to the issue of reshuffling ministers, that matter is rightly the prerogative of the Prime Minister in consultation with party leaders. I have never taken any decision to reshuffle ministers on my own. The former minister is not here because I would like to have him here to listen to this. The reason for reshuffling is purely on non performance. As Prime Minister leading the government I would like to see performing ministers in their posts. It is good to hear reference made on some issues that are not progressing in that ministry.

The Air Services Agreement with Fiji and PNG are not progressing. I had specifically requested the policy on the airport contract to must come before Cabinet and to be led by the Minister for Aviation. It involves two other ministers for a joint policy paper to come before Cabinet; the Minister of Civil Aviation and the Minister Infrastructure Development and, of course, the Minister of Finance and Treasury to be spearheaded by the

Minister for Civil Aviation. That policy never came to Cabinet; not at all. The state of the airport is below standard. I would have expected ministers responsible for those portfolios to attend to matters like that.

Nothing seems to be moving on this matter, which the Minister for Finance slightly touched on yesterday on the undersea cable. The policy aspect of it is from the Ministry of Aviation and Communication working jointly with the Minister for Finance in driving this thing forward, and days are catching up on us. The understanding is that the ADB wants us to make a decision on this by the end of this month. We probably have to seriously decide which directions to go, and I am glad the new minister is taking that on.

The reshuffling of the former Minister for Civil Aviation is not because I have vested interest on the contracts. These people have the audacity to go out in the media raising that kind of statement. Yes, there is a contract under the name of EMS Enterprises. That firm is owned by my family working with their sisters from the Fishing village. This firm was awarded a contract about five years ago for the domestic airport. If you go to the domestic airport, you would see that is probably the only place where work is actually happening. There is a provincial park thing put up there on refund basis for only \$18,000. There are also other Members of Parliament awarded contracts there as well for \$70,000 just for cutting grass and nobody complained about them. We can name Members of Parliament who have contracts at the airport, but I am not going to do that out of respect for leaders. This issue was raised just because it is the Prime Minister. It was just recently that that contract was increased. And you can see work happening there every day. We built that provincial park first and then ask for refund later from the ministry. We did not cost out anything and then ask for payment. Those doing the work were just cousins and nephews. It is the lowest of all the contracts given to people that have contracts to work at the airport.

We are still waiting for the policy on the contract because it is needed for next year's budget. A policy needs to come from the ministry so that we decide on what to do. And once we decide on the policy, Members of Parliament need to accept the decision made. Since this matter was raised, we can either continue giving to small contractors to do the work of cleaning the airport or the Government employs people to do cleaning up of the airport. For outside, we might give it to small contractors and for inside the airport only people with authorization can go inside and do the cleaning up there. This is not only for the Henderson airport but also for airports in the provinces. There is this talk that there are issues with some airports because those that do the cleaning up are not the landowners. There is this thinking that we might need to look at awarding contracts to those owning the land so that they can benefit from the existence of that infrastructure on their land. This thinking is discussed around Cabinet so when the policy comes we will make the decision and implement it next year. There are two options here and that is either we still continue to give it to small contractors so that money is distributed to people that need to work and earn money or give it to big contractors to do the work or maybe have government employees do the work.

I just want to make that clarification because people have the audacity to go out to the media; it came out on the SIBC broadcasted nationwide that the reason why I took action against those ministers is because I have vested interest in airport contracts. I just want to make that clarification and thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to do so.

**Mr Speaker:** I will only allow a few short questions on the statement we have just heard. Be reminded that debate is not permitted on ministerial statements.

**Mr CULWICK TOGAMAE** (*Maringe/Kokota*): I would like to thank the Prime Minister for his statement on the airport contracts. My question is whether the reshuffling of ministers, apart from the Civil Aviation, and also the recent independent members move here is based entirely on performance.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** That question sort of widely extends the reasons as to why I reshuffled the ministers. I have made it very clear to my ministers that I am not going to sack them. However, they were just afraid of being sacked and that is why they went away. They thought they were going to be sacked and so they just resigned. That is the strategy used now.

As I have said, reshuffling is the prerogative of the Prime Minister when he sees we are not moving in this particular area, then there reshuffling has to be done. We can go on and describe and talk about the reasons for removing specific ministers; some of them are not here in the House, but it is the prerogative of the Prime Minister in getting things moving. And as far as the Minister for Civil Aviation is concerned, I called him when the group came together to see me and I told him the reasons why I reshuffled him. I made it clear to him and then we sorted out our differences, we shook hands and we also cried. But all of a sudden he was on the other side.

**Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA** (*Small Malaita*): My question is in two parts and one is in regards to the Prime Minister's statement that he is still waiting for the policy on the airport contracts, which the leading ministry is yet to come up with. He also mentioned two other ministries that are also working together with the MCA, which are the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and the Ministry of Finance. In this particular instance, I want to know how the Prime Minister sees the performances of these two ministers in those two ministries. That is my first question.

The second question is in regards to the airport contract he mentioned, which is a private contract with a company that he is related to the people who own it. I think he mentioned the contract has been going on for five years already and so I want to know how long this contract is going to continue on.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** How long that contract will continue is entirely up to the ministry based on the new policy that will be put in place. The same too goes for those who get \$70,000 a month contract, and we can name Members of Parliament in this House that have contracts, which this new policy is also going to affect them. It is entirely up to the ministry when the new policy is put in place.

Yes, there are also two other ministries that are directly involved or jointly responsible for this policy, and they are Ministry of Infrastructure Development and the Ministry of Finance and Treasury. These two ministries are just waiting for the Ministry of Communication and Aviation to drive the policy because the contract is a matter directly under the Ministry of Communication and Aviation.

**Mr MATTHEW WALE** (*Aoke/Langalanga*): My question is just a follow up from the question by the Member for Small Malaita. With regards to the contractor that is related to the Honourable Prime Minister, whether it is an incorporated company, a limited liability company or is it under the business names registration. If it is under the business names

registration, who is the proprietor or individual named? If there is personal interest whether the appropriate disclosures have been made to Parliament and the Leadership Code Commission (LCC), if as an individual the Prime Minister has a relationship more than just blood relations, of course, to this organization?

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** If I start to list down the names of Members of Parliament in this House, and if they do that too would be very interesting. Just because it is the Prime Minister and so we are starting to.... Yes, that business is not a limited liability company but rather it is a registered business under a business name called the “EMS Enterprises”, and the partners of the business are me and matron and it has been disclosed. I would not do things out of government procedures. There are other Members of Parliament as well that have contracts and if I list them down, maybe they should stand up here so that we can question them as well.

**Mr. BRADELY TOVOSIA** (*East Guadalcanal*): I stand up here to say that I am also one of the contractors at the Henderson airport. I think it is good to tell the truth. I think we went through the process, and just about anybody can go through the process when the contracts were put on tender. We have legal documents to prove that we were given the contract. This is for people to hear. I am not sure but other MPs may also have contracts and they should also stand up and tell everyone as well.

I want to say here that the contracts at the airport involve a lot of Members of Parliament who also have vested interest in the contracts. I can remember very well it was put out for tender and Asians have interest in taking those contracts but luckily Caucus did not allow that. I think it is a much bigger story and we might be just talking on the surface of things only. There are many other things involve, which we may need to dig a bit deeper. I think a lot of Members of Parliament are directly involved but they cannot come out publicly about it; I do not know why.

My question to the Prime Minister is that I heard from documents going around that the contract involving your family and relatives have some issues about it. I think the documents are with some of us on this side of the House as to why your contract has been renewed until today. Can you confirm if the documents are procedural or not?

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** I am not sure about the documents he is referring to. But we have all gone through the same process. When the contract is up we express our interest to extend it and the contract is extended. Just go and see for yourselves the work going on at the Honiara Domestic Airport.

I do not know what document the MP is referring to, but we have gone through the same process to get the contract continue just like anyone.

**Mr Speaker:** I think we have enough questions on that particular statement so let us proceed onto our next business.

## **BILLS**

### Bills - Committee of Supply

The 2015 Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2015

## Committee of the Whole House

**Mr Chairman:** Honourable Members, we are in the Committee of Supply to consider the 2015 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2015. I would like to remind all Members that when we consider each head, Standing Order 64(3) requires that any debate on a head must be confined to the policy of the service for which the money is to be provided. We will begin on page 5 of the bill, Head 274 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade. We will now go through the schedule of the Bill first before we consider each clause.

### Expenditure by Contingency Warrants

#### Recurrent Expenditure

#### Head 274: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade -\$2,800,000

**Mr Ishmael Avui:** Regarding the title - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, is it a new ministry or what. The spelling of the word external, it is spelled 'extertal'?

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** It is a wrong spelling which anyone can just pick up. It is exactly a typing error.

*Head 274 agreed to.*

#### Head 279 - National Parliament - \$1,010,000.00

**Mr Connelly Sandakabatu:** My question refers to subhead Item 2201 - entertainment. Can anyone explain what this entertainment is for?

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** The amount of \$360,000 is to cater for outstanding payment for catering services already incurred during the election of the Speaker and the MPs Induction Program.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** Included here is the Hansard equipment which I suppose we can credit with the daily Hansard Reports. My question is with regards to, in the past we can access Hansard Reports online, but now it is just the minutes and summary. I am asking about the online access portal whether we are still able to access Hansard online now that we have daily reports coming out of this new equipment.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** That is a point worth noting. We will bring it to the attention of the Clerk and the Speaker. If we need to do that, we can do it and it is good so that the public can have access to the proceedings of the day on what Members of Parliament are saying on specific issues.

