



8th February 2010

The holiday season has ended and most of you, including myself, are back at work. I trust that all of you would have had a wonderful start to the New Year. I spent my holidays in Auckland, ensuring to spend plenty of quality time with my wife and our two sons. This is my first newsletter for 2010.

Focus for 2010

Heading into 2010, we have a good platform. Economic growth is stronger than expected and unemployment lower, thanks to a more stable global economy and the Government's success in managing New Zealand through the recession.

New Zealand is on the road to recovery, but we still face risks. Global growth may yet weaken again and there are multiple challenges in our own economy. Unless we can create the right environment for New Zealand businesses to compete on the world stage, we will not achieve the sustained increase in incomes National aspires to.

The government have also set some of the best minds in the country with the task of coming up with ways to lift growth. Among the groups to report back to the Government recently is the Tax Working Group. This report's on ways of improving New Zealand's tax system will contribute to our governments Budget decision making.

Equity and fairness for households and the economy will guide our consideration of options identified by the tax group. The only thing we have ruled out is a capital gains tax on the family home. In considering any significant changes to the tax system I believe the benefits must clearly outweigh any potential difficulties. I want to ensure our tax system rewards people for hard work, encourages them to save, and helps Kiwi families to get ahead.

National Standards

As most of you are aware, the government has launched its new National Standards Programme. Currently too many of our children are slipping through the cracks and missing out on the brighter future they deserve. One in five of our children are leaving school without the literacy and numeracy skills they need to succeed.

National Standards are simply signposts which describe what Year 1 to 8 children should be able to achieve and by when. Teachers will assess, monitor and report on each child's progress against the Standards. Schools will report to parents and families twice a year in plain English. Each Plunket-style report card will show a child's goals, progress, and achievement in relation to the Standards. For the first time, parents will be getting the accurate information about their child that they deserve.

Teachers will use a range of existing assessment tools, as well as their professional judgment, to measure students against National Standards. Many schools already use assessment information to raise student achievement, but we need to get the basics right. We need to find out which children need help, and how much help they need. National Standards are about lifting the performance of every child, and making sure that parents and families can understand the progress of their child.

Minimum Wage Increase

The minimum wage is been increased to \$12.75. Though some people might think that this is not much of an increment, there's a balancing act between the ability for businesses and consumers to pay an increase, and the potential loss of jobs.

Last year the minimum wage was increased from \$12 to \$12.50. In the current fiscal climate, raising the minimum wage by \$2.50 an hour would have put thousands of jobs at risk. We don't want to see people losing their jobs or having their hours reduced because employers can no longer afford to pay their workers. We don't want to see workers priced out of the market, but we also don't want to discourage businesses from taking on new staff.

Hiren Mohini

39-year-old Hiren Mohini was a loving father, husband and son. Hiren's death was a senseless tragedy and he will be deeply missed by his family, friends and community. A gentle, kind-hearted man, Hiren was a hard worker dedicated to his family and committed to creating the best life possible for them. Hiren was always willing to help others and his support of his sister in India is particularly admirable. I visited Hiren's home upon hearing the sad news and also attended his funeral. His funeral was attended by hundreds of his colleagues, community members and people from all walks of life.

My thoughts, sympathy and prayers are particularly with his wife Falguni, his mother Vasantiben and his two beautiful daughters Yashvi and Hetvi as they struggle with their loss. I am confident that Hiren's family will be supported by family, friends and their wider community as Hiren would most assuredly have supported them. I cannot begin to make sense of this needless tragedy. All I can offer is my deepest sympathy and support to Hiren's family. We have suffered a great loss with the tragic death of Hiren but he will not be forgotten. Hiren will long be remembered for his gentle nature, dedication, work ethic and willingness to help and support those around him.

Events

below are pictures of some of the events i have recently attended

60th Anniversary of India's Republic Day

The 60th Anniversary of India's Republic Day was held at the ASB Theatre - Aotea Square, Auckland on the 24th of January. Present at the event were among myself, our Prime Minister Hon John Key, several Ministers and MP's and our Indian High commissioner Admiral Suresh Mehta. The event was started with the raising of the Indian Flag and was followed by a speech by our Prime Minister, Indian High Commissioner and several Ministers and MP's. I was delighted to see that so many children had taken part in the event. You could truly tell the amount of time, effort and the hours of practice it must have taken for them to be able to deliver such a splendid performance. The community was well represented with several Indian Associations taking part in the performances and the organisation of the event.



Prime Ministers Youth Event

I also attended the final day of the Prime Ministers Youth Event at the Trusts Stadium in Henderson late last month. This programme was a result of the joint effort of our Prime Minister - Hon John Key along with Minister of Police - Hon Judith Collins and Minister of Social Development and Youth Affairs - Hon Paula Bennett. The 14 to 17-year-olds were offered places on the week-long Government initiative as a reward for making positive, life-changing choices, as recognised by community leaders. Each teen has faced adversity, sometimes because of their own choices, or simply due to the world they have grown up in. On the last day of the event, Hon John Key and the National Party had a barbecue for the youth and community members to celebrate the completion of the course. Several celebrities also attended to show their support.



Kind Regards

Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi MP

www.national.org.nz



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