in Solomon Islands waters by a Papua New Guinea helicopter later the same month. In late June a series of incidents occurred at the Solomon Islands post at Tulue, and in early July a Papua New Guinea patrol boat bombarded the Field Force observation post at Ovau on several occasions (May 1996, 12–14; PC, 15 July 1996, 11). Such incidents gave ongoing diplomatic talks added urgency, and in July both countries agreed to accelerate work on a series of border treaties and to establish a Joint Border Commission to coordinate and oversee border management issues (PC, 8 July 1996, 5).

Things did not look good for Prime Minister Chan as 1996 drew to a close. In particular, he had taken on the mighty World Bank and lost, while failing to bring about a settlement of the Bougainville crisis, which had occupied much of his attention since coming to office in 1994. He had, however, managed to keep his governing coalition together and maintain his majority in parliament, despite some significant conflicts between members of his People’s Progress Party and its major coalition partner Pangu Pati over cabinet appointments and ministerial responsibilities (PC, 31 July 1996, 2; 6–8 Sept 1996, 1). There were also problems within Pangu Pati. In October, an unsuccessful move to oust Deputy Prime Minister Chris Haiveta as leader of Pangu was apparently sparked by Haiveta’s controversial revenue budget (PC, 7 Oct 1996, 1). The party also finally broke its ties with founding member Sir Michael Somare, who had announced plans to set up a new political group, the National Alliance, to contest the national election and upset Chan’s aspiration to lead the People’s Progress Party to victory in June 1997.

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*SMH*, *Sydney Morning Herald*. Daily.


**Solomon Islands**

In 1996 politics in the Solomon Islands were turbulent, as usual, but by December the focus of political discussion was on the general election, scheduled for July 1997. Many potential candidates began campaigning for an election billed to be the most interesting since independence from Great Britain in July 1978, and coinciding with the nineteenth anniversary celebrations. The year was also characterized by leadership squabbles and political discord that left many pressing issues unresolved. This, however, is not unusual in a country where the political landscape is often marked by rapid and unpredictable changes.

In early 1996 the country was still trying to deal with issues inherited from previous years, particularly the
political bickering and constitutional crisis of late 1994, which resulted in the collapse of the National Coalition Party (NCP) government led by Francis Billy Hilly. The most dramatic aspect of this event was the allegation that five cabinet ministers of the NCP government had defected to join Solomon Mamaloni's Solomon Islands National Unity and Reconciliation Party (SINURP) after receiving bribes from Robert Goh, a Honiara businessman and director of Goh and Partners Public Accountants. Deprived of his majority, Billy Hilly was forced by Governor General Sir Moses Pitakaka to resign as prime minister in October 1994. Mamaloni was immediately elected prime minister and formed the SINURP government.

The five defectors were later charged with corruption and appeared before the Magistrate's Court for a preliminary hearing in January 1996. During the court hearing Robert Goh admitted that he had paid for hired cars and accommodation for the five who had by then become cabinet ministers in the SINURP government: Alfred Maetia (Education), John Musuota (Posts and Telecommunications), Edmund Anderson (Agriculture and Fisheries), Francis Orodani (Lands and Housing), and Oliver Zapo (Justice) (SS, 8 May 1996). Although the case was committed to the High Court, these men retained their ministerial portfolios for most of the year. In late August, Orodani and Musuota were fired by the prime minister along with two other cabinet ministers, although it was unclear whether this was related to the corruption saga. Orodani was acquitted in November, but the office of the director of public prosecutions planned to appeal the ruling.

This was not the only corruption story of 1996. Allegations of corruption emerged from nearly every sector of public life, involving many who occupy responsible positions in politics and the public service. By midyear many citizens were concerned that corruption would become part of the public sector culture, and there was widespread distrust of politicians and public servants. Finance Minister Christopher Columbus Abe stated in February that fraudulent appropriation of government payments was not confined to the Treasury Division of his ministry, but widespread throughout the government system. Abe was reacting to new measures imposed by Accountant General Michael Katea to curb embezzlement and other fraudulent payments from the government treasury (SC, 22 Feb 1996).

