

DISCLAIMER

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Thursday 21st June 2018

9:08am

[Part A]

Message from the Council of Deputies, Hon Le Mamea Ropati

Pursuant to Article 59, Mr Speaker read out the Message from the Council of Deputies to permit the introduction of the following Bills:

Excise Tax Rate Amendment Bill 2018; and
Income Tax Amendment Bill 2018

I. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY – Reading of Bills

1. EXCISE TAX RATE AMENDMENT BILL 2018 – first reading

The Hon Minister for Revenue, TIALAVEA Fea Leniu Tionisio Hunt moved a motion to have the Excise Tax Rate Amendment Bill read a first time; motion seconded and approved.

2. INCOME TAX AMENDMENT BILL 2018 – first reading

The Hon Minister for Revenue, TIALAVEA Fea Leniu Tionisio Hunt moved a motion for the first reading of the Income Tax Amendment Bill 2018; motion seconded and approved.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (No.2) 2017/2018; and APPROPRIATION BILL 2018/2019 – debate on second reading (cont.)**GOVERNMENT RESPONSES:****1. Hon AFAMASAGA Rico Tupai, Minister of Communication and Information Technology**

The Hon Minister acknowledged the House and Samoa; mentioned that there were not many Members who raised issues/concerns in regards to the functions and responsibilities of the Ministry, Office of the Regulator, and the Samoa Post Office.

In regards to the instability of coverage in other areas of the country, the Hon Minister conveyed apologies and assured the House that continuous upgrades are carried out to ensure all of Samoa receives proper coverage for televisions and radios.

Hon AFAMASAGA stated that the Tui Samoa Cable which runs from Tahiti to Samoa has been installed successfully and will be operating at low costs, noting also that a contingency plan has been developed and will kick in when the cable encounters technical problems. In regards to the query relating to the cable running through Tutuila, it is being used for the time being until payments have been met then Samoa will cease to use the cable.

Hon PRIME MINISTER – Clarification:

The Hon Prime Minister elaborated on the status of the cable which runs through Tutuila that although Samoa is utilising this cable, it cannot be relied on as the connection is unreliable and slow when there is too much usage. The Hon Prime Minister explained that it was because of this the government had to secure another cable for ourselves and is expected to provide faster connectivity with sufficient capacity to handle the number of usages and economy.

Hon AFAMASAGA Rico Tupai, Minister of Communication and Information

The Hon Minister informed Parliament of an international warehouse which conducts maintenance works for the different cables running within the Pacific region. He further stated that the warehouse employs 60 individuals and it is government's intention to bring this warehouse to Samoa as it will provide another means of employment for our people. The Minister elaborated that currently the staff consists of people from Philippines and Malaysia (East Asia region); noting government's plans to include within the curriculum of the Maritime School the required skills and capacities needed to equip the students with the objective that in due time, these students will take over maintenance operations.

Another point clarified by the Minister was the national security and cyber security levels on the internet; stating that with any new development and innovation, comes strengths and weaknesses; thus the Ministry's efforts to find ways to solve these problems; emphasising the importance of the parent-child relationship within families; urging the parents to perform their duties of instilling

values and thresholds so that the child knows right from wrong when using the internet. Moreover, the Minister stated that the Ministry, Regulator and Samoa Post work collaboratively to ensure the services and products provide ease of access and convenience for its people and economy.

(i) LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi – Member for Gagaemauga No.3

The Member acknowledged the Minister's clarification and raised the importance of affordability to ensure everyone can afford accessibility to the internet.

(ii) OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai – Member for Salega East

The Member queried the commercialisation of Samoa's National Broadband, noting a conflicting role between the Ministry and the Office of the Regulator to issue commercial license for the operation of the Broadband.

Hon AFAMASAGA Rico Tupai, Minister of Communication and Information

The Hon Minister took note of the issues raised and explained the commercialisation of the license for the National Broadband is not with the Office of the Regulator as Government aims to centralise its internet usage and operations. The Hon Minister asserted, whether the license is awarded to Bluesky, Digicel or CSL, it will only be with one internet provider, rather than having multiple providers as this arrangement will reduce expenses for the government. Moreover, the Tui Samoa, Manatua, ASH cables are all directed to America and government also aims to access the Asian and other markets to ensure Samoa has access to all international information/data.

2. Hon FAAOLESA Katopau Ainuu, Minister of Justice and Courts Administration

The Hon Minister addressed Parliament and explained that there were no issues raised by Members. He then informed the House of the Ministry's future plans to construct a new Court House in the island of Savaii and scoping reports were given to foreign donors to seek funding for the project. The Minister then spoke to voice the requests of his constituents.

Mr Speaker – Interruption:

The Hon Speaker advised the Minister that if the issues raised by Members had been addressed then he should move on so as to save the House's time.

Hon PRIME MINISTER – Clarification:

The Hon Prime Minister stood to advise the Minister that requests do not need to be voiced, that can be addressed between the common relationship of Cabinet Ministers.

3. Hon LOAU Sola Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture

The Hon Minister for Education acknowledged all the Members who raised concerns with the Ministry, offered recommendations, made requests and acknowledged the efforts of the Ministry.

In regards to the issue of outstanding fees recorded by the National University of Samoa (NUS), the Hon Minister stated that this is another concern the ministry is looking into although the national University of Samoa values the education of its student's, fees must be paid. The National University currently offers 5 weeks overdue to seek funds in order to pay fees and those 5 weeks is enough time.