*Head 279 agreed to.*

#### Head 281 Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet - \$2,700,000.00

**Mr Matthew Wale:** I just want to know whether there is now a policy to cover the death of former Members of Parliament for repatriation. The amounts are quite substantial and whether there is now a standing policy going forward or whether these are just a case by case basis.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** As correctly observed by the Member for Aoke/Langalanga, it is on a case by case basis. It is a good point he raised that we may need to look into, especially Members of Parliament who have served this country in their capacity in different portfolios and ministries. It is good to extend that beyond their life in Parliament and, of course, after they passed away. It is a good point that we will take note of but with this specific case, the Government just stepped in to repatriate the body of a former colleague.

*Head 281 agreed to.*

Head 283: Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services - \$11,550,000

**Hon Jeremiah Manele:** Just a simple question to the Minister. I understand that this payment is for ex-gratia payments to Police and Prison officers that worked at the border during the Solomons/PNG crisis. If the Minister could inform the House as to how many officers are covered under this payment or who are entitled to the ex-gratia payments.

**Hon Stanley Sofu:** This amount caters for 226 officers.

**Mr Rick Houenipwela:** Still on that particular matter on police officers. I have sighted in the explanatory note that this payment is for those serving at the border during the Bougainville Crisis for officers now not currently serving. I would like to know what is happening to those officers that are still serving.

**Hon Stanley Sofu:** Those who have been paid already are the inactive officers, which I have alluded to earlier on today, which is a total of 226 officers and 221 officers are yet to be paid. It is for those who are currently serving and those who have died already.

**Mr Derrick Manuari:** My question is in relation to the ex-gratia payments. The explanatory note says it is for members of the Police and Prison Service officers. I understand that other government officers serving at the border during that time also have similar claims. The payment here, I guess, is a policy matter of the government. I would like to ask whether the government policy would also include these other officers which are not part of the police and prison service officers but are public officers. That is my first question.

Mr Chairman, if I can also ask the second question while I am still on the floor. In terms of the other payments, as we know, some people have their guns confiscated by the Government, their legally owned rifles. In the last budget the Public Accounts Committee raised this question whether payment of people with guns, I mean compensation, will still be included at any point by the Government. I would like to ask whether this will be included in the next budget or will it continue to be considered by the government.

**Hon Stanley Sofu:** That is a very important question asked by the Honourable Colleague. The point that needs to be clarified here is that those who were deployed to the border during the height of the crisis, the Ministry of Police brought this before Cabinet in 2008 and was approved. In regards to other ministries, it has to come under individual ministries to make their submissions. I forgot the second part of the question.

**Mr Derrick Manu'ari:** I would like more clarification on the second question. Will the compensation to rifle owners still come as a submission in any future budgets? I am asking because this is a long outstanding issue. Or is it going to be left as it is - compensation to rifle owners?

**Hon Stanley Sofu:** That is a policy matter which Cabinet will have to look into.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** I would like to know about the claimants for ex-gratia, whether the Ministry is now confident it has a complete list and those left is the only remaining part of the Government's liability under this particular expenditure item.

**Hon Stanley Sofu:** The total amount including tax is \$75million. The amount that was paid already is what we see there - \$11million. A supplementary appropriation for \$12million is made for the remaining ones – this is for active officers and the deceased. The deceased is about 42 officers and those still serving are 179 officers including 10 officers who made late submissions. This is still catered for under this supplementary appropriation.

I would like to also inform Parliament that five people have also made late submissions and therefore the ministry will have to bring these late submissions before Cabinet for its consideration.

**Mr Rick Houenipwela:** I am still not very clear about my first question and the explanation by the Minister and so I would like to ask another question. The Minister said that this amount is for deceased officers and those that are still serving. My question is what happens to those who used to serve at the border and are currently unemployed? Those that have retired already is what I would like to know.

**Hon Stanley Sofu:** I think I have already given the answer to that question. This amount covers those who have retired and are currently unemployed. They are referred to here as inactive officers, and there are 226 inactive officers.

**Mr Ishmael Avui:** I thought I heard it from the Minister that officers from the other ministries such as immigration, quarantine, nurses and so forth; he said tht it is up to their ministries to submit their claims. Last time when I was Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Public Service we did not allow claims from these officers. But now I have heard from the Minister that it is up to their ministries to submit their claims. Is that what the Minister was saying or I might have misheard him?

**Hon Stanley Sofu:** I think it is very clear that this amount is for the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services. I did not say that it is up to their ministries to submit their claims to my ministry. What I was trying to say is that it is up to individual ministry to bring a paper to Cabinet because they know the number of officers in their

ministries that went to the border, whether they be the marines, the nurses, works and so forth.

