

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

MONDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY, 2020

[CORRECTED COPY]

CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
Minutes	334
Communications from the Chair	334-335
Presentation of Papers and Certain Documents	335-337
Presentation of Reports of Committees	337-343
Ministerial Statement	343-352
Hon. Dr. M. Reddy - Update on 2020 Fiji Agricultural Census	
Review Report on FPCL 2016 Annual Report	353-370
Review Report on the 2014-2016 Annual Review of the MEPIR Report	371-400
Suspension of Standing Orders	401
Special Committee – Review of Maritime/ Outer Island Development Programmes	402-433
Questions	434-445
<u>Oral</u>	
Question No. 01/2020 - Dialysis Machines	
Question No. 02/2020 - Consumer Protection in the Market	
Question No. 03/2020 - 2020 Outbreak of Diseases & OHS	
Question No. 04/2020 - Non-Compliance of Employment Laws	
Question No. 05/2020 - Update on Sale of Government Assets – 2019-2020	
Question No. 06/2020 - Climate Change in the Livestock Sector	
Question No. 07/2020 - Ownership of Minerva Reefs 0- Update	
Question No. 08/2020 - Parenthood Assistance Payment Scheme	
<u>Written</u>	
Question No. 09/2020 – Sustainability of Pine Industry	
Question No. 10/2020 - Breakdown of Treated and Untreated Piped Water Provisions	
Question No. 11/2020 - Rehabilitation Works - Schools Damaged by TC Winston	

MONDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY, 2020

The Parliament resumed at 9.30 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

Hon. Josai Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry
Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications
Hon. Lt. Col. Inia Batikoto Seruiratu, Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs
Hon. Parveen Kumar Bala, Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations and Youth and Sports
Hon. Mereseini Rakuita Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment
Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications
Hon. Lt. Col. Inia Batikoto Seruiratu, Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs
Hon. Parveen Kumar Bala, Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations and Youth and Sports
Hon. Mereseini Rakuita Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment
Hon. Rosy Sofia Akbar, Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts
Hon. Cdr. Semi Tuleca Koroilavesau, Minister for Fisheries
Hon. Osea Naiqamu, Minister for Forestry
Hon. Jone Usamate, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services
Hon. Ashneel Sudhakar, Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources
Hon. Dr. Ifereimi Waqainabete, Minister for Health and Medical Services
Hon. Premila Devi Kumar, Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development
Hon. Alexander David O'Connor, Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services
Hon. Veena Kumar Bhatnagar, Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Hon. Vijay Nath, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services
Hon. Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj, Assistant Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports
Hon. Alipate Tuicolo Nagata, Assistant Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations and Youth and Sports
Hon. Jale Sigarara, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Maritime Development
Hon. Viam Pillay, Assistant Minister for Environment and Rural Development
Hon. Joseph Nitya Nand, Assistant Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts
Hon. George Vegnathan, Assistant Minister for Sugar Industry
Hon. Selai Adimaitoga, Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs
Hon. Mitieli Bulanauca

Hon. Mosese Dreocala Bulitavu
 Hon. Viliame Rogoibulu Gavoka
 Hon. Dr. Salik Ram Govind
 Hon. Anare Jale
 Hon. Ro Teimumu Vuikaba Kepa
 Hon. Sanjay Salend Kirpal
 Hon. Inosi Kuridrani
 Hon. Dr. Ratu Atonio Rabici Lalabalavu
 Hon. Ratu Naiqama Tawake Lalabalavu
 Hon. Mikaele Rokosova Leawere
 Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua
 Hon. Ratu Tevita Navurelevu
 Hon. Niko Nawaikula
 Hon. Vijendra Prakash
 Hon. Prof. B.C. Prasad
 Hon. Lenora Salusalu Qereqeretabua
 Hon. Adi Litia Qionibaravi
 Hon. Major-General (Ret'd) Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka
 Hon. Aseri Masivou Radrodro
 Hon. Salote Vuibureta Radrodro
 Hon. Simione Rokomalo Rasova
 Hon. Jese Saukuru
 Hon. Rohit Ritesh Sharma
 Hon. Lynda Diseru Tabuya
 Hon. Ro Filipe Tuisawau
 Hon. Peceli Waqairatu Vosanibola

Absent

Hon. Lt. Col. Pio Tikoduadua

MINUTES

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Friday, 22nd November, 2019 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to the first sitting period for the 2020 Session.

I also welcome members of the public joining us in the gallery and those watching the live broadcast and the proceedings on television and the internet.

Petitions from the Opposition

For the information of Honourable Members, I received three petitions from the Opposition and I am still considering and reviewing these petitions.

Once I take a decision on these petitions, I will inform Honourable Members accordingly, and it is most likely to be in the next couple of days perhaps tomorrow morning.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Prime Minister and the Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry, Honourable Josaia Bainimarama, to table his Report. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs' Annual Report for the year 2016 to 2017 to Parliament.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs' Annual Report 2016-2017 to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

I now call upon the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications, Honourable Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, to table his Reports. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. In accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the following Reports to Parliament:

1. Fiji Electoral Commission – 2018 Annual Report;
2. Reserve Bank of Fiji – August 2018-July 2019 Annual Report; and
3. Office of the Auditor-General – Report on Performance Audit on Management of Traffic Congestion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, hand the Reports to the Secretary-General.

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Fiji Electoral Commission – 2018 Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Justice Law and Human Rights.

Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Reserve Bank of Fiji – August 2018 to July 2019 Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Office of the Auditor-General - Report on Performance Audit on Management of Traffic Congestion to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports, Honourable Parveen Bala to table his Reports. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the following Reports to Parliament:

1. Ministry of Youth and Sports – Annual Report for 2017-2018; and
2. Fiji National Sports Commission – Annual Report for August 2017-July 2018.

Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, hand the Reports to the Secretary-General.

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the following Reports to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs:

1. Ministry of Youth and Sports – Annual Report for the year 2017-2018; and
2. Fiji National Sports Commission – Annual Report for August 2017-July 2018.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Honourable Rosy Akbar, to table her Reports. You have the floor, Madam.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present to Parliament the following Reports:

1. Fiji Museum – Annual Report 2015;
2. Fiji Museum – Annual Report 2016; and
3. Fiji Museum – Annual Report 2016/2017.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, hand the reports to the Secretary-General.

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Fiji Museum Annual Reports for 2015, 2016 and 2017 to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

I now call upon the Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development, Honourable Premila Kumar, to table her Reports. You have the floor, Madam.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the following Reports to Parliament.

- Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism – Annual Report for 2016-2017 ; and
- National Fire Authority – 2013 Annual Report.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, hand the Reports to the Secretary-General.

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism – Annual Report 2016-2017 Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the National Fire Authority - 2013 Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs, Honourable Inia Seruiratu, to table his Report. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the Ministry of Defence and National Security's Annual Report for the year 2016-2017 to Parliament.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, hand the Reports to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Ministry of Defence and National Security's Annual Report for 2016-2017 to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, Honourable Alvick Maharaj to table his report. You have the floor, Sir.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts – 2016/2017 Audit Report on Statutory Authorities

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, this report follows the Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji, 2016/2017 Audit Report on Statutory Authorities. The 2016/2017 Audit Report on Statutory Authorities covers audit for 15 entities. The Auditor-General issued 21 audit opinions out of which 15 related to the 2016 financial statement while 4 were on the 2017 financial statement.

The Committee deliberated and compiled a report on the audit findings of 15 entities comprising of 25 audit financial statements for the audits undertaken in the 2016 financial year. The Auditor-General issued an unmodified opinion on 13 of the financial statements audited for the various entities whilst the audit opinion on one entity was modified and one was issued with a Disclaimer of Opinion. For the audits undertaken in the 2017 financial year, the Auditor-General issued an unmodified opinion on six of the financial statements audited for the various entities.

The Audit Report highlights that a majority of the 15 statutory authorities are yet to be audited due to the following reasons:

- Delay in submission of draft accounts for audit or draft accounts submitted were incomplete;
- Delay in provision of management comments;

- Delay in returning the signed audited financial statements for issues of audit opinion;
- Relevant information/records not provided for audit on a timely basis; and
- Authorities deciding to address issues raised in draft audit reports and resubmission of financial statements for audit.

The Committee strongly encourages the chief accounting officers of the respective agencies to take responsibility for the deficiencies that are being highlighted in the audit report and work towards resolving them. The clarifications provided to the Committee revealed that the statutory authorities have taken the Auditor-General's recommendation in a positive manner and are taking necessary actions accordingly.

I would like to thank the executives for these statutory authorities and the staff of the Office of the Auditor-General for appearing before the Committee to provide clarifications on these issues.

I also wish to extend my appreciation to all the Honourable Members of the Committee who were part of the successful compilation of this bipartisan Report, namely Honourable Joseph Nand (Deputy Chairman), Honourable Vijendra Prakash, Honourable Aseri Radrodro and Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu.

On behalf of the Committee, I extend my appreciation to the Secretariat Staff for their timely support in the compilation and preparation of this Report.

With those few words, I now commend this Report to the Parliament.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Please, hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move a motion without notice, that a debate on the content of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the Parliament will now vote.

Question put

HON. SPEAKER.- Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of "Noes")

Motion agreed to unanimously.

Standing Committee on Social Affairs – Annual Review of the
Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) for the Year Ended 31st July 2016

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the Report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the Annual Review of the Fiji Higher Education Commission for the Year ended 31 July, 2016.

In accordance with its established Annual Report review process, the Committee examines Annual Reports of agencies in order to investigate, inquire into, and make recommendations relating to the agencies' administration, legislative or proposed legislative programme, budget, functions, organisational structure and policy formulation. As part of this process, the Committee conducted public hearings to gather additional information.

The process has proven to be an effective means of gauging its progress and maintaining a high level of scrutiny of the agency under review.

This review was made in accordance with Standing Order 109(2)(b) which mandates the Committee to look into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, culture and media.