(iii) LEANA Ronnie Posini

The Member clarified the issue whereby the student is penalised with 5 weeks (no school) unless the payment of fees is made, then the student pays 1/3 of the tuition and returns after 5 weeks with the remaining balance plus a 10% late fee; it is the 10% penalty fee which is of concern, as the student has already missed out 5 weeks of school and then again penalised with 10% this should be reconsidered as the student is being penalized twice.

Hon LOAU Sola Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture

The Hon Minister stated that the National University should take heed of the recommendation put forth and further advised the University to waive the 10% penalty for students who have already been penalised with 5 weeks without lecturers and learning.

(iv) FUIMAONO Samuelu Teo

The Member reminded the Minister of the importance of consultations with parents to ensure both students and parents are aware of the scholarship conditions before the student leaves.

Hon PRIME MINISTER – Clarification:

The Hon Prime Minister took note of the concerns raised by Members and emphasised the importance of the parent-child relationship whereby advise, encouragement and constant direction/guidance is provided to the child so that he/she is able to make wise decisions when out in the real world. Furthermore, the PM urged the students who have been fortunate to receive scholarships, to use the opportunity wisely.

Hon LOAU Sola Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture

The Hon Minister addressed the concern with the limited funds allotted to mission schools; particularly the salaries for mission school teachers to be included in the Ministry's payroll, stating that this is government's dream which can only be realised when there is increase in revenues, emphasising the importance of paying taxes.

In regards to the issue of teacher shortage, the Minister stated that continuous efforts have been undertaken by the Ministry to ensure more students choose teaching as a career path. Hon LOAU asserted that it is each Member's responsibility to encourage the youthful constituents to take up teaching as a profession; the Hon Minister mentioned the \$30,000 starting wage for Education degree holders is an incentive proposed by Government to attract more students to take up teaching as a career however results of increasing enrolment in Bachelors of Education has not been realised yet.

***Proceedings were set aside at 10:48am; and
resumed at 11:26am***

Hon LOAU Sola Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture

The Hon Minister continued his response by affirming sentiments echoed by Members in regards to the development of sports fields and school buildings in constituencies have been duly noted. He mentioned the preparations implemented and proposed for the Pacific Games in 2019 are progressing well, noting the concern to accommodate athletes in hotels/motels rather than in school buildings. The Hon Minister confirmed that the school building in Siumu which was burnt down will be reconstructed from insurance funds which have just been obtained. The Hon Minister concluded by encouraging Parliament and the public at large that the success of the Ministry is dependent on the collective effort and support of the public.

4. Hon SILI Epa Tuiofi, Minister of Finance

The Hon Minister addressed Parliament and delved straight into the concerns and general issues raised by the Members. The Hon Minister stated that there were Ministries/Corporations/SOE's who had not utilised the entire funds appropriated to them for the previous financial year, he emphasised the importance of implementing the projects which the funds were intended for, noting unused funds reflects poor planning and management. He expressed the importance of investing in the development of the education sector as the children are the future of Samoa. In regards to implementing more projects for the Ministry of Agricultural and Fisheries, the Hon Minister affirmed that on-going consultations were conducted with overseas aid donors to secure assistance for such developments in the agricultural and fisheries sector.

In terms of development, assistance was sought from the World Bank for funds to implement the necessary infrastructural developments; he noted the deficit recorded was due to several reasons which had been highlighted in the Budget statement. The Hon Minister noted the investment into

the establishment of the Tui Samoa cable in to ensure affordable and effective internet connection. With regards to the recorded revenue which did not meet the projected amount, the Minister asserted that on-going work and effort was done to enhance the collection of revenue.

The Hon Minister recommended the Public Service Commission to consider other means to cut back on costs. In relation to the revenues collected from the Ministry of Health, the Minister noted that an increase has been noted and will be reported to Parliament once the payment of lease has been complete, noting that the cost of the lease is consistent with the value of the land. SILI urged the Ministry of Agriculture to develop and implement more promotions to boost the sector.

Hon SILI mentioned the issue of cryptocurrency, stating that awareness programs were made to inform the public of the risks if engaged in this product. In regards to the deficit of 12million, the Minister explained that business tax will cover the loss, adding that foreign aid also makes a substantial contribution to alleviate this issue. The Hon Minister acknowledged his constituency and concluded.

5. Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Iemaima Stowers – Ah Kau, Minister of Women, Community and Social Development

The Hon Minister addressed Parliament and stated that there were few issues raised by Members pertaining to the Ministry, which included the following:

In regards to the District Development Project requested by Members, the Hon Minister clarified that currently 17 constituencies have initiated the program and assured the Members that the Ministry is continuing its programs so that it reaches all districts. The Hon Minister requested the patience of Members and asserted that all constituencies will receive the project. The Minister clarified that the selection of village mayors is the decision of the village, the Ministry is only involved when the protocol is ineffective. The Hon Minister concluded by acknowledging the efforts of the Minister of Finance and the Ministry for the distribution and preparation of the budget.

6. Hon TIALAVEA Fea Leniu Tionisio Seigafolava Hunt, Minister for Revenue

The Hon Minister stated that 11 Members expressed concerns in regards to the Ministry, which he will address:

In regards to the damaged xray/scan at the Fagalii Airport, the Minister explained on-going repair and maintenance have been conducted on the equipment to ensure it operates effectively and assists with the border and customs officers with checking luggage contents. The Hon Minister explained that in 2016/2017 projected revenue was at 411million, however 511 million was collected, which is a great increase and stated that currently 459 million is expected to be collected and this is only an estimated amount.

*Proceedings were set aside at 1:00pm; and
resumed at 3:11pm*