What we see here is government policy and so the Ministry of Police is doing its submission. The cost here is for the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services. Officers in other ministries, like the Ministry of Infrastructure Development where marine operators come under, the nurses and immigration, they will be under their own ministries. This is a cabinet decision from a cabinet paper of 2008. That is what I was trying to say earlier on today.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** Just a short question. We seem to end up in these kinds of situations. We have held FOPA and 10 years after we are still receiving claims. We send people to do something somewhere and years later we see claims coming.

My question is because policing and border protection is becoming ever more challenging, given the dynamic situation we found ourselves in this world, whether going forward the police have in their operational guidelines, manuals or whatever some standard rates that can be used where if officers go to serve in different situations, the rate to be paid is this. This is to avoid the officers themselves making the claims which can be excessive or not reasonable because there are guidelines there. I would like to know whether the police now have that or is now working on it and will have it going forward.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** That is a good suggestion that needs to be considered so that the government is not caught off guard when all sorts of claims come before it. I think that is the point put forward by the Member for Aoke/Langalanga and can be looked into.

Just to further comment on the questions that were raised about other officers working in Immigration, Customs and so forth, there is already a policy decision on this; it is not something new. Immigration and Customs officers were already posted at the border before the crisis happened and so it does not apply to them. What we are talking about here are people deployed under arms, people handling arms during the crisis facing the BRA and other. There is already a policy decision made on this and so it is not applied to those other officers. We only look at those deployed under arms.

*Head 283 agreed to.*

Head 293: Ministry of Home Affairs - \$3,693,067.00

**Mr Rick Houenipwela:** Can the Minister explain what exactly is there because the original estimate is just over \$4million and this one is almost \$4million too, about \$3.6 to \$3.7million. What did they have to pay which almost doubled the original estimate? Is it an increase to the contingent or the uniforms or what is it that made it to be very high?

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** I thank the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee for the question. Originally, when the sporting federations put their requests to the government, the thinking was that they will have to contribute themselves towards their airfares, per diems, etc. for the contingents that went to PNG. When the time for the games came closer, there was not any movement at all by the federations to help themselves, but there is a small budget by the government to contribute to the sports contingents that go. We know that the games will happen and we have allocated some amounts to assist them, and normally it is



on a dollar to dollar basis. So you can see it is almost the same amount, about 50 percent increase. The government had to step in at the last minute to salvage the situation by sending the entire team. The contingent did us proud when for the first time a contingent that was sent overseas brought back a lot of gold medals, silver medals and bronze. The government is committed to ensure that the next team that is sent to the 2019 South Pacific Games will be backed up by some of the best facilities. Next year we are allocating a standing amount to improve sporting facilities for our sports people. Thank you very much for the question and that is the explanation.

*Head 293 agreed to.*

Head 296: National Judiciary – \$714,170.00

**Mr Matthew Wale:** I want to know about the practice or the policy behind it; I know that last year or the year before on the case about the tenements at Isabel. The Government contracted one foreign judge to come and preside over the hearings into that. Now with this Town Ground Plaza, what invoked the necessity of bringing a contracted foreign judge to deal with a particular case? Does it have some pre-requisite qualifications on a particular case, so that on that particular case, one particular judge is brought in specifically for that case? Why are the current judges of the high court not deal with such a case?

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** I think we have the Honourable Attorney General here and so we can ask him to explain that.

**Mr Attorney General:** The reasons as to why the Town Ground case as well as the Sumitomo case need foreign judges to be brought in to hear them is firstly the cases are quite complicated and the other reason is because of the shortage of judges in country and the number of cases they have to deal with. These cases are also urgent and that is why we have to get somebody from outside to come and deal with them quickly.

The Town Ground case was filed in 2013 but because of the heavy work load by our present judges, the judiciary decided to bring in a judge from outside to come and handle that case. It is not only because of work overload, but also because of the complications. The case is a commercial one and therefore needs a judge with a good commercial background to decide on it.

*Head 296 agreed to.*

Head 299 – Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology - \$12,004,338.00

**Hon Jeremiah Manele:** I want to acknowledge the support given to the Government of Vanuatu and the victims of Cyclone Pam in this disaster relief. But can the hardworking Minister of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology enlighten the House as to the breakdown of that funding. How much was given to the Government of Vanuatu towards Cyclone Pam and for the NDMO to provide disaster relief to the victims of tropical Cyclone Raquel? I want the breakdown of that amount towards those expenses.

**Hon Samuel Manetoali:** I would like to apologize that I do not have the breakdown of those assistances with me here right now. But I can provide the information of the breakdown to this House through the pigeonholes. And I will do that as soon as possible, maybe this afternoon.