The review looked at nine key areas covering the period from 1st January to 31st July 2016, conducted into the Commission's administration; structure; budgetary allocation; programmes and activities; policies; challenges; highlights; priorities for the coming years; and its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

At this juncture, I also wish to thank the Interim Director of the Fiji Higher Education Commission, Dr. Nikhat Shameem, and her staff for their assistance in this review. I also extend my gratitude to my Committee colleagues, namely: Honourable George Vegnathan (Deputy Chairperson); Honourable Alipate Nagata; Honourable Salote Radrodoro; and Honourable Dr. Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu for their contributions, as well as Honourable Simione Rasova for availing himself as an Alternate Member for those Members who were unable to attend the Committee meetings. Finally, I thank the Secretariat for the assistance provided during the Committee's deliberations.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend the Fiji Higher Education Commission's Annual Report for the Year Ended 31st July 2016 to Parliament, and request all Members of this august House to take note of the Committee's Report. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Please, hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. V. PILLAY.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move a motion without notice that a debate on the content of the Report is initiated at a future sitting. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the Parliament will now vote.

Question put

HON. SPEAKER.- Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of "Noes")

Motion agreed to unanimously.

Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights –
Department of Legislature’s Annual Report 2016-2017

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Justice, Law and Human Rights. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- The Honourable Speaker, Sir, the Department of Legislature is the administrative arm of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. It is responsible for providing administrative and support services, including administering funding entitlements for parliamentary purposes.

The Department is headed by the Speaker of Parliament and the Secretary-General to Parliament is the Chief Executive Officer of the parliamentary administration and the principal procedural advisor to the Speaker, the Members of Parliament and the Committees of Parliament.

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights was referred the Department of Legislature’s Annual Report 2016-2017 on 30th November, 2018 for oversight and review and report back its findings to Parliament. The objectives of the review were to analyse the function, engagement, output and performance of the Department of Legislature with the view of identifying strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvements.

The Committee deliberated on the Annual Report thoroughly and noted a few pertinent matters in its content which were then discussed with the Department’s representatives.

The Committee read through the Report and raised several questions for clarification to the Department of Legislature. The Office provided responses to the questions and these were scrutinised by the Committee.

In its review, the Committee highlighted several findings from the Report. Some of these findings are:

- Clarification on the sufficient space to accommodate the needs of Parliamentary staff and Members of Parliament;
- Clarification on the Department’s constitutional functions and its Strategic Plans;
- Clarification on the systematic mechanism to monitor the oversight role of Parliament on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Clarification on the achievement of the Parliament Outreach Programme;
- Clarification on the systematic mechanism for awareness of Parliamentary work;
- Clarification on the staff turnover and sufficient resources available;
- Consideration was also given to the requirements of the Standing Orders of Parliament pertaining to the impact on gender when deliberating on the Annual Report, however appreciation was given to the apparent gap in placing emphasis on such requirements when the Report was drafted and tabled in Parliament.

Based on the findings of the Report, the Committee makes the following recommendations:

- The Committee notes the ongoing discussion between Parliament and the Judiciary to create more space for Parliament. The Committee suggests if the process can be expedited;
- That future Annual Reports to include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on the overall function of Parliament;
- That the Department looks into revitalizing the Youth Parliament to increase the interest of youths for their Parliament and Parliamentary processes as this is also an important aspect of Parliament’s constitutional function;

- The Committee commends the effort by the Department's Strategic Plan, however, there is a need for adequate resources allocated for the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan;
- That there has to be a standardized mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the six Standing Committees. Furthermore, the Standing Committees and staff to have the necessary knowledge and skills to perform SDG analysis, monitoring and evaluation;
- The Committee acknowledges and commends the achievements of the outreach programmes of the Department, however, it is recommended that there should be more systematic approach for the wider outreach programmes which can be effectively monitored and assessed for its impact;
- The Parliament needs to create more awareness within the general public about the Bills that are before the Committees;
- That there should be other incentives such as annual performance awards; and
- That the Parliament should have Health Awareness Programme for MPs and staff.

Through the review of the Department of Legislature's Annual Report 2016-2017 and through the findings of the Committee, it can be inferred that there has been commendable effort and tireless work conducted by the Office in meeting its obligations. However, the Committee, after extensive deliberation, has come up with certain recommendations that it feels warrants consideration by the Office.

I would also like to thank the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, Honourable Rohit Sharma (Deputy Chairperson), Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua, Honourable Dr. Salim Govind and Honourable Mosese Bilitavu, for their deliberation and input; and the Alternate Members who made themselves available when the substantive Members could not attend; the Secretariat and the officials from the Department of Legislature who had assisted in the Committee work.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, I commend the Department of Legislature Annual Report 2016 to 2017 to Parliament, and request all Honourable Members of this august House to take into consideration the recommendations put forward by the Committee. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move a motion without notice that a debate on the content of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put

HON. SPEAKER.- Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of "Noes")

Motion agreed to unanimously.

Standing Committee on Social Affairs -
Annual Review Report of Film Fiji for January-December 2014 and January-December 2015

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, the Honourable Viam Pillay to table his Report. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I am pleased to present the Report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the Annual Review of Film Fiji for the period January-December 2014 and January-December 2015.

In accordance with its established Annual Report review process, the Committee examines Annual Reports of agencies in order to investigate, inquire into and make recommendations relating to the agencies' administration, legislative or proposed legislative programme, budget, functions, organisational structure and policy formulation. As part of this process, the Committee conducted public hearings to gather additional information.

The process has proven to be an effective means of gauging its progress and maintaining a high level of scrutiny of the agencies under review. This review was made in accordance with Standing Order 109(2)(b), which mandates the Committee to look into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, culture and media. The review looked at nine key areas covering the period from January 2014 to December 2015, conducted into Film Fiji's administration; structure; budgetary allocation; programmes and activities; policies; challenges; highlights; priorities for the coming years; and its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At this juncture, I also wish to thank the Acting Chief Executive Officer of Film Fiji, Mr Jone Tikoca, and his staff for their assistance in this review process. I also extend my gratitude to my Committee colleagues, namely: Honourable George Vegnathan (Deputy Chairperson), Honourable Alipate Nagata, Honourable Salote Radrodoro and Honourable Dr. Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu for their contributions as well as to Honourable Simione Rasova and Honourable Jale Sigarara for availing themselves as Alternate Members for those Members who were unable to attend the Committee meetings.

Finally, I thank the Secretariat for the assistance provided during the Committee's deliberations. I, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, commend the Film Fiji 2014 Annual Report and the Film Fiji 2015 Annual Report to Parliament and request all Members of this august House to take note of the Committee's Report. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. V. PILLAY.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move a motion, without notice, that a debate on the content of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of “Noes”)

Motion agreed to unanimously.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment has given notice to make a Ministerial Statement under Standing Order 40. The Minister may speak for up to 20 minutes after which I will then invite the Leader of the Opposition or his designate to speak on the Statement for no more than five minutes. There will also be a response from the Leader of the National Federation Party or his designate to also speak for five minutes. There will be no other debate.

Honourable Members, I now call on the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment, the Honourable Dr. Mahendra Reddy to deliver his statement. You have the floor, Sir.

Update on 2020 Fiji Agricultural Census

HON. DR. M.REDDY.- Mr. Speaker Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers, Members of Parliament: I wish to provide an update to this House on the Agriculture Census 2020.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this current period marks an important milestone in Fiji’s history as the Ministry of Agriculture is right in the middle of conducting a nation-wide agriculture census in Fiji. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, Sir, census of agriculture provides fundamental data on the organisational structure of the agriculture holdings such as farm size, land size, land tenure, livestock memories, the use of machinery as well as the number of holdings with each crop and livestock type.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, reliable and timely agriculture data provides farmers, producers, consumers, buyers, exporters and governments the information that is required to make well-informed decisions in business and policy. Farmers would want to know who the players in the market are, where they are and what their position is in the market. Consumers would want to know who the suppliers are and where they operate from. Exporters would want production data, who are the major players and how can they transact with them to secure long term markets. Manufacturers would want to ensure that we have producers and suppliers who supply commodities for product development in the required volume and in a consistent manner. The Government would want to know the social, economic and market situation in the primary sector in both individual, household and national interest.

Mr. Speaker Sir, Government will ensure that the data obtained in a timely manner, is reliable and accurate and is accessible to all for policy formulation with their level. The government would want to use the data to direct and restructure and raise production in the national interest. The government would want to use the data to address issues of raising household income, raising exports, raising national income. The Government will also be able to ensure its objective of food and nutritional security at regional and national levels are met. The government will also be able to know and ensure factory suppliers are getting the appropriate returns based on market conditions. The

Government will also be able to use the data to make long term sustainable development plans given the national resource stock.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me also enlighten Parliament that Fiji's Agriculture Statistics System is also part of the National Statistics System (NSS) of Fiji. The NSS is a group of statistical organisations and units within a country that jointly collect, process and disseminate official statistics on behalf of the national government. In Fiji, this is the role and responsibility of the Fiji Bureau of Statistics under the Ministry of Economy. For compilation of agriculture statistics for economic analysis and measurement of agriculture contribution to the national output, national GDP, the Bureau of Statistics sources its agricultural production data from the Ministry of Agriculture through its agriculture statistic system.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Ministry of Agriculture has continued to improve its Agriculture Statistical System since 2014 in partnership with Food Agriculture Organisation (FAO), through the United Nations Global Strategy Initiative to improve agriculture in rural statistics. It has been an ongoing activity of the Economic Planning and Statistics section of the Ministry and I want to assure this august House that the Ministry will continue to improve this important exercise that is essential for us to set priorities, make informed choices and implement better policies for sustainable agriculture development. I have held discussions with our staff of our statistics section and have given them a deadline with regard to coming up with a template for collecting national production data as accurately as possible.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, all Members present here today, value and acknowledge timely and quality statistics as one of the significant components of our activities, especially in planning for development and policy. Through and through during our Parliament discussions we have debated on the use of reliable, correct and relevant information and data for decision-making.

For these reasons and for the betterment of the sector, the Ministry has embarked on a journey to improve its statistical system. I know you will agree with me that it will not happen overnight but it is happening. Changes, like having the right statistical infrastructure, continuous improvement of staff capabilities and introduction of statistical tools, et cetera, are all part of these continuous improvement.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, conducting survey and census in a consistent and well-coordinated manner is one of the key pillars of improving and developing Fiji's Agriculture Statistics System.

Census of Agriculture is no doubt one of the significant data collection exercises undertaken throughout the world especially in developing countries where farming activities is key to sustainable livelihood. It collates important agriculture information that will ensure better planning in formulation of appropriate strategies for the sector. It also allows Government to analyse and measure impact of its intervention across time.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, policy makers at the national and international level and those that develop investment strategies to enhance economic development, face many challenges with the current changing face of agriculture.

