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MEDIA RELEASE

AN NFP GOVERNMENT WILL BUILD A NEW SUGAR MILL FOR RA CANE GROWERS

A National Federation Party Government after next year's general elections will build a new sugar mill in Penang for the cane growers of Rakiraki.

This will be a priority of an NFP Government because we believe social responsibility to the people by a Government is paramount above anything else. And the NFP deeply values this principle.

The permanent shutdown of the Penang Mill is not only a "ill-conceived and irrational" decision by the Board of the Fiji Sugar Corporation, but also a decision of the Fiji First Government as confirmed by the Prime Minister, while rejecting a Petition in Parliament last Thursday by Ra cane growers urging the re-opening of the Mill.

The Prime Minister's comment that the Mill was "beyond repair" and that the "FSC Board is meeting next week on the 27th to discuss exactly these issues", confirms the Fiji First Government's deviousness on this issue right from the outset in 2016 following the closure of the Mill after Severe TC Winston last year.

This Government and FSC have clearly prioritized FSC's financial viability over the survival and livelihood of cane growers, therefore treating growers as sacrificial lambs.

FSC's claim that any repair or refurbishment of the Penang Mill will cost 40-50 million dollars is untrue. This monetary value comes only after FSC cannibalized the Mill by stripping it of its parts, shipping them to other Mills and even transporting locomotives to Labasa. Even then the cost is baseless.

All correspondence should be addressed to the general secretary

The Board is misleading people by saying it was unsafe to work inside the Mill. If this was true, how did employees strip the interior of the Mill of parts after being directed to do so by the Management.

That the PM failed to answer whether an assessment was done on the future of the mill by Indian experts as announced by him (PM) in July last year, confirms beyond any doubt Government had decided long time ago to shut down the Mill without any consideration to growers and the local economy of Ra.

The absence of any response from the PM leads us to believe he misled growers by giving them false hope of an assessment.

We also ask whether the USD\$70 million credit facility offered by the Indian Prime Minister during his visit to Fiji in November 2014 for co-generation project at Rarawai has been utilized?

If not, why wasn't it used to refurbish the Penang Mill?

Cane growers of Rakiraki and indeed throughout the cane belts of the 8 cane growing districts cannot hope for any solution from this Government that will positively impact their lives.

An NFP Government after the general elections will immediately set in motion plans and policies to build a new Mill. This is our commitment to the growers and people of Rakiraki.



Professor Biman Prasad
NFP Leader