The most dramatic manifestation of official corruption was uncovered in April and May when Prime Minister Mamaloni (as acting finance minister) ordered the suspension of thirty-five public servants on half pay for allegedly misappropriating S10 million of government funds (SS, 8 May 1996). Since then, the amount of allegedly misappropriated government money has increased to S135 million. This revelation shocked and angered the country. The prime minister then ordered the police to confiscate the property of the thirty-five public servants. For Mamaloni, this was a spectacular move to salvage his political reputation, which had nose-dived since he came to power in late 1994 because of controversies over the logging
industry, corruption charges against five of his cabinet ministers, and the continuous deterioration of the country’s economy. Despite huge publicity, however, none of the public servants involved had been officially charged by the end of 1996. This left many people wondering whether the case was merely a public relations ploy aimed at improving the reputation of the Sinurp government, and more particularly Mamaloni, in preparation for the 1997 general elections.

Central Islands Province Premier Peter Manetiva and his deputy, Charles Sagulinge, also faced corruption charges during the year. In February the Magistrate’s Court in Honiara heard allegations that they had been induced by hotel accommodation and cash to grant a business license to a company called Marving Brothers, allowing it to log on Pavuvu in the Russell Islands. The payments were allegedly made by Goh and Partners Public Accountants and Allan Kemakeza, the member of parliament for Savo and Russells and minister for environment and conservation (ss, 23 Feb 1996). The Pavuvu issue became controversial after landowners began resisting government proposals to log the island in 1995.

While corruption charges against people in power were being debated in the media, tried in the courts, and whispered in the galleries of public life, the economy continued to receive a battering. The most obvious indication of the deteriorating economic situation was the rapidly increasing cost of living. The Central Bank of Solomon Islands reported that the rate of inflation increased from 10.4 percent at the end of December 1995, to a peak of 14.5 percent at the end of March 1996 (CBSI, April 1996). By the third quarter the rate of inflation had dropped back to 10.4 percent, although this was still 1.9 per cent higher than the rate for the same quarter of the previous year. The Central Bank noted that “by regional and international standards the current rate of inflation is high in Solomon Islands, although from a historical perspective inflation has always been high” (CBSI, Sept 1995, 20). Average urban workers living on minimal salaries were the hardest hit by the high inflation rate.

It was a difficult year in nearly every sector of the economy. Government debt increased both domestically and internationally. Many citizens were astounded when the Honiara newspaper Solomon Star reported in March that the government owed the National Provident Fund (the country’s only national superannuation scheme) a total of $20 million in rents ($917,473), loans ($5,676,015), contributions ($10 million), securities ($1,915,370), and surcharges ($1,096,000) (ss, 15 March 1996). The country’s three commercial banks were also affected by the government’s inability to pay bank securities. According to the Central Bank, the government had accrued over $8 million of debts to the banks since the start of 1995. The general manager of the National Bank of Solomon Islands stated that the “loss of reliable income hits straight at our ability to grow and expand” (ss, 1 May 1996).

The country continued to accumulate debts with international lending agencies such as the World Bank, the
International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank. By the end of the year the government was operating on a huge budget deficit that had been inherited from previous years. In 1995, Finance Minister Abe told parliament of his difficulties financing a “huge” budget deficit: “The government debt is rocketing upwards and now accounts for some 70 percent of our gross domestic products. This means that the government has incurred a debt of about $1,750 for every single person here in the isles of Solomons” (SIMP 1995).

Despite the grim fiscal picture, the story was a little more positive on the macroeconomic level by the third quarter of 1996. The balance of payments showed a trade surplus of S$30 million, 19 percent higher than the previous quarter and 15 percent higher than the same quarter of the previous year. The value of total exports also increased by 15 percent to S$168 million in the quarter ending 30 September, compared with a decline of 7 percent in the previous quarter. Total exports for the nine months through September reached S$471 million, 21 percent higher than for the same period a year before. This allowed external reserves to grow to S$102 million by September, the equivalent of around 1.6 months of import cover. However, taking into account the government’s external arrears of around S$17 million, the reserves represent only 1.3 months of import cover (CBSI, Sept 1996).

Government revenues also improved during the nine months to September. The total revenues were S$263 million, which was up by 13 percent on the same period a year earlier. This represented about 78 percent of total expected revenues for the whole year, as recorded in the 1996 budget estimates. This means that the overall government revenue performance in 1996 will be broadly in line with the budget outcome. However, the Central Bank argues that “revenues could have been higher by around S$11.8 million had the government proceeded to suspend all duty exemptions and remissions to logging companies” (CBSI, Sept 1996, 23). “Local” logging companies in particular have been given 100 percent export tax exemption, even though most of them have overseas partners. For example, Prime Minister Mamaloni’s logging company, Somma Limited, works in partnership with the Goodwill Company of Malaysia.