**Mr Connelly Sandakabatu:** I will repeat the question I have asked earlier on, which was directed to the Prime Minister at one stage. This is to do with the 10 constituencies who have not received their assistance for the most recent disaster. This is inclusive of about three constituencies in Choiseul Province. Will the three constituencies in Choiseul Province and others be included in the Supplementary?

**Hon Snyder Rini:** The 10 Members including the three Members of Parliament from Choiseul Province are not in the Supplementary. The amount is already there; \$4million is sitting there in the subhead, as I have said in my winding up speech, ready to be paid out. I have asked the Financial Controller of the ministry to make the payment of \$100,000 each, which comes to a million dollars. The amount sitting there under the current appropriation; the two contingency warrants is \$4million.

**Mr Bradley Tovosia:** I just want to be clear. Is this delay in providing supplies to our people will now be over with this amount here? Can the Minister confirm that?

**Hon Samuel Manetoali:** Yes, as soon as funds are available the work of MDMO will continue.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** An ongoing issue has been the capacity of the NDMO to respond efficiently and in a timely manner in a disaster situation. The issue has been raised a number of times but it seems not much has improved or it has improved but we are not clear about it. I wonder if the Minister can enlighten the Committee as to what specific steps are being taken by the Ministry to building up irreversibly the capacity of the NDMO so that disaster funds are not channeled through us, the MPs because we are already over loaded with our constituencies, but that the NDMO is able to do its job and do it competently.

**Hon Samuel Manetoali:** It is true that the NDMO is not very effective but now there are some improvements, for example, in terms of human resources has seen an improvement and also the networks - the relationship of NDMO with the provincial authorities, especially with different ministries which are located in the provincial headquarters, we work with them very closely, especially the Police. This relationship is becoming very good at the moment when other ministries also assist in the provinces. For example, when the NDMO does not have a boat and an OBM, the medical team and Police can help them with a boat. We are trying to share resources at the provincial level.

Within the NDMO itself, we are starting to address the human resource capacity there with more training as well. We are improving the NDMO so that it can handle situations when they come.

I thank the Member for Aoke/Langalanga for the idea he proposed yesterday. That is very good and we will take that on board.

**Mr Rick Houenipwela:** We have heard during the PAC inquiry when representatives informed us that in some of the places affected by the two cyclones, the reports about those places are not completed. In fact, officers from the provinces were recalled and work was discontinued. I want to know what the Ministry is going to do to ensure that reports are done so that assistance is provided based on reports. I want the Minister to enlighten the Committee on this.

**Hon Samuel Manetoali:** Thank you my good friend, the Honourable Member for Small Malaita for that question. Some reports are not yet here which means some more work still needs to be done. Under my direction work must be done. I must ensure that this is done.

**Mr Douglas Ete:** Through a Cabinet Paper, \$1million was given to Vanuatu and the rest goes to the Disaster Office. But during the Public Accounts Committee inquiry, disaster officers are still complaining as to why the \$10million was given but is still stuck in the hands of the 43 Members of Parliament. East Honiara, Central Honiara and West Honiara constituencies are not included as well as another four constituencies. Forty three constituencies have been extended the benefits of receiving this fund. Recently, the Director of the NDMO came out in the media and stated his disappointment as to why this arrangement has been done through Cabinet. There must be an explanation to it because we have established an institution to hand deal this. Was the minister being dealt with quite recently? A government institution is disappointed with the government or the Cabinet regarding that matter. I want to know whether that issue has been resolved amongst yourselves already or not?

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** That question ties directly at some policy considerations. If the officers of the ministry are not happy, then that is their problem. But the Government has to make some serious decisions.

I think earlier on during the debate, there were some references made to the ability of the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) to respond immediately after a crisis has happened. That is the issue here and thus the decision taken by Cabinet as the first line support. I am sorry that some constituencies are still yet to receive assistance. But the way things are happening at the NDMO; and probably the Minister will confirm this, the Minister is a very powerful minister, he can go to the shops and direct shop owners for bags of rice and whatever goods to be given to him because a crisis has happened. But he can only act after receiving reports from the NDMO after assessments are made before he can use his power to do that. Even though he has this kind of power, he is really powerless when it comes to first line of supply.

When a cyclone strikes what people need immediately is food, and the NDMO must be able move immediately to supply food. That does not usually happen and that is the reason why decision Cabinet made the decision for funds to come through Members of Parliament. There is the need to move through Members of Parliament and so they were each given \$100,000 for the first supply line to our people. But the point is taken and it looks like there is need to relook at the whole process again. If there is the need to amend the law then it has to be done so that the Minister is powerful and is powerful right from the very beginning so that he can walk in straight to the shops when a cyclone strikes and load bags of rice, put them on the boat and go direct to where the disaster occurs. But that is a point taken.

