

## TUESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2015

The Honourable Speaker, Mr Andrew Manepora'a took the Chair at 10.28am.

Prayers.

### ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Ministers for Fisheries & Marine Resources; Provincial Government & Institutional Strengthening; Environment, Conservation, Disaster Management, Climate Change & Meteorology; Justice & Legal Affairs and the Members for Fataleka; North West Guadalcanal; East Honiara; West Makira; Savo/Russell Islands and South Vella Lavella.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

#### Question Without Notice

**Mr Speaker:** Honourable Members, the MP for Aoke/Langalanga has sought permission under Standing Order 21(4) to ask a question without notice. Permission was granted by the Chair and I understand that sufficient private notice has been given to the Government to enable the question to be answered. I believe the question relates to a matter of public importance.

**Mr MATTHEW WALE** (*Aoke/Langalanga*) to the Minister for Health and Medical Services: The question is with regards to the state of the National Referral Hospital. If the Minister can inform the House after the media reports as to the true state of the National Referral Hospital and what actions are being taken by the ministry to addressing the issues there?

**Hon TAUTAI KAITU'U** (*Minister for Health and Medical Services*): First of all, I want to thank the Honourable Member for Aoke/Langalanga for asking this very important question that we have seen a couple of weeks ago in the media. There has been a lot of news about the state of the National Referral Hospital. I agree to answer the question without notice when he asked me this morning because the public needs to know.

First of all, the good news is that there is no outbreak of tuberculosis at the National Referral Hospital. I repeat that there is no outbreak of tuberculosis at the hospital. It is unfortunate that one worker was suspicious of having tuberculosis so he is under treatment at the moment. The good news is that it is not a positive case; there is no positivity of his sputum, there is no cavitation of his lungs and so the risk of spreading tuberculosis is very small. There is no outbreak there and I hope this worker recovers well and I wish him all the best.

There has been a survey done and signed by the Permanent Secretary yesterday to find out what needs to be done at the hospital, especially at the outpatient and emergency department. The CEO will have a talk with the media today and there will be a media

release tomorrow. So if you want to see the details of that survey report of our hospital, better look at the paper tomorrow.

We are trying to reorganise the Emergency Unit by getting some more doctors at the Ministry to take course at the Hospital. There are nurses who have returned from Vanuatu who are being already appointed and we are looking at placements for them and some of them will obviously work at the Emergency and the Outpatient Department.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** A supplementary question. This suspicion of a tuberculosis breakout there, and it is good the Minister has clarified that there is no outbreak and this one particular staff that was sick did not have TB, his tests are not positive which is good. However, I think the fear comes from the non-functioning of the air-conditioning system and this has been for an extended period of time. I wonder whether this has been fixed or this is fixable or what steps are being taken by the Hospital Management and the Ministry to fix this?

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'u:** Yes, I have just spoken with the Hospital CEO this morning and work has started to look at ventilation by increasing window sizes and putting more fans in the Outpatient and Emergency Department.

**Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA** (*Small Malaita*): I have one question but in two parts. This staff who was sick but not with TB, what sort of sickness then was the staff suffering from?

The other part is in terms of the hospital itself where a lot of people complained about the drainage system there as a problem because it is actually very stinky and smelly. I spent one night at the hospital over the weekend with some relatives and it is true that it is very smelly. I am not sure whether the smell comes from the kitchen, the operating theatre or from other places but it is very smelly and sometimes patients with little knowledge about disease assumed that the smell is causing problems at the hospital so can the Ministry clarify.

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'.** The case of the staff with tuberculosis at the hospital is a different case. If the test is positive then definitely you have TB. There are some cases which are just suspicions from X-rays and therefore are on treatment for tuberculosis because of that. We have done this many times before, we treat patients with suspicious x-rays and they got better.

The state of the drainage, as I have said earlier a survey has been conducted or done signed by the PS yesterday which will look at the whole hospital and not just the outpatient and emergency.

**Mr CHARLES SIGOTO** (*Ranogga/Simbo*): Supplementary question. The Minister made reference to the nurses who have just returned from Vanuatu that they are ready to be recruited. I would like to know when are you going to recruit them since they have already returned a long time ago. Where is the hold up, is it at the Public Service or the Ministry of Health?