These improvements in the economy were, unfortunately, overshadowed by the government’s huge domestic and international debts. The government’s borrowing had exceeded its ability to repay. In a desperate attempt to salvage the country’s crippled economy, parliament passed a controversial bill in December 1995 that, if implemented, would impose a 2 percent tax on every withdrawal from bank savings. In February 1996, Finance Minister Abe announced that despite widespread criticism of the proposed tax, it would be effected in June. The decision outraged the public as well as the banks. However, the fate of the proposed debit tax was determined when, in May, Abe fell ill in Singapore and had to spend some weeks receiving medical treatment in Australia. During his absence, Prime
Minister Mamaloni, a veteran political genius, took the opportunity to mend his and his government’s public image. In a tactical public relations campaign, Mamaloni made himself acting finance minister and subsequently ordered the debit tax bill thrown out. In addition, he suspended payments from the Constituency Development Fund, which gave each member of parliament personal control over $200,000 per year. However, the decision to suspend the fund was reversed in July, when Abe returned as finance minister.

The government’s biggest economic achievement was finalizing agreements for a gold-mining project on Guadalcanal. The economic situation is expected to be boosted when the Gold Ridge gold mine begins operation in June 1997. The agreements for mining were finalized in a series of documents signed in 1996 between Ross Mining of Australia, the government, and the Gold Ridge Landowners Association, which represents the landowning tribes in the area. This is Solomon Islands’ first large-scale mining project, although alluvial gold has been mined at Gold Ridge since the 1970s. Throughout the year the government’s immediate concern was to ensure the Gold Ridge project got started as soon as possible. This is not surprising given that the Gold Ridge deposit contains an estimated $1 billion worth of gold. The company expected to complete the feasibility studies by July 1996 and be ready to go ahead with the project (ss, 7 Feb 1996).

However, like most projects, there were a number of costs. As part of the agreement the more than seven hundred residents of Gold Ridge in central Guadalcanal will be relocated to Lungga (near Henderson Airport) in order to make way for the mining operation. This is planned to be a temporary relocation. After the mining is completed, in about ten years, the environment in the Gold Ridge area will be rejuvenated and the residents returned to their homes (ss, 31 Jan 1996). A general social impact assessment was prepared, but, despite its profound social implications, the relocation plan was not studied specifically.

The estimated $6 million cost of the resettlement scheme will be met by the Ross Mining Company. It involves the construction of residential houses, schools, and a clinic and is expected to provide more than a hundred direct jobs over a period of about twenty weeks. A ground-breaking ceremony was held in November to mark the beginning of construction work on Gold Ridge resettlement village (ss, 13 Nov 1996). The company had paid $90,000 in access fees to landowners earlier in the year and estimated that the capital development cost will be about $125 million (ss, 31 Jan 1996).

Events in 1996 were dominated by another long-standing resource-extraction issue. The government continued its controversial policies in the forestry industry, despite widespread criticism from foreign governments as well as international and local nongovernment organizations and individuals. It was estimated that the forestry resource was being harvested at three times the sustainable rate, causing uproar among environmental groups. Also, there was concern over the govern-
ment’s 100 percent export tax exemption awarded to some logging companies, including the prime minister’s own Somma Limited, which operates in his West Makira constituency. These criticisms culminated in an Australian Broadcasting Commission *Foreign Correspondent* television program produced in August, which highlighted the prime minister’s involvement in the logging industry. The issue of logging was made more prominent by the Central Bank of Solomon Islands 1995 Annual Report, which stated that despite an increase in log exports, the revenue from log products has not increased. This caused many people to ask questions.

Forest policy in Solomon Islands is a political as well as an environmental issue. The reactions and responses of foreign governments as well as international and domestic nongovernment organizations were also important. Australia’s then minister for development cooperation and Pacific affairs, Gordon Bilney, for example, lashed out against the government’s logging policy. In reaction, an executive officer of the Solomon Islands Forest Industries Association, Erick Kes, stated that “it is deplorable, that the minister totally ignored affirmative change and positive developments taking place in this industry” (SV, 16 Feb 1996). Forestry is an issue that will definitely feature in campaigns for the 1997 election. It was ironic that in February the prime minister blamed the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Forest, Environment and Conservation for what it had described as the present untidy situation in the forestry industry (SS, 16 Feb 1996).

