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PROPERTY VALUES UP 1

Property values up

PROPERTY values in Labasa have gone up resulting in an increase in rates paid by residents living there, says Local Government Minister Parveen Kumar.

Speaking at the Local Government forum, which began in Lautoka yesterday, the minister said an article which appeared in this newspaper yesterday misrepresented the facts.

Mr Kumar said rates had been increased because of a rise in the value of property and this was done with prior consultation.

"Let me make it very clear to The Fiji Times journalists, that because of the valuation, the rates have changed," Mr Kumar said.

"This type of reporting is not good because in fact you are misleading the general public and I would like to urge The Fiji Times to correct that.

"The rates increase was due to the valuation of properties."

Mr Kumar said the media report did not mention that consultations were held with ratepayers and as many as 30 turned up and objected to the increases.

"I have been informed the special administrator Labasa held two meetings with ratepayers," he said.

"But before this increase, because of the valuation, proper process was conducted, consultation was carried out with the ratepayers.

"There was an objection period and no one objected."

Ratepayer Ambika Prasad claimed all those present at the two meetings (organised by the council held at the Civic Centre in Labasa) objected to changes in town rates.

He questioned why the media was locked out of the consultations and why ads announcing the consultations were placed in one newspaper.

"We asked at the meeting for the special administrator to explain to us about the unimproved capital value and what services have they done for the ratepayers, but he didn't respond."

Another ratepayer, Ambika Raj claimed he only got to know of the increase in his rates statement, but nothing about the Unimproved Capital Value issue.

Opportunities provided to Labasa special administrator Vijay Chand to comment and clarify the matter proved unsuccessful, with Mr Chand referring all queries to the Local Government Ministry.

International Property Tax Institute

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Questions sent to Mr Kumar's communication team via email on January 3 have remained unanswered.

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