While agriculture is the primary source to feed, clothe, and provide materials for fuel and housing for a growing world population, the challenge is at the same time to lift millions of people out of poverty and hunger, reduce the impact of agriculture on environment and global warming and sustain water and land resources.

These are issues that go beyond national boundaries. Improvement of agriculture statistics provide the vision for national and international statistical systems to produce the basic data and information to guide decision making required for the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we can all agree that a well-designed and a well conducted census of agriculture is an invaluable source of information for the agricultural sector of any country. Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to briefly share in this august House an overview of the 2020 Fiji Agriculture Census which is currently under implementation by the Ministry, we started last week on 10th and will finish on 29th of February.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Agriculture Census is conducted every 10 years and Fiji has previously undertaken four censuses in 1968, 1978, 1991 and 2009. The 2020 census is the fifth in that series. All four previous censuses that I have just highlighted were conducted on a sample basis and for this current census, it will include full coverage of the rural area, part of the peri-urban area and selected urban villages targeting more than 75,000 farming households based on the 2018 Farming Household Review. In order for us to have sharper and targeted policies that enable us to transform agriculture in Fiji, it is imperative that we capture everyone who is making contribution in this sector. The primary decision to go with full enumeration exercise is that sampling methods cannot provide accurate information for small administrative sub-divisions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when the entire geographical space is not homogenous then it is not very important that you try if possible to collect population data. And as you know, Mr. Speaker, Sir, across Fiji amongst the divisions there is quite a bit of heterogeneity with respect to household, farming structure et cetera and there Sir, this time around, we have decided that we will go with population data amongst the rural and maritime division. However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, some crops were cultivated only to a limited extent, maybe of great economic significance. Information of such crops can only be reliably obtained from a complete census. Sampling methods cannot provide accurate information on variables that occur infrequently.

So whilst the complete enumeration exercise is resource-heavy, it provides distinctive advantage for us in Fiji and will be a valuable tool in supporting us in coming up with firm policies towards transforming Fiji's Agriculture sector, which will have a major impact on raising the issues of livelihood for the rural and maritime community.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government through Cabinet approval, has made an allowance for us to conduct the 2020 Agriculture Census with a total allocation of FJ\$4.5 million. There is a great need to accept the role of agriculture in invigorating crucial economic segments and this is an investment in achieving our aim of agriculture becoming the single biggest contributor to economic prosperity in Fiji. This approval spearheaded the preparation for the 2020 agriculture census with the aim of successfully achieving its immediate objectives.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this will enable us to establish baseline data on the structure of Fiji's agriculture sector and provide a framework for future agriculture census and surveys. It will improve Fiji's agriculture rural statistics system capacity to generate quality agriculture data. It will provide timely, accurate and quality evidence for planning and policy making. It will enable monitoring and progress of the sector towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, guided by the 2020 World Census of Agriculture Framework, this is the first time the Ministry is conducting an integrated census for all four agriculture sub-sectors, crop, sugarcane, fisheries and forestry. Mr. Speaker, Sir, previously, forestry and fisheries were not included in the agriculture census.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this data collection exercise will ensure availability of small area data for primary sectors especially for the Ministry of Fisheries and Forestry, whose current database is populated mainly by registered entities who practise these activities on commercial level.

The 2020 Agriculture Census preparation was inaugurated with the formation of a National Steering Committee (NSC) whose members were made up of Executive Officers from Ministries that administer these sub-sectors – Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Forestry and Ministry of Sugar. Also part of the National Steering Committee are pro-stakeholders such as: Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development; Ministry of Economy; Bureau of Statistics; Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; Ministry of iTaukei Affairs; and Ministry of Health and Medical Services. Technical Officers from all these ministries and stakeholders were present in the number of Technical Working Groups that designed the Census Questionnaire and methodology.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is grateful to the United Nation Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) who have been our partner in organising and the implementation of this very important exercise providing technical expertise and guidance. FAO provided three Statisticians and two Computer Assisted Personnel Interviewing (CAPI) who have been working with our Census team in preparation for this National Exercise.

It is exciting to note that this will be the first in Fiji for officers engaged to collect data through the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) system on tablets and I would like to personally thank our National Statistic's Office; the Bureau of Statistics (FBoS), for the continuous support and provision of 700 tablets to be used by Enumerators. The adoption of technology in such an integral process signifies the digital advancement that the Government is implementing keeping in par with trends in developed countries. The use of modern technology also allows us to make best use of our human resource, cutting out inefficiencies and eliminating radical non-value adding processes.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with this approach of collecting data electronically, we are able to observe in real time the actual data coming into our Head Office. The adoption of this new technology in the Agriculture Census will substantially improve the quality and transparency of data collected, shorten the time for data processing and quickly disseminate results for Census data users. Across the world, some countries are leading this global trend, and Fiji is now joining them. I am sure we are all very proud to be part of this revolutionary move. The Fiji Bureau of Statistics adopted this tool in the conduct of the 2017 Population and Housing Census and the Agriculture Statistics System is just as excited to be part of that change.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform this august House that the designing of the Questionnaire for the 2020 Census underwent continuous consultations and series of activities to ensure that we formulate the perfect questions that will enable us to achieve the objective of the Census and improve our Agriculture Statistical Database:

- Reference document used was the 2009 Census Questionnaire;
- Meeting with all the line ministries to identify their data needs;
- Numerous technical working group meetings;
- Questionnaire test with Ministry staff internally;
- Questionnaire field pre-tests;
- Consultations were held with experts at the Fiji National University and the University of the South Pacific; first time ever this was done.
- Pilot census of the questionnaire prior to this survey was undertaken from 4th to 8th November, 2019;

- Users Conference organised at the Tanoa Plaza Hotel on 29th November, 2019 to fine tune the final questionnaire; and
- Final amendment was endorsed by the National Steering Committee.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the 2020 Agriculture Census Questionnaire covers 13 sections.

Section 1 – Household Composition. This section will capture detailed information of all members of the household and clearly identify how their agriculture activity have contributed to their livelihood. It captures information such as:

- Household size;
- Demographic details such as age, et cetera;
- Economic activities – primary and secondary occupations and its status; and
- Respondents identify farmer as an occupation with follow-up questions about types of agriculture activities.

Section 2 – Household Particulars. This section is designed to capture information on the impact of agriculture in terms of household's living standards and conditions.

Section 3 – Land. This section will provide data on actual land use in Fiji which is crucial in analysing agricultural productivity.

Section 4 – Crops. Crop-type and data collected in this section include types of crops planted, harvested by area, production, home consumption and market supplies.

Section 5 – Livestock. In this section, data will be collected on livestock or farm animals. It identifies the type of livestock farmed, stock count, production, market, livestock feed and livestock services.

Section 6 – Fisheries. This section identifies what type of fishing activities and other fishing details that the household participates in.

Section 7 – Forestry. This section captures information pertaining to the cultivation, harvesting and sale of forestry products. For the first time, data will also be collected for some core products such as *voivoi* or pandanus.

Section 8 – Aquaculture. This section captures information on cultivation of marine organisms, regular stocking, feeding, protection from predators, et cetera.

Section 9 – Climate Change and Challenges. Again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, given the issue of climate change, for the first time in the agriculture census, we have this section on Climate Change and Challenges.

Section 10 – Equipment. This section records the type of equipment and tools that a farmer has in his/her possession.

Section 11 – Agriculture Services. This section will capture information on different types of support services that the farmer is able to get.

Section 12 – Food Insecurity. This section captures the food insecurity experience of the farming household and provides baseline data for further analysis of villages and settlements where the people are most at risk of hunger.

Section 13 – Labour. This section captures basic labour costs information on the household and allows for simple gender desegregated labour statistics in the sector.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as of Week 1, given the census target last week, we were able to collect from 18,247 households from the 71,153 total that we were supposed to collect over the three-week period.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a slight reduction, slightly lower than the target for Week 1 because there were some issues in terms of getting to maritime areas. This is being rectified and we expect to complete the full 71,153 farm households by the end Week 3, that is the timeframe for the census.

This morning, I had a brief meeting with the Census Team to look at back-up strategies to ensure that given the slight shortfall in the targeted number of households, what are the back-up plans to ensure that we are able to get the data collected within this timeframe; from 10th to 29th February because this is census. Census is about collecting data at a particular point in time over a geographical space so that back-up plan is enforced.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government through the Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry can only improve and change its current agriculture services, create new agriculture programmes for farming assistance that best suits farmers' needs, provide specific agricultural technical advice and reach out to farms if there is quality information available. Data captured through this census will provide much needed statistics which will enhance development of Fiji's primary sector. Collectively, it will be our voice that determines the future of Fiji's Agriculture Sector.

To conclude, the Ministry will continue to pursue the improvement of its Agriculture Statistics System, align statistical activities to meet standards to ensure that all necessary information needed is recorded on time and no one is left behind. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister for his Ministerial Statement. I now call upon the Leader of the Opposition or his designate. You have the floor, Honourable Kuridrani.

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the Minister for the informative Statement this morning on the 2020 Agriculture Census.

It is timely and updates the nation on this initiative which is an important measure of the status for our agriculture sector, the largest sector that benefits 90 percent of our people, feeding the nation, providing employment opportunities and contributes to our food security. We do not want to become Singapore which imports 95 percent of its food and is trying now to grow its own domestic agriculture sector for its food and national security.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the core of governance is consultation and if this Government practised what it preached, the people would be informed, rumours would not be spread

and dissatisfaction would not fester. But the opposite is true, unfortunately the many questions are occurring in relation to the census and the agriculture industry.

Agriculture continues to decline, having contributed 16 percent of the GDP in 1995 and only 6 percent by 2016, yet over 50 percent of our population continue to depend on agriculture.

The lack of data, one issue which the Minister failed to elaborate on is why ethnic data is not being collected or measured in this Agriculture Census. It is unfortunate that this Government chooses to blind itself to the rich identity and culture of our multi-ethnic society. Ignoring ethnicity is a recipe for disaster. The disaggregated ethnicity data is required for the basic research behind policy decisions ...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- ... because we and the Government must look and assist the individual families and communities holistically rather than ignoring ethnicity-related factors that contribute to this current state or inability to prosper in these certain areas.