The eight-year war between the rebel Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and the Papua New Guinea government across the western border in Bougainville continued to affect the Solomon Islands. Officially the Solomon Islands government recognizes the crisis as an internal matter for Papua New Guinea. However, the reality is that Solomon Islands involvement is inevitable. First, the number of Bougainvillean civilians fleeing the war-torn island into the Solomon Islands continues to increase, and many crossed the border in 1996 seeking medical assistance, often for bullet wounds (SS, 11 Dec 1996).

The situation has been further exacerbated by the presence in Honiara over the last six years of BRA representative Martin Miriori. However, in January Miriori’s house in Honiara (which also housed the BRA office) was burned down. Two Bougainvillians were later arrested and charged with arson. Fearing for his and his family’s safety, Miriori was eventually given political asylum in the Netherlands and in June was flown out of Honiara in a specially arranged Australian military aircraft.

Continued Papua New Guinea Defence Force incursions into the Solomon Islands, and a number of armed confrontations with the Solomon Islands Police Field Force, drew the country further into the Bougainville crisis. As Prime Minister Mamaloni noted in July, the crisis has resulted in the increasing militarization of the Solomon Islands economy and society (SS, 5 July 1996), imposing further strains on the country’s budget. There is an increasing acceptance
within civilian society of the need for a military, particularly in Western and Choiseul Provinces, which share the border with Bougainville. At the diplomatic level, the government has requested assistance from the United Nations to help find a solution for the crisis.

The Bougainville crisis continues to be an important agenda item affecting relations between the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. When twelve PNG soldiers were killed on Kangu Beach in South Bougainville in September, Solomon Islanders were accused of supplying the arms to the Bougainville Revolutionary Army. Solomon Islander students in various Papua New Guinea institutions were repatriated after some were allegedly threatened. Most were later sent back to Papua New Guinea after assurances that their security would be guaranteed by the PNG government, which had expressed disappointment over the repatriation decision (SS, 11 Oct 1996). Diplomatic relations deteriorated to the point that officials in the two countries refused to talk to each other. Prime Minister Mamaloni, in particular, refused to meet his PNG counterpart, Sir Julius Chan. However, the situation improved in early 1997, when Chan talked with Mamaloni in Honiara on his way back from the state funeral of Marshall Islands President Amata Kabua. The two countries agreed to establish joint border surveillance that would allow PNG Defence Force personnel “to be based on border posts in the Solomon Islands, allowing them to police the movement of Bougainville rebels between Bougainville Island and the Solomons” (National, 10 Jan 1997). Sir Julius later told reporters in Port Moresby that “these talks have ensured that recent strains in the relationship caused by the crisis do not derail our friendly relationship” (National, 10 Jan 1997).

Former diplomat and Foreign Minister Francis Saemala was appointed as the government’s special envoy on the Bougainville crisis on 2 June 1996. His terms of reference included “to pursue a more determined effort for a constructive and cooperative approach to resolving the crisis . . . and to seek to establish a peace plan” (SN, June–July 1996). However, by the end of the year the Bougainville crisis was far from being resolved, and the Solomon Islands perspective had not changed.

Perhaps the Mamaloni government’s most important domestic political landmark during the year was the passing of the new Provincial Government Bill 1996, which replaced the Provincial Government Act 1981. This was a long-standing issue that had first been discussed in the 1980s but was never passed by parliament because of continual changes in government. This time it went through parliament without many difficulties. The new act allows for a restructuring of the provincial government system with the objective of helping people participate more in the process of governance. Previously, the Solomon Islands had a three-tier system of government, with central and provincial governments as well as area councils. Each of the nine provincial governments had an elected assembly with a premier, an executive, and a speaker. This system was deemed expensive and not conducive
to popular decision-making. The new system replaces provincial governments with provincial councils consisting of presidents of area assemblies, the only local bodies to be elected by the people. Consequently, there will be two, instead of three, elected tiers of government. This, it was argued, would improve people's participation in the decision-making process (SINP 1996).

