

DISCLAIMER

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Day 25
9:32 am

Tuesday 23rd February 2021

I. PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

2 Regulations were presented to Parliament:

1. SR 2021/3, Land and Titles Act 2020- Notice of Commencement; and
2. SR 2021/4, Community Law Centre Amendment Act 2019- Notice of Commencement.

II. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY

1. **SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO.1) 2020/2021- second reading & Debate on the Bill (cont.)**

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Hon TUILAIPA Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, PRIME MINISTER

The Hon PM emphasised the importance of Ministers to stand on a point of clarification to clarify on a matter queried by a Member in Parliament and further noted the interrelated role of the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) in providing advice and information to their respective Ministers accordingly in order to elucidate any misunderstanding or misleading proclaims made by the competing parties. The Hon PM then urged his Cabinet to provide complete and comprehensive responses to issues raised by Members so that all listening in would understand the current situation.

Mr SPEAKER

Asserted and warned Members of Parliament to be prompt in attending sittings. It is a disgrace if Parliament never sits because quorum is not met. Speaker noted that the younger Members of Parliament are often the ones being late to meetings. Urged members who are not present to attend the

sittings as it is their sworn duty. Parliament sitting should be made a priority over other personal matters.

i. Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, MINISTER FOR COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND LABOUR & PUBLIC ENTERPRISES cont.

The Minister accentuated the reason for lengthy and in depth clarification to ensure the public listening in are well aware of the services offered by respective Government Offices.

Hon Minister then spoke on the Gambling Control Authority (GCA) which provides financial backing for different sporting associations in Samoa. The Hon Minister noted that the earnings made by the GCA is collected from licensing and renewal of license for gambling entities; these earnings are then distributed to various sports association as well as sponsoring students by way of scholarships for those who cannot afford to pay school fees but are academically capable.

The Minister stated that the GCA donated at least \$907,000 tala to sporting associations; \$17,000 tala to charitable organisations and more than \$76,000 tala was appropriated to fund school fees for certain students. The GCA intends to continue its assistance, as well as establish an office in Savaii.

AFOA Amituanai Faleulu Maui, MEMBER FOR PALAULI WEST

The Member stated that there is no denying the pros of TV bingo however we must also consider the cons (disadvantages) of it especially for our children. The member noted that he has been suggesting to government to do something about this, but nothing has happened yet.

Hon TUILAEPA Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, PRIME MINISTER

The Hon PM asserted that the Gaming Control Act 2017 was introduced to control gambling. Noted that the situation is difficult than it looks. Explained that one cannot change the law to address one issue but have to look at the veracity of things.

Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, MINISTER FOR COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND LABOUR & PUBLIC ENTERPRISES cont.

- Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour

The Minister then spoke on the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour and noted its complex multifaceted nature of business. Hon Minister noted that in 2019 Samoa became a member of the WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation). He elaborated that the Organisation deals with protection of intellectual property (IP).

Asserted that IP is important as it seeks to protect Samoa's original creations from forms of copyright and patent, etc. particularly from overseas competition.

Hon TUILAIPA Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, PRIME MINISTER

Hon PM clarified on the issue of IP and spoke on its importance, using coconut cream, luau (in can) to elaborate more on the issue.

The PM noted that Samoa has conducted numerous testing in its laboratory to ensure the quality of the coconut cream is up to standard - it was packed in cans and labelled pe'epe'e which was high in demand in the New Zealand and Australia markets, however the problem was that the Indonesian and Thailand also produced coconut cream and similarly labelled it pe'epe'e (which is a Samoan term). Hon PM noted that had we established intellectual property at the time, we could have saved our pe'epe'e. However we have lost this development due to imprecision at the time.

Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, MINISTER FOR COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND LABOUR & PUBLIC ENTERPRISES cont.

The Minister delved into the Recognized Seasonal Employment Scheme (RSE) and noted its importance in the development of families and the nation. Hon Minister stated that there are currently 5 contracts for seasonal employment; 3 contracts in NZ and 2 contracts secured in Australia. Hon LAUTAFI noted that these contracts include Fruit picking, Butchery and Carpentry. The Minister noted that those working in Carpentry are upskilled and upon return to Samoa can share the knowledge and skills acquired when abroad which will improve the quality of work in Samoa. The Minister noted that conditions of employment for seasonal employees are similar to those of New Zealand and Australian citizens (referring to paying taxes and so forth). Noted that approximately 3,300 Samoan people had the opportunity to work under this RSE scheme last year.