How else can Government tailor programmes if it ignores this basic fact about the nation and its people? That is why it is important to collect data on ethnicity. It is not about being racist but having the best and full information available in order to tailor-make policies that really help farmers to prosper.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Nationally, collecting ethnicity data is important to promote equal employment opportunities or assessing racial disparities in health and environmental risk. Race data is therefore critical for the best basic research behind many policy decisions.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to talk on the company that is behind the collection of data of agriculture census and I wish to question the Minister on the company that designed the software for the Agriculture Census.

Reports are that Pacific Technologies whose director is currently the Director of ITC has won the contract. Can the Minister explain how a public servant of ITC under the Ministry of Economy won the Agriculture Census Software Tender?

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Shame, shame!

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- It is unheard of, to say the least and the public must be fully informed of the process and its transparency.

HON. MEMBER.- Not only agriculture.

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Normally we had the Bachelor of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also want to inform the House the misinformation done by the Minister of Agriculture in our November Sitting.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to raise a breach of Standing Order 64 by Honourable Dr. Reddy on Monday, 18th November, 2019. He claimed that I told the House that the Honourable Prime Minister receives \$3,000 as daily travelling allowance. The record shows that I did not mention \$3,000, it was Honourable Dr. Reddy who did show in his response

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- He has breached Standing Order 62 by imputing improper motives and is using words that could provoke feelings of ill will and hostility between communities in his speech.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on page 57 of the Daily Hansard Report I actually said and I quote: "There is only a very small percentage of people living in Fiji who can afford to live in luxury...". This percentage includes our Government Ministers who enjoy huge pay cheques to make public appearances all over Fiji and around the world, whilst everyone in their Ministry gets work done for them. That includes our Prime Minister with his extravagant travel allowance. I did not mentioned the \$3,000.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, sit down. You have had your time.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Honourable Member, when you are answering to a Ministerial Statement, stick to answering to the Ministerial Statement.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Very poor.

HON. SPEAKER.- Do not bring in things that are personal to you and I hope I have made myself clear on that. We will move on. Honourable Leader of the National Federation Party, you have the floor.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I want to thank the Honourable Minister for his Statement.

Mr. Speaker, I have no dispute with the Honourable Minister on the rationale, on the need and the processes that one has to undertake to collect agricultural census data. I also heard him explain the processes, I have no particular issues with respect to the collection of the data. But I think, Mr. Speaker, the challenge that I want to put to the Honourable Minister and to the Government is to make sure that, that data is available in a transparent manner. This Government, we all know has been known to hide data, misinterpret data and misuse data.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I want to challenge the Honourable Minister for Agriculture to ensure because Agriculture Census data and he is right, Honourable Speaker, it is very important for policy, for understanding the supply chain, for intervention in various sectors of the agricultural area; it is very important. But if that data is not fully available, it should not only be available to the Government stakeholders and to different ministries.

Mr. Speaker, when you have this kind of data, if it is not available to the wider stakeholder, scholars, researchers, people who want to look at what is happening in the agriculture sector, you are not going to get good policies. In fact, I have noticed, I have looked at many governments in the past, Honourable Speaker, this is the first Government where Ministers spend more time travelling and lecturing the people in the country

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Lecturing the people on every aspect of what they do, instead of looking at proper planning, instead of understanding where they need to design good policies. I mean, the Honourable Minister himself goes around the country and tells the ordinary farmers that they are responsible for raising the cost of living in this country.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- This is the kind of lecturing, Mr. Speaker, that I am absolutely worried about and this is why I want to raise this with the Honourable Minister. I have heard him also talk about, for example, the juncao grass. First it was said that it was good for the dairy industry and then now I am told that it is becoming a weed. Then he goes and says, "Rice has more money to the sugarcane farmers." These are the sort of things that reflect lack of proper planning and lack of understanding of data and policies. He is not the only Minister, I know there are others who are doing this and this is why we are saying, Mr. Speaker, that once they have collected this data, that should be available in a transparent manner, in a way that is usable, understandable and interpreted correctly that not only what Government says based on the data, there should be others - scholars, researchers, tertiary institutions, to look at what they think of the data that has been collected, and point out the various areas or gaps in policy and planning that need to be undertaken as a result of that data.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I still got one minute, you are not the Speaker my friend. Listen to the Speaker, only the Speaker will stop me, not you. Honourable Speaker, it is very important and let me repeat what I said to him at the beginning. I challenge him as the Ministry for Agriculture, he is someone who understands the value of data, I have no doubt that he does because he himself has been a researcher in his previous life at the University.

Now, in his political life, he needs to get the politics out of the data collection and dissemination of the data, because it is absolutely important. For example, when we had the population data, the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) data, it was thoroughly politicised. They talk about politicisation on this side, but they actually politicised. I want to ask him, I want to challenge him to get this data out in a transparent manner, and make the methodology available so that people who are looking at the data actually understand the value of that data and they can inform his Ministry and this Government about what needs to be done in the agriculture sector, because the agricultural sector has been on a decline for the last decade. So, a challenge to you, Honourable Minister, when you have the data, make this

available publicly to all the stakeholders in the country. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Leader of the National Federation Party for his Statement. Honourable Members, that ends the debate of this particular Agenda item. We move on.

Honourable Members, I have been advised that there are no Bills for consideration today.

On that note, we will now adjourn for morning tea.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.33 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.06 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, the Honourable Viam Pillay, to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

**REVIEW REPORT ON THE
FIJI PORTS CORPORATION LIMITED (FPCL) 2016 ANNUAL REPORT**

HON. V. PILLAY.- Honourable Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Review Report on the Fiji Ports Corporation 2016 Annual Report which was tabled on 12th July, 2018.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to speak on the motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. The Fiji Ports Corporation Limited was a government-owned entity incorporated under the Fiji Companies Act 1983 and the Government Commercial Company under the Public Enterprises Act 1996 domiciled in Fiji till 12th November, 2015. The Honourable Minister for Public Enterprises, through a Gazette, declared Fiji Ports Corporation Limited and Fiji Ships and Heavy Industries Limited collectively on 13th November, 2015, a re-organisation enterprise under the Public Enterprise Act 1996. This facilitated the changes under the privatisation and divestment initiative of the Government.

Shareholding breakdown: has the Ministry of Public Enterprise controlling 41 percent; the Fiji National Provident Fund 39 percent; with the Sri Lankan conglomerate Aitken Spence controlling the remaining 20 percent, given as a Aitken Spence PLC's maritime industry experience in Port Management and the partnership package provides an ideal model for Public, Private Corporation.

Parliament, at its sitting on 7th April, 2018 referred the Fiji Ports Corporation Limited 2016 Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for review and collation of information which included a presentation from the Fiji Ports Corporation Limited on 28th May, 2018. This assisted the Committee Members to fully appreciate the organisation's operations, achievements, challenges encountered during the financial year.

The Committee noted that the Year 2016 was noteworthy as it represents the Company's first full year of operation under its new part-privatized structure and the Company's robust financial results mirrored the success of the divestment of a percentage of shares in the Company to the private sector. It was also pleasing to note that under the partnership, 80 percent of the total number of shares remained in Fiji's hand.

The year in review signifies FPCL's commitment to fulfilling its obligations as a professionally-managed commercial maritime company demonstrating across-the-board improvement in its delivery of services. An area worth taking note of is the achievement of the operating gross profit for the year was \$26,254,954 significantly up in comparison to 2015's profit after tax figure of \$13,577,091. Hence, increasing globalization of trade and complexity of port operations require the Company to stay up to date with Port operation systems as it grows. The size of ships too, has doubled over time and continues to add challenges to managing port operations while addressing demand for even larger logistical effort.

The way forward hinges on continuous investment in infrastructure and the protection of its human resources to ensure FPCL is positioned amongst the best in the region.

With these words, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for the comprehensive Report. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Chairperson. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on that motion. Anyone wishing to take the floor? Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa, you have the floor.

HON. RO T.V. KEPa.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, on this particular motion, looking at Recommendation No.1, which is on Pollution Prevention and Environmental Concerns should be the foremost consideration. The Committee recommends that FPCL accelerates their actions with relevant stakeholders for the removal of the 18 vessels.

My contribution to this motion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, will be a brief one. As the concerns of the people of Nadonumai and Navukavu Levulevu had voiced at various fora on the pollution of their *i qoliqoli* but to no avail as the authorities are deaf to their pleas which have surfaced once again in this Report, and this is on the derelict vessels (18 are mentioned in this Report), Sir, although the owners of this *i qoliqoli* believe that this is only a very conservative number that more than that pollute their waters through chemicals and other pollutants that are seeping through the structure to the surrounding areas. The seepage, Sir, continues to pollute and poison their food sources so they are hoping that talks in this Report for the removal of these vessels have been successful and that there is a certain schedule by which time all the junks and eyesores have been attended to, and I am pleading, Sir, on behalf of the people of Nadonumai and Navukavu Levulevu to hold good to the promise made by the Committee in this FPCL 2016 Report and this is now 2020, that these derelicts be removed as per the priority list in this Report, to assist them in their fight against NCDs whilst enabling them once again to enjoy good and healthy seafood, and I support the motion before the House, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Salote Radrodoro, you have the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. My presentation will focus on one of the key challenges as cited by the FPCL and that is in regards to the infrastructure - the aging facilities in regards to the wharf, not only in Suva but Fiji-wide. This is, Sir, a Report in 2016. There has been a lot of delay, it was tabled in 2018 and now we are just debating on that. I would also like to draw our attention to the 20-year plan of the Government in regards to port services and I read part of that 20-year plan: “That a Ports Master Plan is being prepared to guide the long-term development of our ports”. Also there is mention here that there will be new sites and that includes Natovi.

Honourable Speaker, as we know, this Government has done very little or nothing at all in regards to the upgrade of the main Suva Wharf. That facility has been built by the previous governments, so what has this Government done, Honourable Speaker?

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- The Fiji Ports Corporation Limited in their report, they have cited that this is a major challenge to them; the upgrade of the facility. The Government has mentioned it in the 20-year plan. What is missing is the provisions in the Budget. This Government is only talking about upgrade of the infrastructure, but it has not allocated appropriate amounts in the Budget to ensure that this upgrade exercise is undertaken. The Fiji Ports Corporation also mentioned in the Report in their response to questions that the Committee raised and then they said, and I quote their response, Honourable Speaker:

“The FPCL master plan progression and implementation is very vital to guide future growth and development for the company and for Fiji as a nation.”