**Hon Jeremiah Manele:** I would like to thank my colleague MP for Aoke/Langalanga for giving me the opportunity and thank you Minister for your response to my earlier question in terms of the cost breakdown. After the meeting, I am going to check my pigeonhole for the responses.

I think in the long term and since we are aware of the increase in frequency and magnitude of natural disasters, maybe this is a good idea because I think this has been talked about in terms of the government trying to look into setting up a national disaster trust fund. I think this would be good in the long term, much more coordinated, I guess, instead of being adhoc so that we can respond much more quickly and appropriately when disasters happen, not only here in the country but also in helping our friends in the region in the event they experience disaster as well. This is just a thought the Government may wish to explore.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** Thank you very much, that is indeed a very good suggestion. Not only that but sport and things like that too, if we can establish a fund that will generate funds every week. The idea we are going to thrash out with the Deputy Prime Minister is for the Government to establish a state lottery kind of thing where every week it turns in money so that it feeds the trust fund and supported, of course, by annual budgetary allocations from the Government. This is to generate funds every week so that our people themselves help our people when the need arise. That is a very good policy question being proposed and the Government is seriously thinking about it and will share it in Cabinet. Thank you very much.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** This question is also in the same spirit. When Jesus was in Mary's womb and her sister went to visit her, I think Elizabeth is also pregnant too with her son, John Baptist at that time. When Mary went to visit her sister, she said that the baby in her womb jumped for joy.

When the Prime Minister stated earlier on today when we consider the Ministry of Home Affairs head that we want the contingent to the games to come back with many medals and so we are going to make a commitment and so forth, my heart too really jumps for joy. Mr Chairman, this is true. But when we come to disaster management, especially adaptation, my heart did not jump for joy but my heart would like to collapse.

I raised in the main budget last time and I also raised it in PAC again, I am raising it really just for the sake of registering. It is an absence, it is not in here but because the sea level is rising and we need to have a standing fund so that we are not just responding to disasters but we are moving ahead before disaster strikes.

I just want to register that so that the Prime Minister can raise my heart to jump up for joy.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** We take note of that very, very important policy suggestion by the Member for Aoke/Langalanga.

*Head 299 agreed to.*

*The total Recurrent Expenditure by Contingency Warrants of \$34,471,575.00 agreed to.*

## **Development Expenditure**

Head 479: National Parliament - \$2,524,211.00

**Hon Derrick Manuari:** My comment is in regards to the ongoing maintenance need of Parliament. This CW is mainly for the Paul Tovua Complex. But this building that we are currently under is in urgent need for maintenance, especially the systems, the air conditioning system. I think this was raised in previous meetings and I would like to raise it again so that the Government seriously takes note of so that we address this need, perhaps in the 2016 appropriation.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** We take serious note of the comment made by the Chairman of the House Committee. That is precisely the reason I am in active consultations with the budget unit of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury on the allocation to National Parliament in the 2016 Budget.

*Head 479 agreed to.*

*The total Development Expenditure of \$2,524,211 agreed to.*

## **Advanced Warrants Expenditures**

*Head 373: Ministry of Finance and Treasury - \$12,352,740.00 agreed to.*

Head 374: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade - \$819,200

**Hon Jeremiah Manele:** Under the explanatory notes for that head, it says this is Budget Support provided by the Enhanced Integrated Framework/World Trade Organization through the UN Office to implement a number of trade related projects in Solomon Islands. Can the Minister or Prime Minister clarify what and where are these trade related projects? Or does it basically refer to consultancies, conferences, workshops and things like that?

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** The Minister is not here, he went up to brief His Excellency otherwise he would have provided the information on specifically what those projects are. But as you know, the government has just passed a very comprehensive trade policy for Solomon Islands launched with the Director General of the South Pacific Forum. Currently, Solomon Islands is chair of a number of trade related meetings within the regions. With regards to more detailed specific trade projects, I can ask the minister responsible when he returns to outline it for the information of the Committee.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** My question maybe is a little bit out of line, but perhaps the Prime Minister could say so if he thinks about this case. This is with regards Pacer Plus - where are we on this and if any of this is to assist us in that process?

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** I can say yes. Pacer Plus negotiations really need to be relooked at. It comes to a position now that we might not be able to sign the Pacer Plus Agreement with the European Union. Thus, the two biggest countries in the region - Papua New

Guinea and Fiji have gone ahead and sign an agreement with the European Union. There is a lot of constitutionality in the agreement that is imposed on small countries, and we may not be able to sign it in the medium to long term. We therefore need to take some serious decisions as to what we can do. Cabinet will be consulted by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Relations in terms of how we are going to move forward with trade related discussions in the region with our major trading partners.