The Minister added that the Pacific Labour Scheme have been improved from year to year. It started off with just 2,500 workers in 2019, later, increased to 3,300 in 2020 and is still increasing. He added that we are the most trusted country in terms of the workers that we bring to this scheme. It is not just us that are getting this opportunity, other Pacific countries like Fiji, Papua New Guinea and others that are also included however the Minister stressed that we are the most trusted out of all Pacific countries because of the well-mannered workers that we employ under the scheme.

Hon Minister asserted that there are ongoing correspondences between the Prime Minister, Ministers and officials in the hopes of securing more opportunities for our people. Noted that in 2019/2020 - \$210,662,180 tala was earned through the

RSE; more than 190million in 2018/2019; and more than 140million in 2017/2018 - these earnings were made by the RSE which have gone straight into the development of families, villages and Samoa as a nation as these are the monies circulating within the economy.

Hon Minister accentuated that the most important thing is 'honesty' to work honestly and diligently to ensure the confidence of foreign employers in our Samoan people. He mentioned that due to the pandemic crisis, it has reduced the number of our people to join the seasonal scheme as NZ and AUS has offered opportunities to their own people as many have lost their jobs from the impact of COVID19. The Minister also noted that NZ are more interested in bringing over Samoans who already have the skill and understanding of fruit picking, to avoid more time spent on training new workers.

OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, MEMBER FOR SALEGA EAST

The Member posed two queries to the Minister:

i. He queried a man that was found with a medical condition and reckons it is a fault during the medical checks. It seems that it was not picked up during medical check and just recently died whilst under the RSE programme.

ii Queried if our people in the scheme have insurance to protect them whilst in these countries; and who was responsible to ensure the lives of the employees were insured, the Samoan government or the respective governments which the employee is working for.

Hon FAUMUINA Faaolatane Tiatia Liuga, MEMBER FOR PALAUI LE FALEFA

Commended the Ministry for this essential initiative as it has provided an opportunity for our children who were not able to do well in school. However, he has two recommendations to put forth before government: i) to provide pension for our people working in these RSE schemes when they return home ii) commented on exchange rate. Voluntary contribution (noted that the Ministry is currently looking into a way to implement the voluntary contribution/pension for the RSE workers.

Another issue raised by the Member was the 'exchange spread' which is the difference between the value of the tala and dollar.

AUMUA Isaia Lameko, MEMBER FOR FALEALILI WEST

The Member for Falealili West addressed the benefit of having the RSE scheme for 14 years (2007 to current date). The member noted the 2000 work opportunities which were afforded to 6 villages and queried how the percentage was determined amongst the 6 villages, as he believes there is a certain division within the Ministry that is tasked with the 'export of workers' and suggested that if certain villages oppose Government's appropriation of work opportunities, it should be brought back to the 'export of workers' team to avoid problems from occurring.

ALAIASA MOEFAAUOUO MALAGAITUTOGIAI Sepulona Moananu, MEMBER FOR ANOAMAA EAST

Commended the impact that this scheme has contributed in growing the standard of living for the worker's families; however, recommended the Ministry to conduct a financial management training for all returning RSE workers as he noticed that after three weeks of arrival they are empty-handed.

LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi, MEMBER FOR FALEATA WEST

Suggested for the successful RSE workers to share their knowledge and skills to people that may have been elected for the next scheme so that they will be familiar with how things are done- not just in fruit picking but other specialties such as carpentry and butchery.

The member addressed the development that we are in due to the scheme and also recalled that there has been an increase in remittances throughout the past few years from 2019-2021.

ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau, MEMBER FOR ALATAUA WEST

Clarified payment for Pensions is from the Main Budget appropriations which is approximately \$27million and the percentage distributed after financial years is from the contributions of those who contribute to NPF. Therefore, pensions cannot be paid from contribution % or increase unless there is appropriation from the Main Budget.

FUIMAONO Teo Samuelu Teo, MEMBER FOR FALEALILI EAST

Suggested whether it is appropriate to distribute RSE opportunities by constituencies in order to reflect fairness (for instance, 10 from each constituency as he believes that probably only 3 at most constituency are benefitting from the scheme).

Hon TUILAEPA Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, PRIME MINISTER

Noted the importance of agreements (MOU) between the Government of Samoa and Governments of New Zealand and Australia. Hon PM noted that there were changes during negotiations of the terms and conditions for the agreement. He noted that there was communication from the NZ Minister for Foreign Affairs, in regards to the assistance Samoa would receive from New Zealand during Covid-19 pandemic as well as the issue occurring between the Pacific Forum and there was also discussion of the RSE, where he expressed Samoa's gratitude for the opportunities afforded to Samoa.