The bill was widely accepted within parliament, but there were mixed reactions outside parliament. Initially, Malaita, Western, and Guadalcanal Provinces opposed the bill. Although Malaita and Western Provinces later withdrew their opposition, Guadalcanal Province argued that the implementation of the bill was unconstitutional and filed a case in the High Court. One of the major arguments is that the inclusion of chiefs as unelected members of the Area Assemblies is unconstitutional because the constitution requires that leaders should be chosen through universal suffrage. In late February 1997, the High Court ruled in favor of Guadalcanal Province and declared the 1996 Provincial Government Act “null and void.”

Politics in the central government were mirrored in the provincial governments. In two provinces there were changes in leadership, while in the others the same issues of finance, logging, and the Bougainville crisis dominated the political agenda. In Choiseul Province, which is adjacent to Bougainville, Premier Clement Kengava was voted out in a motion of no confidence. New Premier Jerold Simmy Vazarabatu identified the spillover effects of the Bougainville crisis and logging as his most immediate concerns (personal communication, July 1996). In Guadalcanal Province, politics were much more traumatic. Throughout the first half of the year, the province's premier, Gideon Moses, came under criticism for his general handling of provincial affairs. A number of calls for him to resign came from within the provincial assembly and from his executive. In late March a motion of no confidence was moved and passed. However, Moses refused to step down, arguing that the provincial Speaker did not comply with the provincial standing order when he accepted the notice for the motion of no confidence (SS, 29 March 1996). Moses challenged the validity of the motion of no confidence in the High Court, which subsequently ruled in his favor. However, immediately after the High Court decision, another motion of no confidence was filed against him, and in mid-April he was ousted from power. Moses was replaced by Siriako Usa as premier. In Western Province, Premier Thornley Hite took the Bougainville crisis as the most important issue, especially in view of the increasing number of Bougainvilleans coming across the border to Gizo, the provincial capital. In other provinces, finance held center stage in political discussions.

As stated earlier, 1996 was marked by early preparations for the 1997 election by individuals and political parties. In January, former Governor General Sir George Lepping publicly announced his intention to compete in the general election. Immediately he began organizing the Peoples Alliance Party. In June the party held a three-day national convention, after which Sir George was elected president,
replacing Brown Saua who had died earlier in the year (SS, 31 Jan 1996). Other political parties were also preparing for the 1997 general election. In February, president and founder of the Christian Democratic Front Milton Talasasa announced that the party was working toward finalizing candidates to contest the 1997 general election and planning a national convention in June, when it would launch its manifesto and announce its candidates. Talasasa announced that the party expected to field twenty candidates in four provinces. If this eventuates, it will be the first time the party has contested the elections since its formation in 1988 (SS, 9 Feb 1996). The formation of such a party reflects the important role churches can play in the country's politics. There is already a Christian Fellowship party in parliament, and it is likely churches will continue to have significant influence on politics and the state.

Within the opposition, preparations for the 1997 election were temporarily marred by political wrangling between the parties. In April, after continuous political bickering between the parties, Sir Baddley Devesi resigned as leader of the opposition. In May former Prime Minister Ezekiel Alebua was elected to replace him. Alebua's first task was to call on Prime Minister Mamaloni to declare a state of emergency at the border with Papua New Guinea and start dialogue with Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan. Alebua also lashed out against the government's forestry policy and the management of the economy. But the most interesting development was when three of the six parties in the opposition (United Party, National Front for Progress, and Christian Fellowship) merged to form a new National Party and elected Alebua as leader. The three parties that did not join the new National Party were the National Action Party of Solomon Islands led by Francis Saemala, the Peoples Alliance Party led by Sir George Lepping, and the Labour Party led by Joses Tuhanuku (SS, 8 May 1996).

The formation of this new opposition party caused an interesting twist in Solomon Islands politics when Francis Saemala, an arch rival of Mamaloni, later in the year left the opposition and joined the government as minister for planning and national development. This followed one of Mamaloni's political stunts, when in late August he fired four of his cabinet ministers, cut the number of ministries from nineteen to sixteen, and recruited Saemala. The ministers fired included Abe (Finance), Orodani (Justice), Musuota (Posts and Telecommunications), and George Luilamo (Commerce). Orodani and Musuota were at the time awaiting High Court trial for charges of corruption, while Luilamo in 1995 had been charged with corruption in relation to the Pavuvu logging issue and acquitted. On the other hand, Abe was in August interviewed in the controversial ABC Foreign Correspondent program on logging and made remarks that apparently infuriated Prime Minister Mamaloni.