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'u:** Yes, there are 20 nurses who went to Vanuatu a few years ago. These nurses have returned and the Public Service has already re-appointed them. Right now their

appointment letter is being processed and we are just looking at their placement where some will be placed at the National Referral Hospital and some at clinics.

**Hon Jeremiah Manele** (*Leader of Opposition*): A further supplementary question to the Minister. I note that there is no outbreak of tuberculosis (TB) at the hospital. But could the good Minister inform the House on the general trend of tuberculosis over the years? Is it on the increase or a decrease?

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'u**: Thank you Leader of Opposition for a good question. Tuberculosis has decreased dramatically in Solomon Islands. I do have figures but we have made very good progress with tuberculosis.

**Mr Ishmael Avui**: Those nurses who have been reappointed after coming back from Vanuatu, what levels are they reappointed to? Are they reappointed to the levels they used to be prior to their leaving and working in Vanuatu or are they reappointed to new levels? And what is the justification for their reappointment to new levels?

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'u**: The nurses are reappointed on the same levels they used to be in prior to leaving to work in Vanuatu.

**Mr Connelly Sandakabatu** (*North West Choiseul*): A supplementary question on this incident that shocked us in terms of the possibility of a hospital staff becoming sick at work is quite frightening or serious. Learning from this experience that we have had, does the hospital any plans to continue carry out surveys for not only tuberculosis but also other diseases that may transfer to our doctors and nurses? This is very serious because these are the people we do not want to get sick because they are the ones to help us. Learning from this experience that we do not want to repeat itself if it were true, does the Hospital Management have a system in place to ensure we can be able to work out this does not happen again with other disease while our doctors and nurses are at work.

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'u**: Yes, it is an ongoing program where health workers are always reminded to take precaution. Obviously with the improvement of ventilation to the workplace with more fans and a clean environment would really help. I think it goes to say that all of us should take note and not only workers at the hospital but all of us that if we have symptoms that we think could be tuberculosis, we must go and see a doctor.

**Mr Culwick Togamana**: My supplementary question is in relation to the capacity of the hospital to make appropriate diagnosis for this illness. Could the honourable Minister explain to the House whether we have appropriate machines or instruments that will enable workers at the hospital to quickly and correctly diagnose or identify this virus relating to TB?

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'u**: We do not have all the necessary equipment now. What we have are basic equipment to do with tuberculosis especially, where a patient only needs to do a chest ex-ray, sputum and maybe a man to test. We do not have all the equipment for other viral infections you are referring to.

**Hon Derek Sikua:** A supplementary question about an issue which causes a lot of problems at our National Referral hospital is water supply which can cause diseases to happen. I would like the Minister to inform the House on the issue of water supply to our hospital whether it is being looked at and rectified or is it still a problem.

**Hon Tautai Kaitu'u:** I have to be honest here that I am not very sure about the water supply but I can get some information about that.

**Mr Matthew Wale:** I wish to thank the Minister for Health and Medical Services for his answers, and more importantly keeping it on the board, making sure the National Referral Hospital is working and is working well. When the Ministry of Health and Medical Services appeared before the Public Accounts Committee, they said that they are adequately funded for 2016 and we are happy to note that so that we do not go back to the situation where staffs are being suspected as infected in the work environment. Thank you very much.

## STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### MOTIONS

#### Motion of Special Adjournment

**Hon MANASSEH SOGAVARE:** I stand to move that at the adjournment of Parliament on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015, Parliament shall then stand adjourned to 1.00 pm on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

The reasons are that the report of the Public Accounts Committee; I spoke with the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee this morning and I was told that the report is not ready until later this afternoon so we have to give time to the Committee to prepare the report to do things like photocopying and binding of the reports for distribution to Members of Parliament.

The reason for taking it all the way to 1pm tomorrow is that there is a march Against Corruption tomorrow. A number of ministers are going to participate, and I would like to encourage Members of Parliament who are serious about corruption, to please join those of us who are going to march starting from the Honiara City Council to the Arts Galley. There are going to be activities happening tomorrow morning which should finish at around mid-day and that should be enough time for us to return to Parliament and start the debate. Take note as well that we might need to take some of the sittings very late into the night so that every one of us has a chance to contribute and debate.