With the implementation of this dynamic plan, it will surely address the current challenges of aging infrastructure and limitation of vessel berthing space, boosting our international and local trade. Further on, the go onto say and I quote:

“A solid backing from the Government to support FPCL’s bid in acquiring suitable land and gaining assistance. Financial institutions will be an added bonus in achieving our key focus on implementing the master plan.”

This means, Honourable Speaker, that all these infrastructure upgrade or future development depends on this master plan or most importantly the implementation of the master plan. Both the Government in the 20-year development plan and FPCL have mentioned the importance of this master plan. Also FPCL has gone on to say that it is depending on the Government to provide the needful resources.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Acquiring of land.

HON S.V. RADRODRO.- Whether it is land or other resources, that is what they said.

Honourable Speaker, we will recall that there has been a reform undertaken at Ports Authority and when questioned in the Committee, their focus was more on the processes, on the systems not on the upgrade of the infrastructure. Right now without that vital upgrade in the infrastructure, Fiji will not be able to move forward in regards to increasing its vessel capacity at the wharf.

Another example, Honourable Speaker, in regards to the upgrade of Natovi, even though that comes under the Ministry of Infrastructure, little things like, there is even no lighting at the passenger shelter in Natovi. I had raised that already in this House, but as of to-date, still nothing has happened.

And also in Natovi, we are looking at upgrading Natovi, little things like the rest rooms. When the passengers are there, it is all closed and here the Government is talking about upgrading infrastructure light in the wharf. But even this kind of easy renovation work that could be undertaken by the Ministry of Infrastructure, this is not even done.

How on earth would we believe a 20-year development plan like this, that there will be an upgrade on infrastructure when the Minister for Infrastructure cannot even ensure that facilities like Natovi to ensure passenger comfort is not done, even though they are saying that it is away from FPCL, but those are really things that should be looked at first. How can we believe your 20-year National Development Plan when not even enough funds is allocated to the Minister behind you for those kind of renovation works?

Again, Honourable Speaker, in regards to this infrastructure upgrade, this Government has not helped FPCL.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- No.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- This Government has brought in new management to undertake the reform but all these reforms hinges on the upgrade of the infrastructure. This Government has not done any major infrastructure upgrade in regards to the wharf. Therefore, Honourable Speaker, the Minister for Economy needs to seriously look at the budgetary allocation in regards to FPCL and help FPCL. The FPCL is reaching out to the Government. The FPCL is stating that the Government needs to support them

in regards to infrastructure development, in regards to the upgrade of the wharf. So the question I ask the Minister responsible and the Minister for Economy, what kind of budgetary allocations you will do or you will give in this upcoming budget session in regards to this request. Even though, Honourable Speaker, this is from 2016, still nothing has been done. We are now in 2020 and the only thing that we can say, we look forward to the next budget session in which we will hear the Minister for Economy say that they are going to allocate this much needed by the FPCL to be able to undertake the necessary upgrades in all the wharves in Fiji. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Premila Kumar, you have the floor.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Very poor.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the Review Report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the FPCL 2016 Annual Report and it is FPCL 2016 Annual Report and not the side issues that we have been listening to from the Honourable Member.

I think the debate becomes more interesting if we stick to the Report before us. I acknowledge the recommendations of the Committee and the summation that Fijian ports are no longer just for cargo handling but also has become an international logistic service as part of the core business. Since the entry into force of the Trade Facilitation Agreement in 2017, countries have expanded their policy focus from trade facilitation to trade logistics, encompassing policies to improve hard infrastructure. For example, in June 2019, a mobile x-ray container scanner was installed at the Suva Port and yet we are hearing that nothing was done. The mobile x-ray container scanner enables joint inspections to be conducted with limited physical intervention and thereby reducing the time required to clear consignments.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is important to note that the FPCL is also an important member of the National Trade Facilitation Committee. The Committee is responsible for the implementation of measures aimed at simplifying, standardising and harmonising trade procedures and documentations related to import, export and transit. The FPCL remains a key strategic partner for facilitation of trade and tourism activities and I would like to acknowledge the tireless work done by the FPCL board, management and staff.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, 2016 marked the first full year of the FPCL's operation and we have seen a lot of improvement in their services provided. From a trade perspective, there was an increase gross tonnage at Suva and Lautoka Ports by 24 percent and 18.9 percent respectively. From a tourism perspective, cruise liners increased by 26.6 percent. These statistics demonstrate how well the public private sector partnership model can work successfully to provide an enabling environment to facilitate trade tourism and investment. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Fiji Ports Corporation

Limited has entered into a Sister Port Corporation arrangement with Guangzhou Ports. Co-operation between Fiji Ports and Guangzhou Port provides opportunity to share experiences and knowledge together with skills and technology that will take our port operation to greater heights.

I just want to comment on the statements made by Honourable Radrodro about the wharf. Well surely it is not logical to start working on the wharf itself when we know that the wharf cannot handle the vessels that are coming. So we need to move away, we have to conduct a feasibility study, find the right place and it is all happening.

I think in this House, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have spoken at length about the master plan being conducted for the Suva and Western Division that is Lautoka and Nadi and all that will help in identifying a place.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Where?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Well, that is what the feasibility study will indicate, we cannot just say, “okay, let us expand it here”, because that wharf was sufficient at the time it was made. It was able to handle the cargo load but now it is not sufficient, we know that. And wharf is not something that you know you can just go and say, “okay, this is the area we are going to put it up.” There is a lot more work required to understand whether that area is suitable or not.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- So rather than coming here in the Parliament and simply saying nothing has been done, let me correct the Member, a lot has been done. It is just that you have to open the eyes and see what we have done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. I give the floor to the Honourable Niko Nawaikula, you can have the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Perhaps the Honourable Minister should have read the recommendation that was made in the report in relation to the master plan. They said, “a solid backing from Government to support FPCL’s bid in acquiring suitable land and gain assistance from financial institutions.” So the problem is the Government.

I will read that again, “a solid backing from Government”, yes, so what have you been doing?

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWQAIKULA.- Doing nothing.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Read the rest of it.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- To support them in their bid to acquire land. All this time, you have been waiting there, you have been sitting down there; 15 years, they still cannot acquire the land. So what are you doing?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sit down then I will tell you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is here you better read this. The answer is right there facing you with an added bonus of achieving a key focus of implementing a Master Plan. So who is the problem? The problem is you.

HON. S. ADIMAITOGA.- What have you done?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- What have I done! What have you done? Do you want us to come here and come there so we can do something, that is a problem you have been doing - nothing.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And I think it is very sad that this Government will get into an arrangement such as this where it gets a private company not locally but from overseas. We have a fondness for overseas, overseas, overseas. Permanent Secretaries from where? Overseas. Private Companies from where? Overseas. They do not trust the locals, do you not trust the locals? These are the people who come here and wreck the economy and you know it. That is what has happened. You are getting all these expatriates from overseas and what is happening in last 15 years? Kill the economy, no money.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, 1.0 last year, the Reserve Bank is saying this year 1.7; that is a recession.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And what have you done? Only borrow money, borrow money all the time and that is where the GDP came from. And these are the kind of people who are doing that because they do not care for Fiji.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- *Dinau, dinau!*

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Why not partner with Vinod Patel? Why not partner with Fijian Holdings? No, we will amend it here, why do you not partner with Fijian Holdings? Fijian Holdings can get all the expertise but for some reason, they go overseas all the time, they do not trust us and they kill the economy because of that. I really commend the Report because this is one of the Report which is totally fair, and this company which is a Sri Lankan, is just like a parasite depending on Government. Honourable Speaker, I will tell you why.

The first recommendation says “Pollution, prevention and environment concern should be foremost consideration” and what did the company said, it said “It’s not our job”. That is what it said “It’s not our job to clean this out”. This overseas company that you took from Sri Lanka that you think is an expert in everything cannot even clear out the derelict goods. That is what it says here, it said “It’s not our problem, it is the Government problem” so it is a parasite.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is just hanging on the Government to make money then go back to Sri Lanka..

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Read the law.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- This is what the so-called expert from Sri Lanka said “Under the Sea Port Management Act, “it is not my responsibility’, I say go and change the law, go and change the lawyers.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- This is what the so-called expert from Sri Lanka said “Under the Seaport Management Act, it is not my responsibility”, I say - go and change the law, go and change their lawyers so what has the Government been doing – nothing, and the 20 wrecked vehicles are still there.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Since when?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Since 2016 and are still there.

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Then it goes on again, “The Committee recommends that FPCL be assisted financially for the implementation of the Master Plan”. Now, if you partner with a private company from Sri Lanka, can you rely on it to prepare your master plan and can you rely on it to bring the money? That is what Fiji needs - partner with someone who can bring the money, and here it says again, “it is not our problem”. Go to the Government to finance the Master Plan, that is the kind of partner they are getting. And you look to Ba Hospital, what is happening there? That is also the foreign arrangement - nothing. You look at Lautoka, they are trying to partner with a private company. A private company’s only concern is to make money. They are not concerned about the public.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, at least, it is local, Vinod Patel is local, Fijian Holdings is local.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I do not need to go to Sri Lanka, I do not need to go New Zealand, I do not need to go to Australia to find someone who can manage the ports. And what is the first thing they do? They raise the fees up.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- They raise the fees up and what happens? Look at your figures ...

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Look at your figures from the Bureau of Statistics ...

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- From 2013 or 2016 up to now - re-exports they are going to Tonga, Samoa because the fees here are too much. Honourable Speaker, Sri Lankan expert company, that is what you get. So my point is...

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- No point.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The point is, the Government is doing nothing and the recommendations are there, they did not read it. All right, let me read to you another one, "The Committee recommends that FPCL strengthens the Seaport Management Act 2005 to assist in the waste management system. This company is saying "We cannot do anything because to remove that is the responsibility of the owner" and they have been cheating. What have you been doing? You are supposed to be a law-making body, amend the law to shift the responsibility to the Port or whoever to shift that and they have been sitting on that. They have been sitting on this Seaport Management Act 2005. They are very famous for Standing Order 51 laws, why can you not do that for this one, considering priority.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Because you use Standing Order 51 for every other thing except for the things that are very essential, that is what they do.