Another important event, not only for the Solomon Islands, but for the rest of independent Melanesia, was Fiji's decision to join the Melanesian Spearhead Group after four years as an observer. Commenting on Fiji's inclusion, the permanent secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Benjamin
Newyear, stated that Fiji’s decision to join will strengthen the organization’s base: “The benefits, especially in trade, social and economic cooperation and cultural exchange to each member of the MSG should only increase with Fiji’s inclusion” (SS, 24 May 1996).

Other developments in the international arena for the Solomon Islands included the increasing interest of Japan and the relationship with Australia. Japan, over the last few years, has had an increasing involvement in terms of aid projects as well as closer diplomatic relations. It became the largest single bilateral aid donor, funding a number of important capital projects such as the construction of the country’s new international terminal, a fisheries depot and facilities for a new Honiara market, improvements to the Honiara water supply system, and the national fisheries project. The reasons for and implications of Japan’s increasing interest in the Solomon Islands are interesting. Economically, the Solomon Islands has nothing much to offer in terms of trade, except for the fisheries resource, which is already dominated by the Japanese company, Taiyo Gyogyo. However, politically there is a lot at stake for Japan, which is currently trying to get support for its inclusion in the United Nations Security Council; the Solomon Islands vote in the General Assembly could be crucial. Also, Japan is trying to win votes for its campaign against the worldwide ban on whaling, and in 1995 the Solomon Islands voted in favor of Japan. The Solomon Islands and other countries in the Southwest Pacific are among Japan’s closest neighbors.

Relations with Australia were affected by the furor over logging, particularly the cancellation of Australian funding for the Timber Control Unit, which was established as part of a forestry aid project. This was designed to indicate Australia’s displeasure with the Solomon Islands government’s unsustainable logging policy. However, relations were beginning to improve by the last quarter of 1996. Foreign Minister David Sitai visited Canberra in November and met his Australian counterpart, Alexander Downer. They discussed, among other things, the logging issue. Sitai stated after the meeting that there is now a better understanding between the two governments (personal interview).

The 1997 election promises to be the most interesting to date for several reasons. First, there will be three generations of Solomon Islanders participating: those who were adults at the time of independence and participated in the first postindependence election in 1979; those born before independence (and now in their late twenties) who were not old enough to participate in the 1979 and 1982 elections; and those born immediately after independence, who will be participating for the first time. These three generations have diverse ideas, interests, and expectations that will provide innovative campaign platforms and voting patterns, unlike previous elections, where the majority of voters and candidates belonged to the first two generations. Many of the present parliamentarians who climbed the pinnacles of power and became prominent during the colonial era are likely to be challenged and replaced in 1997. According to a survey conducted by
the Solomon Islands Development Trust’s hundreds of village workers, most parliamentarians are unlikely to be returned in the coming election. “Of the 2,108 survey returns almost two people out of every three voters are choosing not to return their present parliamentarian if an election were held tomorrow” (Roughan 1996).

Second, issues such as the economy, logging, corruption, leadership qualities, and the Bougainville crisis will all feature prominently in the 1997 election. These issues have become increasingly important in the last two years. The number of corruption cases uncovered in 1996 is also bound to have an impact on the election results. Furthermore, voters’ awareness of their role and rights in the political process has undoubtedly improved since previous elections.

Third, despite this increasing awareness, and the existence of political parties, the personalities of candidates will continue to have a huge influence on voter choice. In a society with deeply rooted patronage-based electoral and coalition politics it will be a long time before parties become an important variable in determining election outcomes. Patronage-based politics have intensified in recent years as a result of candidates’ access to substantial amounts of money that could be used for campaigning. This is particularly so for current members of parliament, who have personal control of project funds worth SI$200,000 each year through the Constituency Development Fund.

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Vanuatu

The year of living dangerously might aptly describe 1996 in Vanuatu.

The short life-expectancy for the newly elected Vohor-Lini government, forecast in this review at the close of 1995, was quickly fulfilled and ushered in a year in which the institutions of the state were continuously assaulted and their integrity dangerously threatened. The parliament, the government, the judiciary, the police and mobile force, and the Office of the Ombudsman were all at various times under attack and in peril. At year’s end, much as in a bad year for cyclones, the country had survived the storms and an apparent calm prevailed, but the trail of destruction left in its wake was observable everywhere. It remains to be seen how well the