Hon PM also noted the government has a zero tolerance policy and no one can get away with any misconduct and if someone from a village who committed a misbehaviour during the scheme then that village will be punished by not recruiting any RSE workers from their village. He noted that from the inception of the scheme, there have been

individuals who upon arrival into NZ abandon the team and the reason of his/her travel to NZ and pursue individualistic motives; the Hon PM noted that dishonest individuals have always been an issue, hence Government's zero tolerance policy.

The Hon PM noted that there are implications for the dishonest practices conducted by RSE workers. Hon PM noted that not only is the individual returned, the village which the individual belongs to, will cease to receive any future employment opportunities (elaborating Government's zero tolerance policy). The PM asserted that this urges Village Council's to be more involved with instilling good morals and attitudes for their villagers who are chosen to work in seasonal employment.

Furthermore, the PM noted that Government has also created an assessor/inspector paid by Government to oversee the workers of the scheme; this individual also identifies the threats and weaknesses experienced by the employees and reports back to the Minister to ensure necessary action is taken - Hon PM added that the most common weakness for the workers is alcohol.

Furthermore, there are ongoing visits by the Minister and his team to the farms and employment areas which employ the Samoan workers to continue communication in identifying suitable options for our people working abroad. PM noted that it is important to have a good number of new employees afforded the opportunity to work in the scheme, regardless of the contractors' preference for old employees. Stated that the government is about to look into forming a committee that will deal with matters in regards to RSE scheme.

Proceedings were suspended at 10:57am

Proceedings resumed at 11:45am

Hon PAPALIITELE Niko Lee Hang, MINISTER OF WORKS, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Minister noted that the appropriation for pension is worth millions and clarified statements made by certain members of the competing political party (FAST) that if elected into Government they will increase the pension from the SNPF funds; Hon Minister clarified that the NPF does not source the pension for pensioners rather focus on the contributors of the fund.

SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauiiili Tuivasa, MEMBER FOR VAIMAUGA EAST

Afioga SULAMANAIA spoke on the tax system for New Zealand which entitles the tax payer a portion of their tax upon filing tax returns, which our seasonal workers are not entitled to and noted that the seasonal employees also pay NPF.

Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, MINISTER FOR COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND LABOUR & PUBLIC ENTERPRISES cont.

Hon Minister noted the difficulty in living conditions for RSE employees. In regards to a RSE worker who was found sick as mentioned by the Member for Salega East, accentuated that they could not identify it as NZ and AUS only required for X-ray report in order to ensure that RSE workers do not have Tuberculosis (TP). He then added that the Government has since changed its policies from merely providing an x-ray to requiring a full medical check up to avoid the issue from occurring in the future. The Hon minister noted that there is insurance by the Australian Government, however the particular illness which the individual carried was not covered by insurance.

The Hon Minister spoke on the Samoa Competition and Consumer Commission to monitor prices of goods and services, to ensure prices are affordable for the benefit of consumers. Hon minister also mentioned the Price Control Board which is responsible with monitoring price ceiling and price flooring to ensure there is a balance. There is also an inspection team assigned to enforce provisions of the Act, such as the importance of issuing receipts and labelling costs of certain products; further noted that these inspections are conducted once every 2 weeks. Hon Minister touched upon the importance of monitoring international safety standards of products which businesses/retailers should consider before they are being sold to the public and to comply with the requirements for all exported goods.

OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai, MEMBER FOR SALEGA EAST

The Member queried whether there was a policy in place to determine the cost of products, noting that recently there was a shortage with chicken, hence the notable increase in price.

The Member also queried the quality of products imported in the country especially products packed in sacks such as sugar, flour and rice.

FUIMAONO Teo Samuelu Teo, MEMBER FOR FALEALILI EAST- Point of order

Queried on the provisions of Standing Orders in regards to interruptions. That the member for Salega East is speaking on a subject that he did not mention in his speech.

Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, MINISTER FOR COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND LABOUR & PUBLIC ENTERPRISES cont.

Hon Minister continued by noting the appropriation afforded to the Private sectors, \$250,000 every year to ensure that these private businesses are complying with the policies put forth by the Ministry. In regards to Foreign investment, the Ministry

endeavours to create a healthy environment to attract foreigners to invest in Samoa. Hon Minister noted that there are ongoing advertisements and marketing strategies to lure/attract investors into Samoa to build our economy and provide employment opportunities for our people. He took note of Dubai and stated that its main export is oil however Dubai is not wealthy because of its oil, rather foreign investment.

Hon Lautafi spoke on the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and asserted that Samoa continues to look at different mechanisms for the development of work 'the future of work' and formulate long term goals. Mentioned the capacity building for NUS, apprenticeship scheme, technical vocational training, etc. aim to improve the employability of Samoa's labour force.