The Recommendation No. 4: The Committee recommends that FPCL looks at the opportunity of upgrading Levuka. Expert partner, overseas from Sri Lankan cannot even advise you to do that then it goes on.

On the development of PAFCO, we raised this problem here that everything that needs to go to Levuka has to come here first and go there, and they still have not resolved it. I think 15 years is too much, you should give up. You cannot do anything right, you cannot do the Port, the economy is on its knees.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You're a joke.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It's not a joke, you're a joke. The economy is going down, everything is going down, and agriculture is down.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And the Honourable Minister for Agriculture has been in the picture of what - opening footbridges.

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Footbridges for what? We do not want footbridges, we want you to increase agriculture, so forestry is down

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You're a joke.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You're useless which should mean the Government is useless. Fisheries is down, you are doing nothing.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You are doing nothing, nothing, and you should be out, you should be embarrassed, you should be totally embarrassed of yourself. You are mooing the nation. You have taken \$2.5 million for what - for freebees and everything. Where are we now as a nation?

HON. J. USAMATE.- The 10 years of growth

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The 10 years of growth, all right, let me tell you this - where did that come from? From debts, where did the GDP come from - GDP from debt is a GDP from *dinau* - makes sense, and you listen to that, \$2.5 million, which is where all money has been coming from and it is all gone now, and where are we?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- All right, enough.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. Honourable Koroilavesau, you have the floor.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I would like to first congratulate the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for the assessment of the Report and the ...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.-... clear indication on the four recommendations. I was not going to rise and contribute, Honourable Speaker, Sir, but I thought I should correct the misinformation that has been created by the Opposition.

I joined the Fiji Ports Corporation Limited (FPCL) in 2007 as Chairman, and the amount of contributions that have been done then to-date, is huge. The profit margin that has been created has never been realised. When we took over in 2007, basically, FPCL was bankrupt.

It was not generating any revenue, so we had to take it from level zero. From the periods that I was Chairman and looking at the report that has been submitted here, it is a huge achievement and FPCL should be commended for the achievements that it has created.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, the recommendation well highlights the concerns of all Fijians. The amount of derelict vessels in Suva Harbour poses its fair share of environment, economic and social threats. But these wrecks did not appear in 2016, these wrecks have been there from 1990s. Some of them are submerged, they have rusted and will not be able to be taken out of the water, it will totally collapse.

Additionally, Honourable Speaker, Sir, like any other entity, access can only be undertaken through the ambit of governing legislations and financial support. Honourable Speaker, Sir, the FPCL have clearly indicated the work that is currently being undertaken and we can witness in the recent month on the operation of the removal of Southern Phoenix. That has been done during the FijiFirst Government's term.

We all know, Honourable Speaker, Sir, that apart from the development of infrastructure and the review of governing legislations, it is important for everyone to understand that there are internal and external processes involved to fully realise these priorities.

In saying that, Honourable Speaker, Sir, I am in full support of the tabled Report, thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEKAER.- I thank you, the Honourable Minister. I give the floor to the Honourable Adi Litia Qionibaravi.

HON. ADIL QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I rise to contribute to the motion before the House. Firstly, I wish to thank the Chairperson and its Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for the succinct Report before the House on the first day of operation of the Fiji Ports Corporation Limited after its new partly privatised structure in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I note with appreciation the Company's robust financial result in its first year of operation. However, I also note the Public Enterprises Ministry in taking over the execution of the master plan that has been talked about today. I refer to the second last line of the last paragraph on Page 47 of the Committee's Report, where the CEO of the Company said, and I quote:

“The execution of the master plan has been taken over by the Ministry of Public Enterprises but, of course, the Port will support in various aspects but the withdrawal will be on the Ministry of Public Enterprises.”

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Company made a profit of \$26,254,954 in 2016 and it also paid dividends totalling \$5,070,605 for 2016. I asked the question, Mr. Speaker, as to why should the Ministry of Public Enterprises take over the implementation or the execution of the master plan when the Company is making profit, at least from after its first year of operation? In doing so, it has failed to address some of the pertinent issues regarding the wharves around Fiji. Mention has been made about the Natovi Wharf, the Levuka Wharf to which I support those sentiments, a lot needs to be done, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

The Report also talked about the funding for the removal of derelict vessels. A quotation of about \$3 million has been obtained by the Company. The question is, who will pay for the \$3 million to remove these vessels? I also understand that the boat MV Bawaqa that had belonged to the Ba Province is floating in the waters of Yasawa, in particular, Viwa Island. I also would like to ask as to when will this boat/vessel be removed?

My other issue, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is regarding the social responsibility of the Company. It has made profit but it has responsibilities to the traditional fishing rights owners of Suva, including Navukavu, Mr. Speaker Sir. Will the company consider paying some form of compensation to the *Tui Suva*, *Na Yavusa Vesivanua*, and the *Roko Baleni* - only two, but there are other fishing rights owners around the country where the wharves are located and the marine resources have been affected by the use of the vessels around these wharves as well as wharves that have seen the spillage of oil from those vessels. So, I ask, Sir, as to whether the Company will consider some form of social responsibility to compensate the major sacrifice, in particular, for the people of Suva and Navukavu that they have given to this country?

They have given up their land, they were relocated and now their continuing daily living has been affected by the use of their fishing rights or their fishing grounds by not only the Ports Authority of Fiji but the residents around Suva who have continued to use the fishing rights or the fishing grounds for the people of Suva and Navukavu.

I also note the absence of insurance, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The absence of Wreck Removal Insurance for those vessels that use the wharves in Fiji. These are some of the issues that need to be addressed by the Company so that the Company or the Ministry Public Enterprises will not be burdened with the cost of paying the removal of these derelict vessels. That is my contribution, Sir and I thank you for the opportunity to address the motion before the House, *vinaka*.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Adi Litia. The Honourable Attorney-General you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, just some quick comments in respect of firstly the recommendations of the Committee itself and then also some responses to the issues raised by the members from the other side, who obviously again are showing a very pedestrian understanding, not just on the business but also about Ports itself.

Mr. Speaker Sir, in respect of the pollution prevention, it all goes to what the Honourable Kepa was mentioning. Under the law the responsibility of removing the derelict ships is responsibility of the shipowners themselves and not with FPCL nor of Government. The law is very clear on this. Otherwise people will simply bring boats and ships and just dump it here and it will become a graveyard for derelict ships or ships that are no longer in commission, they simply dump it here and that is why the law is such. They do not obviously understand that.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the other point is that from January 2015 to date, FPCL on its own volition has actually scuttled 31 wrecks. Of course there were a lot of talk about previously I remember 18 months or so ago when we talked about MV Southern Phoenix and that again was removed by the shipowners themselves and of course we encourage other vessel owners to do the same.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the company that actually removed the MV Southern Phoenix was a company called Pacific Towing Limited. We had discussions with them and in fact, FPCL requested a proposal from PacTow to see what would cost to remove the 14 derelict ships from the Suva and Lautoka harbours. It costs about F\$6.5 million. Out of the 14 wrecks, Mr. Speaker Sir, six are considered high risk vessels and would cost approximately \$2.5 million for the removal.

In the interest of preserving the marine environment and in keeping ship navigation safe, FPCL has undertaken the following:

- Discussion with development partners to assist in clearing the wrecks in Suva Harbour (we are talking to a number of them);
- Working to facilitate the removal of the wrecks by the shipowners; and
- A few court cases filed by FPCL to expedite the process. The reality is that to play political games like they want to play, and just to get some quick political whims or window dressing; if you start doing that at the cost of FPCL, that is where FPCL's money will go, people will simply come and dump their ships. You need to look at the long term. That is what we call strategic thinking which obviously they lack.

Strictly enforcing port insurance to cover all vessels entering the Suva Harbour, Mr. Speaker, Sir; for a number of decades this was neglected and that is why people have gotten away with it, so now FPCL is actually going to engage in ensuring that everyone has the insurance for that. The port development, Mr. Speaker, Sir, has been much talked about. This port development not only looks at things like the port itself and the capacity of the port, but also the ability in the impact on the people outside the port area. So, for example, in many towns and cities throughout the world, if you have a major cargo port right smack in the middle of the city, it will have an enormous impact on the flow of traffic; traffic

congestion and the type of roads you need to build because of the weight of the cargo that is actually carried into and out of the port area.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have said now on a number of occasions publicly, that given the fact that this port/wharf was built decades ago during the colonial times, and that a third of the port cannot be used for a number of decades because of the ageing infrastructure. Of course, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's Government did nothing about it, nor did the previous Governments address the issue, now it has reached such a stage that it cannot simply be used unless we pull down the whole thing and rebuild the entire new wharf area. Only two-thirds of this is being used on and off for heavy cargo shipment.

What we have said, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that we need to find an alternative site and to use this wharf for cruise liners; and to build the right ambiance and environment for cruise liners in Suva again can become furthermore a port of visitation for cruise liners and improve the capacity, develop the promenade, et cetera, along the port area. Mr. Speaker, Sir, given the fact that cruise liner ships actually take priority over the cargo ships, that has always been the tradition, so now because the port has become really busy, the turnaround times can actually get delayed when there are a lot of ships coming through if the cruise liner ships come along, you need to have a dedicated cruise liner port.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in respect of the master plan, we are working with Asian Development Bank (ADB). You do not just get some Tom, Dick or Mary to just develop a master plan regarding the port. You need to know the draft, you need to know where your ships can actually go in, you need to know the tides, you need to study it and it takes a while. You do not just flick your finger and get a master plan. They need to understand and they probably need to talk to the Honourable Prime Minister to understand how shipping works.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The ADB Mr. Speaker, Sir, has already allocated a grant of \$1 million because they are very interested in enhancing the trans-shipment capacity of Fiji. Unlike Honourable Nawaikula, who has actually misled Parliament by saying people are going off to other countries; No. I will get to the statistics that show the turnaround time in Suva Port since 2016 has actually improved remarkably.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, ADB is currently working on a master plan. Now, you do not allocate land before the master plan decides where the port will be. It is like saying, let us build something over there, but we do not know what we are going to build. You do not go and allocate land before the actual allocation of the port is developed. The Naval base, at one stage was considered, and there are other various options that are currently being looked at.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other point

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the kind of stupidity that comes out from the other side.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other point is this; we want to develop a port area where it becomes an entire eco-system for port facilities, so you have fishing, you have cargo, you have ship repair, you have shipbuilding, et cetera. Talking about shipbuilding, under the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's time when he was Prime Minister, they sold the shipyard to a two-dollars New

Zealand company; a foreign company, that went under and guess what? They had to buy it back again! That is what they did.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, under his leadership, he sold our National Bank, 51 percent for a mere \$9.8 million to an Australian Company.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a kind of inconsistency that they have and of course incompetency of the SVT Government at that point in time under the leadership of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is the story with the master plan. Once the master plan has allocated a site, and of course, Government will work in terms of acquisition of the land et cetera, and we will be able to talk to it. When FPCL talks about financial institutions Mr Speaker, Sir, they are actually talking about organisations, and multilateral development banks like ADB and World Bank because we get concessional rates. As you know, we are able to negotiate what we call “full concessional loans” where you have zero percent interest payable over 40 years. So, that is what FPCL is interested in and that is what they talk about when they talk about financial institutions.

