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MEDIA RELEASE

NFP NAMES NEW GENERAL SECRETARY \$5M FOR DIALYSIS UNDER AN NFP GOVERNMENT

Former Chief Executive of the Sugar Cane Growers Council Mr Jagannath Sami is the new General Secretary of the National Federation Party.

Mr Sami replaces Mr Bala Dass who has resigned to concentrate fully on his role as General Secretary of Fiji Cane Growers Association, having served as the Party's chief administrator and organiser for the last two years.

Mr Sami has been appointed by the NFP Management Board, in conformity to a resolution unanimously adopted by delegates at the Party's Annual General Meeting on 3rd June 2017.

The AGM had authorised the Management Board to appoint a fulltime General Secretary to play an integral role in the preparations, implementation of strategies and ensuring compliance with the electoral laws in the lead up to the next general elections scheduled for 2018. Under the NFP Constitution the President and General Secretary are extremely important positions. We are confident that our President Mr Pio Tikoduadua and Mr Sami will form a formidable combination and complement the work of the Party Leader in ensuring success in 2018.

Mr Sami brings to his new role a wealth of political and administrative experience. He has always lived and served ordinary citizens of Fiji, particularly the cane growers through his role in the Fiji Sugar Corporation, Fiji Cane Growers Association and Sugar Cane Growers Council.

All correspondence should be addressed to the general secretary

Mr Sami served the FSC for 21 years as Field Officer, Traffic Officer and Estate Officer. He resigned in 1992 to join the Sugar Cane Growers Council as District Manager and later in 2000 was appointed as Chief Executive Officer. It was his dream to champion the cause of the farmers. During his 6 year tenure, many services were provided to the cane farmers of Fiji namely legal services, medical insurance, good will grants, farm inputs etc.

Mr Sami was unlawfully and brutally removed by the military regime in January 2007 after warning that the impasse that eventually led to the 4th military coup, would result in the loss of the \$350m European Union grant earmarked to reform the Fiji Sugar Industry. Mr Sami was then terminated by the President of the Republic of Fiji through Decree No. 1 of 2007. This action was followed his second termination by the newly appointed Sugar Cane Growers Council Board, on the directive of the then Interim Minister for Sugar. That grant was lost because of the coup. So was the chance to advance our sugar industry. The rest is history.

Mr Sami has been an active and integral member of the NFP and FCGA for the last 23 years. He was the founder President of the NFP Youth Movement in 1994 as well as the General Secretary of the FCGA two years after its formation in 1992. Therefore, he is a person with a wealth of experience, energy and vigour together with Mr Tikoduadua to direct the operations and activities of the Party during these significantly important times.

The Party wishes to sincerely thank Mr Bala Dass for his voluntary service for the last two years. It will indeed be a massive boost for growers now that Mr Dass can concentrate fulltime on looking after the welfare and interest of growers who are the largest and most important stakeholders of our sugar industry.

In the absence of a legitimate voice for growers due to the abolition of the elected Sugar Cane Growers Council, Mr Dass has and will continue to be their legitimate voice as he understands grower issues perfectly well having served as FCGA General Secretary for over 16 years.

Policy Announcements

We feel the winds of change blowing across Fiji. We have announced several initiatives many of which will be a priority if NFP forms government after the elections. All policies are oriented towards providing lasting solutions, alleviating the plight of all our people and enhancing their livelihood.

It is worth repeating some of them: -

- ✓ Implementing a minimum guaranteed price of \$100 per tonne of cane and building a new mill in Penang, Rairaki. The minimum guaranteed price will be far greater than the value of subsidies for fertilizer and weedicide announced by the current Fiji First Government. Honourable Prem Singh very eloquently dissected the issue in Parliament on 11th July and I quote, “For a grower producing 20 tonnes in an acre, the savings from fertilizer subsidies equate to \$3.45 per tonne of cane. For a grower producing 30 tonnes in an acre, the subsidy equates to \$2.30 per tonne. And if you add the weedicide subsidy of \$1 per tonne, the total savings per tonne is \$4.45 per tonne for a 20 tonne per acre producer and \$3.30 per tonne for a 30 tonne producer.