Hon Minister mentioned the PACER Plus agreement and testified on the importance of statutory payments which must be paid every year in the Budget. Hon Minister noted from previous attendance in international organisations, that never was there a time where Samoa did not pay its statutory payments to these foreign organisations which is something Samoa should be proud of.

Hon LAUTAFI then spoke on the Ministry for Public Enterprises which was established in 2015 and asserted that this Ministry consolidates 27 Public Bodies; 16 Public Trade Bodies, 8 Public Beneficiaries and 3 Mutual Societies. Noted that all Public Bodies have already submitted their updated annual reports on time - which is one of the goals of the establishment of the Ministry for Public Enterprise.

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In regards to Samoa's Aircraft 'Samoa Airways' it is pending due to closing of borders.

The Minister noted that the Ministry of Enterprises collected revenue for the different financial years as follows:

- 2million in 2016-2017;
 - 3 million in 2017-2018;
 - 15 million in 2018-2019; and
 - 9 million in 2019-2020.
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- Samoa Business Hub (formerly known as Samoa Business Enterprise Centre (SBEC))

Hon Minister noted that this is a minor organisation which makes quite an impact. The Hub has developed from micro and small businesses to including 'medium level type' businesses (as something the entrepreneurs can aspire to).

Hon Minister stated that the Hub is more interested in sustainable businesses. Loans for micro type businesses go up to \$10,000 tala, other loans can go up to 100,000 depending on the type of business. There are co-horts which meet once a month to assess the operations of the Hub. Hon Minister noted that more than 600 are currently employed in the Business Hub.

- Samoa Housing Corporation (SHC)

Hon Minister provided a brief background and stated that after Cyclones Ofa and Val, the Government set up the Samoa Housing with the opening balance of \$10,000 tala to provide assistance to families for their recovery costs. He then added since the privatisation of the Samoa Housing, the government lent \$10 million tala to start off with its work. By the end of 2010, the Corporation was able to pay back to Government the \$10 million that was lent. He noted that approximately 4000 people use the service of the Corporation for loans.

He commended the service provided by SHC as they offer low interest on loans for home renovations etc. Highlighted a total of 72 government rental buildings have been renovated through loans which has now increased their value. Highlighted that SHC also offered a stimulus package for Covid-19 whereby they offered to delay payment of loans for two months.

- Samoa Land Corporation (SLC)

Hon Minister elaborated upon the lands under SLC are not the only government lands, he further clarified that there are lands in Savaii that have not been surveyed. He noted that it will soon be surveyed so as to ascertain the number of lands under public property (government lands).

- Samoa Sports Facilities Association (SSFA)

Noted that this Association is responsible with the monitoring and maintenance of all Sports facilities such as the Apia park, various gymnasiums and sports fields for the different sports.

Hon Minister acknowledged the PM for his leadership and vision for a Better Samoa! He also commended the three (3) Bills which further supports the leadership of the PM. Hon Minister noted that there were four (4) Members from Satupaitea in the Constitutional Convention which formed Samoa's supreme law 'the Constitution' and noted that these individuals played their part to ensure Samoa's independence but they are looking and waiting for the time to incorporate and recognise Samoa's customs and traditions - and was pleased to note that this change occurred during his time. He then acknowledged efforts of Samoa's government during Covid-19.

Acknowledged Cabinet and wished them well for the upcoming elections. Acknowledged his Associate Minister Afioga Tuifaasisina Lisati Leleisiuao Palemene and his wife for their support during the term. Acknowledged the MPs, Committees and Board of Directors & CEOs/Public Servants for their efforts during the Measles epidemic. Acknowledged all the Ministries, Corporations in his sector for their efforts, hard work and service. Acknowledge Samoan ambassadors based overseas e.g. Belgium etc. as well as MFAT officials and their services when the Minister travels for meetings overseas. Acknowledged the CEO for ADRA and ADRA for their development aid which assisted in building the church hall in one his constituencies. Acknowledged medical doctors who are now based in district hospitals especially the medical officers in his constituency. Acknowledged his family and their support, his wife, children, immediate and extended family last but not the least his mother for her never ending support and raising a son thriving in the political arena.

MOTION TO EXTEND SITTING HOURS

Hon PM moved a motion to set aside Standing Orders and to adjust sitting hours as follows:

- 9am – 1pm
- 6pm- 10pm

He further noted that the new sitting hours will come into effect tomorrow and suggested that the sitting may go on to Saturday so as to ensure that all Parliament work has been dealt with before it dissolves.

Motion seconded and approved.

Proceedings were adjourned at 1:22pm

Parliament will again reconvene on Wednesday 24th February 2021 at 9am.