Financial institutions are able to make the money available. Once you get the master plan completed, once you have identified what you will do and how big it is going to be, then of course the financial institutions will come in. These people want to put the cart before the horse. I do not even know whether there is a horse in that cart scenario days.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other point is this, the Sea Port Management Act again Apart from that Mr. Speaker, Sir, in compliance with the International Maritime Organisation Regulations, FPCL has implemented our waste reception facility operation contract to see the South Sea Towers Limited. The role of the Waste Reception facility is to collect garbage and various polluters from the vessel at berth at the port. We are not silly, we of course, want the environment to be protected. We want the ability to be able to comply with international standards to make our country more attractive. They make it sound like we are not doing anything about it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in respect of the comments regarding Levuka and PAFCO wharves, and of course Honourable Radrodro talked about Natovi; and we are here talking about the FPCL Annual Reports. Mr. Speaker, Sir, FPCL has already hired a firm to develop a 5 year strategic plan to align the port to an increasingly dynamic and comparative business environment. The Strategic Plan was launched in November 2019.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as part of the plan, FPCL is looking at opportunities to upgrade the Levuka Wharf. As far as PAFCO and Malau wharves are concerned Mr. Speaker, Sir, they are privately owned by PAFCO as the name suggests, and FSC in Malau, and they therefore fall outside the responsibility of FPCL.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, 2016 as highlighted by the Honourable Minister for Industry and Trade marked the first full year of operation during the divestment of shares. Let me reiterate what is the shareholding.

Thirty-nine percent is owned, Mr. Speaker, Sir, by the Fijian Government, 20 percent is owned by Aitken Spence (or the Sri-Lankans as the Honourable Nawaikula calls them) and the balance is owned by the FNPF. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, Sir, 80 percent of the FPCL is Fijian owned and as they may remember also, when we actually divested the shares, we transferred all the assets of the FPCL into a holding company, 100 percent Fijian owned by the Fijian Government so even if somebody owns 20 percent or tomorrow somebody will own 51 percent and they are not a Government entity, they will not own the assets. They own the equity in the company. They do not understand that. We have explained to them so many times. It is beyond their commercial and financial comprehension.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, let me highlight the profitability trend on what has happened since the divestment of the shares. In 2018, the shareholders equity increased to \$130 million. The dividends paid out was \$16 million in total. The Fijian Government got \$6.6 million, the FNPF got \$6.3 million and Aitken Spence got \$3.2 million. Honourable Nawaikula's paranoia xenophobia about foreigners, Mr. Speaker, Sir, of course, is very well known. If he is so afraid of foreign businesses, let us shut down the tourism industry tomorrow. Most of the hotels in Fiji are foreign owned. The Shangri-La, Honourable Gavoka worked for the Mocambo, the Korolevu Hotel, go on to the outer islands, it is all foreign owned. Do you want to chase them away? You go to Cakaudrove, how many locals own the hotels. Mr. Speaker, Sir, you see this is the kind of racism

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, that comes down from the other side. He is singling out the Sri-Lankans. Mr. Speaker, Sir, anybody who has an iota understanding of how a limited liability company works, the Sri-Lankans do not sit there and say "Aha, we are going to do this now!" They are directors. They only own 20 percent of the company. They are directors but the board makes the decision.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me just inform them what has actually happened. I will have to reiterate the figures since the divestment has taken place. The cargo handling improved by 60 percent within the first three months of the year. First three months, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Previously the average port stays of a vessel was 36 hours but now the average turnaround time of a vessel is less than 20 hours.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the average berthing per vessel was recorded as six hours previously, however, currently the same has been reduced to one hour or less. Previously, the ships with consignments paid a sum of US \$125 per 20-foot container because of what they called congestion charge. That is gone. The crane moves, increased from 6.5 moves to 10 moves per hour.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is the reality. That is how you make your port attractive through efficiency. You see they do not understand efficiency, completely do not understand efficiency. It is not whatever, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The reality of the matter is that in the 21st century you need to be efficient, not dinosaurs in the previous years.

Let me tell you one more thing, Mr. Speaker, Sir. He is so hung up about the expatriates. There are more locals as permanent secretaries. If you are so hung up about expatriates then why did you want to get Ben Ryan? Why did you want to get Gareth Baber, if you are so hung up about expatriates? They are foreigners. They are from the United Kingdom, do not have them. You do not have them. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the problem.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... and then you have the people of Namosi, the people of Namosi giving Ben Ryan land, Mr. Speaker, Sir. This is everybody saying that Ben Ryan is such a great guy, such a great coach.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Oh sorry. My apologies, Serua.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- We did not, Honourable Speaker. It is here on record, we did not give land to Ben Ryan. It is Serua Province, not Namosi Province. We ask him to withdraw.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Just give him another land.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, the Honourable Attorney-General has already corrected himself regarding that.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- He has already corrected himself.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- But I was going to correct him.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I withdraw that, not Namosi or Serua. The province used to be known as Serua/Namosi as you know before, so my apologies.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, Honourable Nawaikula says, “why do we not give anything to Fijian Holdings?” They are the majority shareholders of Government Printing.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- So?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So, that is why I said, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we sell assets, we diverse assets but more importantly we partner with people who we know will add value to that particular asset. We do not simply willy-nilly sell, you need to understand that, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again I wanted to highlight that Honourable Nawaikula said local companies, he mentioned Vinod Patel and all the other hardware companies. When they get contracts, then you say why you giving it to Vinod Patel? Why you giving to RC Manubhai? Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality is that there are a lot of foreign companies, they do come into Fiji and they do form partnerships. In the same way Fijian Holdings has formed partnership with Aitken Spence for Government Printing, that is their choice. That was their choice because Fijian Holdings strategically saw them as someone that has got valuable asset and knowhow and knowledge in the printery area. That is Fijian Holdings’ choice, we cannot stop Fijian Holdings, they do not understand how the private sector works, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the fact of the matter is that FPCL is in a far better position than it ever was. And of course, there is always enormous room for growth. And we fundamentally believe that as an island nation State, as we have been positioning Nadi as a civil aviation hub and indeed it has become a hub, we have our a national airline that flies to all the continents that are in the Pacific Ocean except South America. We similarly believe we have an enormous amount of potential in our Port system. And Mr. Speaker, Sir, with the turnaround time, the statistics that I have just shown you or highlighted to Parliament, we are getting there in terms of efficiency.

A lot of companies now do want to come into to use Fiji as a hub in particular Suva Port and Lautoka, of course, then to tranship to other places. We believe the next step is getting a very good Port facility that has international recognition. We recently, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are talking about eco-system, when we talk about eco-systems it is not just about ships coming in. It is about providing services to them in respect of painting, repair works, et cetera, that of course was demolished in the SVT sale. Now we want to rebuild that and we do not want people to go over here, if you want to do repairs you go to the other corner of Fiji, everything needs to be a one-stop shop.

And this master plan and the ability to identify which area will suit the new Port facilities will go ahead and build with it, we are currently talking to our development partners and this recommendation and the response by FPCL that they seem to be quoting, it is saying here:

“That a solid backing from Government to support FPCL has been in acquiring a suitable land and gaining assistance by institutions will be an added bonus.”

In other words we will work with them. Once the master plan is done and we will of course help FPCL in terms of acquisition of land, in terms of identifying and talking to maybe the landowners or whoever it is, other landowners, wherever the port will be and of course talking to ADB and World Bank to provide with those some assistance, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to commend the Committee for their input into this and would like to of course thank the Board of FPCL. And I would please like to take this opportunity to say to all investors in Fiji, and interest investors in Fiji either local or foreign, please our doors are open, we here to assist you and Government has provided enabling environment and please remember what these people are like, do not believe any single thing that they say. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua, you have the floor.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. The Parliamentary Committee that reviewed this report did its work in accordance with information provided during the period of the review and we do thank them for this work.

However, a lot of time has moved on and we will soon reach two years since the report was tabled in Parliament and the review done by the Committee of the operations at the sea ports of entry and exist will be almost four years old. What we need to look at, Mr. Speaker, is whether we have progressed from where we were at that time because many tides have come and gone, and many more barnacles have formed under the pillars of our wharves or on the pillars of our wharves.

Mr. Speaker, just a few things that I would just like to highlight, we are asking on behalf of the taxpayers and staff, we need to know how the industrial relations and climate is between the company, workers and the union? We would like to know if the workers of Ports Fiji and the dock workers are paid fair wage for the work they do including overtime and everything else in accordance with the employment laws in Fiji and we would like to know about the deals that surround the new wharf built in Lautoka by a

company, to make sure that they are transparent, and this wharf will be an asset for Fiji, not a private investment by a firm awarded the contract to extract sand from Ba.

In terms of a shipping graveyard or ship graveyard, Honourable Speaker, I wish to just state right here that I know for a fact that Draunibota Bay is becoming a ship graveyard and you only need to look to see the graveyard hidden from public view.