Even if we are producing 2 million tonnes of cane annually, the total value of the fertilizer and weedicide subsidy will be \$6.6 million to \$8.9 million.

What growers need is a meaningful increase to the price of cane. And this can only happen if a minimum guaranteed price of \$100 per tonne is implemented with an annual subsidy of \$50 million that will cover both the subsidy and the guaranteed cane price.

At the current average cost of production of \$45 per tonne, growers will earn a net income of \$55 per tonne minus cultivation, production, harvesting and delivery expenses. This plan to be implemented as a priority by NFP will mean growers receive between \$50.55 and \$51.70 more per tonne of cane as net income, rather than the monetary value of subsidies provided by the current government". – unquote

- ✓ We will implement a living wage of \$5 an hour instead of the new meagre minimum rate of \$2.68 an hour
- ✓ We will zero-rate or make VAT free 15 basic food items. This list used to be of 7 items until the Fiji First Government betrayed its pre-election promise and re-imposed VAT on them from 1st January 2016
- ✓ An NFP Government will reduce the salaries of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers by 25% from the current levels and for the salaries to be determined by an independent Emoluments Committee
- ✓ The i-Taukei Village by-laws and the Rotuma Land Bill will be abolished if enacted into Law
- ✓ A National Health Service will be established to reform and rejuvenate our public health and medical services that has deteriorated rapidly under the current Government

Today we announce that further to the establishment of a National Health Service, an NFP Government after the elections will: -

1. Allocate \$5 million annually towards dialysis costs of our kidney patients. The Motion to increase the allocation from \$300,000 by NFP was defeated by Fiji First on July 12 in Parliament during the Budget debate.

2. Yet the Fiji First Government sees it fit to give away \$18 million in marketing grant to Fiji Airways, \$9 million for golf, \$11 million to Fiji Broadcasting Commission, millions of dollars for consultancies, to name a few. Not forgetting the fact that the per diem or allowances for Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament have increased substantially. In the case of PM, it has increased by 300% with the PM entitled to \$3000 a day even to our nearest destination of New Zealand. So why cannot \$5 million be allocated for dialysis which is a matter of life and death? Aren't the lives of our kidney patients precious?

3. An NFP Government will build a Hospice to ensure the best of care and comfort for our cancer patients. Currently our cancer patients, even in the last days of their lives are left to die in hospitals or family members are being forced to take them home and provide care at their own expense. This is unacceptable and inhumane. An example of the pain and suffering of our cancer patients was witnessed first hand by one of our Vice Presidents at CWM Hospital two weeks ago. Women acutely suffering from various forms of cancer were yelling and crying for assistance. There was no morphine – the common painkiller drug- to provide them relief. This suffering has to end and it will under an NFP Government. A well resourced and fully equipped Hospice with nurses trained in the care of patients suffering from terminal diseases will be constructed in Suva.

4. And during the term of an NFP Government similar facilities will be built in the Western and Northern Divisions.

The NFP is in all likelihood not only Fiji's but South Pacific's oldest political party. We are 54 years old. The fact that we have survived all pitfalls including four military coups and three politically annihilating defeats in general elections between 1999 and 2006, re-enter parliament after more than seven and a half years of dictatorship, speaks volumes about our resolve and our principles.

We have survived because of our achievements that have become permanent milestones in Fiji's history. And we achieved them by being in parliamentary opposition, never shirking our principles, never indulging in political expediency.

After almost 3 years as a minority but highly effective parliamentary opposition party, we are now offering ourselves for judgment by all our people. Above all, we are offering ourselves as a truly credible alternative to the current Government.

Change is coming. Change is inevitable. And together as a mighty collective force, ably marshalled by our President and General Secretary, we shall prevail.



Professor Biman Prasad

NFP Leader