Those are the reasons for the special adjournment to 1pm tomorrow. With that I beg to move.

**Mr Speaker:** I will allow a few comments on this motion before I put the question.

**Hon JEREMIAH MANELE** (*Leader of Opposition*): I would like to briefly comment on the motion of Special Adjournment moved by the Honourable Prime Minister. I think the reasons put forward by the Prime Minister are quite straightforward. We need time for the

PAC to complete its report. It is important that we have an informed debate, hence the completion of that report.

The second reason given by the Prime Minister is also an important one. I would like to encourage colleagues on this side of the House and all Members of Parliament for the matter to join the march. It is an issue that we all have a common interest on for the sake of our country so I concur with the reasons outlined and the motion moved by the Prime Minister.

**Dr DEREK SIKUA** (*Leader of the Independent Group*): First of all, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for moving this Special Adjournment motion to 1pm tomorrow afternoon. As the Prime Minister has already explained, we need the report of the Public Accounts Committee to inform our debate and therefore it is important that the report is made available to all of us. Some of us are ready to debate but I think we need that report. In sticking with our Standing Orders it is important for us to have that report to inform our debate. Therefore, this side of the House does not have any problem with that.

The other reason which the Honourable Prime Minister also mentioned is very important. This side of the House does not have the details of the program and we would really want to participate and support the cause so if those responsible or even the Honourable Prime Minister himself might want to give us a little bit more detail when he replies in regards to this program. Otherwise we have no problem supporting this motion. Thank you very much.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare**: I would like to thank the Leaders of the Opposition and the Independent Group for their contributions in support of the motion. Since the Leader of the Independent Group has asked me to outline what is going to happen tomorrow at the International Anti-Corruption Day 2015, which will be marked tomorrow and end on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015 the celebrations which started on Violence Against Women we launched previously for 16 days and will end on the 10<sup>th</sup> which is the Anti-Corruption Day.

The program for tomorrow is that between 7am and 8am, walkers to assemble at the Honiara City Council Car Park. And so if you are busy the whole night lobbying then you need to sleep early tonight so that you stop doing that.

*Laughter*

And come ready to march at the City Council and so that kind of work must stop a bit tonight.

While those things happen at 7am, music will commence at the Arts Gallery. At 8am the walk against corruption commences at the Honiara City Council to the Arts Gallery. Opening prayer will happen at 9.15am, where the Solomon Islands Christian Association official is going to welcome and introduce the keynote speaker, and I was privileged to be asked to make the keynote address at 9.30am. I will do that so please come and listen so that you stop from doing the things you are doing now. At 9.45 is the official launching of the Anti-Corruption Song - 'Break the Corruption Chain' and the prizes for the essay and poetry competition will take place there. At 10am is the question and answer forum, hosted by the Prime Minister's Office representatives of which the panellists are the Law Reform Commission, the Leader Code Commission, the Ombudsman Office, Office of the Auditor General, Anti-Corruption Fraud Unit of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Department of Public Prosecution, Public Solicitors Office, Ministry of Police, National Security and

Correctional Services, Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, Financial Intelligence Unit at the Central bank of Solomon Islands and the Solomon Islands Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative. This will take place at 10am. At 12pm there will be entertainment against corruption program and lunch break. At 1pm other things will be taking place there but Parliament will resume at 1.30pm for us to start the debate. I hope I have cleared that query by the Leader of the Independent Group.

With that, I beg to move that at the adjournment of Parliament on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015, Parliament shall then stand adjourned to 1pm on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

*Motion agreed to.*

*(Motion is passed)*

**Mr Speaker:** Honourable Members, you may have noticed a carol program on your respective desks. As we are in the festive season, I am pleased to invite you all to Christmas Carols for MPs in the Parliamentary Leaf Hut when Parliament breaks for lunch today. The program is being organised for Members of Parliament by the Parliamentary Civic and Education Department and will be performed by the PTEC Choir. Thank you.

*The House adjourned at 10.58 am*