Yes, that is the budget and I can comfortably say that it goes towards helping us develop our positions in negotiations with our trading partners.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** Just for clarification. I was of the opinion that PACER PLUS is between the region, Australia and New Zealand and not the EU. I am aware, and for the Prime Minister to confirm the issues with that particular process with the EU, but the one with Australia and New Zealand is the one I am asking about.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** That is correct. Our issue of trade with Australia has been the supply side constraints in setting up market for taro, cassava in Australia. We can do that. To satisfy the requirements of entering the market is what we are having problems with, and so now we are actively talking. If that is our problem then we need to secure down our negotiations, and the only way to access the market is to satisfy the requirements of quarantine and customs. That is where the discussions are going on now. If we can set up the facilities here, please help us to do that. And so the discussions are going on along those lines with our big brothers that are very close to us. The big market is there and the things that we have here are there.

**Mr Douglas Ete:** It is true that PACER Plus is between Australia, New Zealand and the region. There are certain issues with PACER Plus which Cabinet has already dealt with and mandated. I am not quite satisfied with the Prime Minister's explanation. It seems like he is beating around the bush. He said that the legality of the agreements within the region and outside of the region is what the negotiations are about. Cabinet has already mandated the Government to move forward with it but how far it has gone with it is the question. We will be losing out on a lot of things. Within the region, the *sanitary* system here must be set and it is upon the government's political will before it can happen.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** The former deputy is telling us the right thing. Let us go ahead with it. Cabinet approved it and we are going ahead with it but he ran away instead; maybe he did not want to help out for us to go ahead with it. The ministry responsible for that will go ahead with that.

*Head 374 agreed to.*

Head 376: Ministry of Health and Medical Services (\$5,799,483)

**Hon Jeremiah Manele:** First of all, I would like to acknowledge the various donor partners there under the explanation notes which provide budget support for these activities. If the hardworking Minister for Health can enlighten the House whether this budget support is a one off thing or will it continue for a number of years, of course, based on certain benchmarks or conditions.

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'u:** We have asked the donor partners to come so that we can talk to continue with this assistance to Solomon Islands.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** Under the advance warrants is a list of public servants' salaries, does that mean they are not in the establishment or did they come in but their posts are yet to be created? Just need a bit of clarification here.

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'u:** These salaries under public service are paid under projects.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** If so, does that mean they are public servants or casual or contracted under those projects?

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'u:** Some of them are contracted and the Public Service has absorbed them into the public service.

*Head 376 agreed to.*

*Head 473: Ministry of Finance and Treasury - \$1,319,736.00 agreed to.*

*The total Advance Warrants of \$20,291,159.00 agreed to.*

*The total expenditure by Contingencies and Advance Warrants of \$57,286,945.00 agreed to.*

### **Variations in Appropriations**

Head 274: Ministry of Foreign of Foreign Affairs and External Trade

**Hon Synder Rini:** I move that Head 274 is reduced by \$1million.

*Amendment agreed to.*

Head 283: Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services

**Hon Synder Rini:** I move that Head 283 is reduced by \$4,203,290

*Amendment agreed to.*

Head 481: Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Hon Snyder Rini:** I move that Head 481 is reduced by \$6,626,000

**Mr Rick Houenipwela:** I want to ask about Head 481 under subhead 00-614016-2004 - consultancy fees. Is this reduction not going to affect the work that is going on there in terms of consultancy?

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** Yes, we have discussed that fully. This is just the accounting mechanism to reduce this particular item that is picked up in items we feel that we need additional resources on. I can say that we are comfortable with that.

**Mr Rick Houenipwela:** I want to ask on the same head on office rent. With this reduction of \$50,000, it would seem like there is not going to any vote on this subhead. I want to know what sort of rent is this and is there not going to be any rent for this place.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** As the Schedule shows, that is what it is going to be. I do not have the reason for this but we can provide later on. All these adjustments would have been fully discussed by the Accounts Section of the office before it is brought to Parliament. The same goes for the next item below it on training.

*Amendment agreed to.*

Head 488: Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Employment and Immigration

**Hon Snyder Rini:** I move that Head 488 is reduced by \$100,000.00

*Amendment agreed to.*

Head 496: National Judiciary

**Hon Snyder Rini:** I move that Head 496 is reduced by \$416,848.00.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Total offsetting savings of \$12,346,138 agreed to*

**Additional Recurrent Supplementary Expenditures**

*Head 272: Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development - \$46,880,580.00 agreed to*

*Head 273: Ministry of Finance and Treasury - \$27,250,000.00 agreed to.*

Head 274: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade - \$1,000,000.00

**Hon Jeremiah Manele:** Just a simple question. I am not sure whether the Minister is here but if the Prime Minister has any information on the breakdown of this one, how much goes to CFTC and how much goes to SPC.

I think just a small correction there as well, under the explanatory notes on grants to the Commonwealth Technical Funds for Cooperation. I think the name there is wrong. It should be Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation.

**Hon Peter Shanel Agovaka:** That fund is mainly to pay for our membership fee to the South Pacific Commission based in Noumea. Also, as you rightly said it Leader of the Opposition, it should be the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation. I do not have



the details of how much is for which one but they are mainly for those two. I will give you the details in your pigeonhole.

*Head 274 agreed to.*

*Head 276: Ministry of Health and Medical Services - \$3,205,300.00 agreed to.*

Head 277: Ministry of Infrastructure Development - \$1,577,120.00

**Hon Rick Houenipwela:** I would like to ask the Minister if he has a breakdown of this estimate in terms of purchases and hiring of vehicles. How many are new purchases and how many vehicles are being hired for Members of Parliament?

**Hon Jimmy Lusibaea:** After the general elections in 2014, the vehicles which MPs used during the previous government were all purchased by the MPs. This amount of \$1.5m is to pay for the hiring of vehicles at the beginning of the year for ministers because they do not have vehicles. This is because this amount is not appropriated for in the 2015 Budget.

**Hon Rick Houenipwela:** I am not asking for the reason but I am asking for the breakdown of this amount. In the explanatory notes, it talks about funding for purchases and hiring of vehicles and so my question is how many new vehicles were purchased and how many vehicles are being hired for Members of Parliament?

**Hon Jimmy Lusibaea:** I will need to find further information on that and will put it in your pigeonholes, maybe half an hour's time when we finish.

*Head 277 agreed to.*

*Head 279: National Parliament - \$880,000.00 agreed to.*

Head 281: Office of the Prime Minister \$6,626,000.00

**Hon Rick Houenipwela:** Under subhead 0061-0000-2706 - MPs and MPAs overseas other costs with an amount of \$1.1million. The explanatory note states it is for the Prime Minister's official trip to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings. I would like to know how many MPs and MPAs will travel with the Prime Minister on that particular trip.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** The explanation is there. Some overseas visits have already taken place. Quite a number of ministers have already travelled overseas. Some are overseas right now for the UNESCO Meeting and later on is the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the COP 21 Meeting.

There will be a number of MPs attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, which will be headed by the Deputy Prime Minister with two other Members of Parliament for that trip. The Minister for Environment will lead the delegation to COP 21 Meeting with two other Ministers when Parliament is in recess. The UNESCO Meeting is taking place right now and is led by the Minister for Education. All in all, there are five or

six ministers that have already taken trips and will be taking overseas trips for the last three international engagement of the Government.

*Head 281 agreed to.*

Head 283: Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services – \$45,527,458

**Mr Ishmael Avui:** Subhead 1903 on workers compensation. This head stands out very clear for that particular ministry. I understand that for the other ministries it is the Ministry of Finance that is paying them. Why did it stand out clear for that Ministry? Is it because incidence of workman compensation is high in that Ministry or why is it there?

**Hon Snyder Rini:** This amount is for the last payment for the police and prison service officers serving during the Bougainville crisis. This payment is the final one and it includes tax.

*Head 283 agreed to.*

Head 288: Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Employment and Immigration – \$350,000

**Hon. Jeremiah Manele:** Under the explanatory notes this funding also covers SINU apprentices training cost. Can the Minister inform the House as to how many apprentices are under these trainings; the number of personnel or apprentices that are covered in this training?

**Hon Elijah Doromuala:** We have more than 1,500 sponsored students at SINU. Our Ministry is involved with SINU teachers normally at the end of the year in going out to check exams at the rural centres and this amount is for expenses like fares, uniforms and so forth.

*Head 288 agreed to.*

*Head 289: Ministry of Communication and Civil Aviation – \$500,000 agreed to.*

*Head 292: Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs – \$422,880 agreed to.*

*Head 296: National Judiciary – \$4,133,848 agreed to.*

*Total Supplementary Recurrent Expenditure of \$138,453,186 agreed to.*

*Total Expenditure by Contingencies, Advance Warrants and Supplementary Expenditure Pressures of \$195,740,131 agreed to.*

*Clause 1 agreed to.*

*Clause 2 agreed to.*

*Clause 3 agreed to.*

*Parliament resumed*

**Hon Snyder Rini:** Mr Speaker, I wish to report that the 2015 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2015 has gone through the Committee of Supply with amendments.

Bills - Third Reading

The 2015 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2015

**Hon Snyder Rini:** I move that the 2015 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2015 be now read the third time and do pass.

*Motion agreed to.*

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

*The House adjourned at 12.11pm*