Mr. Speaker, environment protection, when you have divers at Narain Jetty coming up after a dive, after having checked ships and having raw sewerage and toilet papers being dumped on their heads by ships that are berthed at Narain Jetty, I would just like to suggest that perhaps the Department of Environment, I will repeat what I said last year that the, Department of Environment be strengthened to enable it to do its work at our ports and our harbours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the last speaker on this motion. Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, let me just take us back to around 2014 and 2015 when the divestment of shares was being touted in this Parliament. It was the Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu (*Tui Cakau*) who had put forward a motion that Fijian Holdings to spearhead a consortium of local companies to take ownership of FPCL. What we see here today, Honourable Speaker, is a company that is making very, very good profits. This could have been earned by Fijian Holdings and other local companies and could have even be floated on the stock exchange to increase the economic activities in the country. It was a lost opportunity and it is deeply regretted that, that the motion was not accepted by this House.

It is a very profitable company and my colleague, the Honourable Minister for Fisheries is impressed with the increased performance by the company, he is a businessman, he knows if he wants increased profits for his company, he just increases the rate to his cabin. That is basically what has happened in Fiji, Honourable Speaker, is that rates with Ports has increased quite significantly.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Honourable Speaker, Levuka we have highlighted these a number of times in the PAFCO Report for the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, it needs some breathing space from Ports. The port charges in Levuka is extremely high, Honourable Speaker, and is impacting on the operation of PAFCO. There is something that a company like this, that is now paying out huge bonuses every year to consider the livelihood of the people of Ovalau by supporting PAFCO with these wharf charges.

Honourable Speaker, we have talked about this master plan. We have been hearing about it and the presentation is always very glib, it is going to happen but the question is when. We want to see it happen, Honourable Speaker, we have been hearing about King's Wharf that it is not strong enough to withstand what is required of it. We have been hearing that since 2014. When is it going to happen?

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Honourable Speaker, we want some action. We want to see something definitive to take place in terms of a wharf. There are so much promises, there are so many master plans, nothing is happening

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- And that is impacting on the growth in this country, Honourable Speaker. I can bring up other issues but it is not in the ambit of this report of delays, of paralysis with this Government Honourable Speaker, things do not move.

The Honourable Prime Minister was in my province last week and they were talking about their water, their road, these are the people within the vicinity, where the Honourable Prime Minister had spent \$45 million on golf for the rich and wealthy to come and play golf in Fiji; \$45 million.

I want them to see, Honourable Speaker, because Natadola is so close to Semo, Nalele, Kabisi and Emuri, why did you not just spare some of that \$45 million for our infrastructure? That is the tragedy with FijiFirst; the mismanagement of funds.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- And that we see today. If they have been managing the funds properly Honourable Speaker, the wharf could have been done by now. That is where the problem is and I think this report highlights the mismanagement of what this Government undertakes.

Honourable Speaker, I hope that we can still talk about the divestment of shares, that is 80 percent, that is 39 percent by Government and Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) can be shared with the leading companies in Fiji. Thank you Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Viliame Gavoka for his contribution to the debate. I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to speak in his right of reply. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Thank you Honourable Speaker, Sir. I would just like to thank all Honourable Members who have contributed positively to the motion and also for supporting the motion before the House. Thank you very much.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Chairperson. Honourable Members, the Parliament will now vote to note the content of the Report.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of “Noes”)

HON. SPEAKER.- As no Member opposes, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

Honourable Members, we will now take the lunch break. I do not see any reaction, we will take the lunch break. We adjourn for lunch.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.12 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.30 p.m.

**REVIEW REPORT ON THE 2014, 2015 AND 2016 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE
MINISTRY OF EMPLOYMENT, PRODUCTIVITY AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
REPORT**

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on in Natural Resources, Honourable Sanjay Kirpal to move his motion. You have the floor Sir.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. It is indeed a great pleasure to move:

That Parliament debates the 2014, 2015 and 2016 Annual Review of the Ministry for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations.

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. J. SIGARARA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to speak on his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- The Honourable Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers, Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Members of Parliament, on behalf of the former and current Members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, I take this opportunity to speak on the motion in regards to the Committee's Review Report on 2014, 2015 and 2016 Annual Review of the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations which was tabled in Parliament by the former Chairperson of the Committee, Honourable Joeli Cawaki on Thursday, 12th July, 2018.

These Annual Reports were initially referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for scrutiny through the consent of the Chairperson of the Social Affairs Committee and Chairperson of the Natural Resources Committee. These Reports were given to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources since the Committee was free and had no report to scrutinise under its mandate. Honourable Speaker, Sir, the bipartisan Committee Report examined, compared and analysed the performance of the Ministry's administration, legislation, organisational, structure, financial, management, functions and programmes. The Committee in its review process has identified concerns related to the Ministry's management, extension and service delivery to all stakeholders. The review exercise was made possible through consultations and verification meetings with the Permanent Secretary and the senior staff of the Ministry.

The Committee following its scrutiny of the three Annual Reports made the following recommendations;

- The Annual Reports be produced immediately in the following years;
- The Ministry's Annual Report should reflect its performance and achievements against the set targets in accordance to its Annual Corporate Plan;
- The Ministry should indicate measures undertaken to address issues raised in the previous year's Audit Report;
- The Ministry should coordinate with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts on its introduction of life skills training in the school curriculum;

- The Ministry should re-introduce the apprenticeship scheme;
- The Ministry should re-introduced the Heritage and Arts on its introduction of Life Skills Training in the school curriculum;
- The Ministry should re-introduce the Apprenticeship Scheme;
- The Ministry should open overseas employment market for all sectors to cater for women participation;
- The Ministry should review the recruitment and selection criteria to consider the applicant's employment, skills and experience.

Above all, the Committee was satisfied with the operations of the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations for the period from 2014 to 2016. With these sentiments, I thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Chairperson. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on this motion, and I give the floor to the Honourable Mikaele Leawere, you have the floor, Sir.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I rise to speak on the motion before the House – the debate on the Review Report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources on the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations for 2014, 2015 and 2016.

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to acknowledge and thank the staff of the Ministry, the Office of the Auditor-General and the Members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources for the Report that we are discussing now, and the recommendations that they have made, especially in the necessary improvement which should be made to the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to remind this House and the Government that its then Minister for Education in 2014, the Honourable Dr. Mahendra Reddy, made a profound announcement in this House in his Maiden Speech for the establishment of our National Education Commission. We supported that move as we do now but it is rather tragic that that proposal has not been allowed to see the light of day.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Sir, we continue to impress the idea that there is a need to have a National Education Commission for the reason that we need to review and tidy up our education system and from therein to the training and development of our workforce and not for the regular labour market only.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- We need to think big and outside the box keeping in mind the changing geo-political and socio-economic dynamics of the global market.

Meaningful job-creation, Mr. Speaker, is an important area of activity of this particular Ministry given the availability of job is one of the major needs and ways of achieving Goal 1 which is “No Poverty” and Goal 2 which is “Zero Hunger” of the Sustainable Development Goals.

By now everyone knows, Mr. Speaker Sir, that this Government is known for its poor leadership, over-regulation, over-taxation, high costs of business operations, including red tape measures, increasing incidents of crime and failed policies and programmes which have driven investors away, thus, we do not have a meaningful job creation available here in this country.

As if that is not enough, Mr. Speaker, Sir, instead of admitting the truth, the Government has gone on a campaign spree to conceal employment statistics and say that the increase in the membership of the Fiji National Provident Fund is an indication of jobs created and the economy was doing well.

The Opposition, Mr. Speaker, Sir, refuses to buy that myth because the Chief Executive Officer of the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) himself made a statement and not even a fortnight ago, there were thousands of members who have zero balance, and again a few more thousand members with balance of less than \$5,000 in their FNPF accounts which point to the fact that it is not the actual workers but students and retired persons who have opted to become voluntary members of the Fiji National Provident Fund.

Let me move to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) issues, Mr. Speaker Sir, and I thank the Government for the establishment of the Workmen Accidental Compensation Commission which now covers and caters for mishaps at workplace from 1st January, 2019.

However, Mr. Speaker, Government must be reminded to empower our Judiciary with resources to deal with cases pending before our courts which deal with workmen compensation claims before 1st January, 2019. We remember this and I ask the House, especially the Government that “Justice delayed is justice denied”.

The three Reports under review, Mr. Speaker, Sir, further highlight the number of occupational health and safety incidents, near misses, lapses and issues of non-compliance which should be an eye-opener for the Ministry and this Government. These statistics, Mr. Speaker, Sir, point a finger at the need for the Occupational Health and Safety Unit to put its foot down on matters of compliance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other matter that needs mention in this House and for discussion as in every other discussions on Employment Productivity and Labour Relations is the review of the National Minimum Wage Rate which we welcome. However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the time taken for the Review Committee and the lack of consultation with the larger worker representatives is confusing and also worrying.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, coming to the issue of Labour Reforms, the Opposition would like to remind the Government of the expired ultimatum by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). These, Mr. Speaker, are, and I quote:

- The review of draconian legislations making a mockery of worker rights and right to collective bargaining;
- Stop interference with trade union activities including its elections;
- Putting an end to all forms of oppression upon the workers and trade unions;
- Empowering the Employment Tribunal to deal with backlog of cases before it; and
- Implementation of decisions of judicial bodies without political influence in public administration.

The fairy tales spun by the large and elite delegation to thwart the challenge posed by the ILO ultimatum is just a temporary reprieve and would not get them off the hook.

Before I finish, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is important that we must learn to work together in creating an industrial climate in this country where employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person, not just as an employee. Satisfied employees means satisfied customers, Mr. Speaker, Sir, which leads to profitability, progress and prosperity.

As if that is not enough, Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me go a step further.

Employees stay when they are:

- Paid well;
- Mentored;
- Challenged;
- Promoted;
- Involved;
- Appreciated;
- Valued;
- Given a mission;
- Empowered; and
- Trusted.

Now, be these virtues as they are, let me ask this Government on the floor of this House in this debate whether we practice these when it comes to Civil Service Reforms and when dealing with industrial relations issues in places such as the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) and the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF)? It is time for soul-searching not self-defending to skin the truth.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I believe that the recommendations made by the Committee in its Report are timely and need our full support while we must gather the will to recognise the related issues in the Report which we have raised outside and we should link outside the box. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Leawere. Honourable Mitieli Bulanauca, you have the floor.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I rise to make a few comments on the Report by the Committee of Natural Resources. First and foremost, I would also like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to the former Chairman, Mr. Joeli Cawaki, and the Natural Resources Standing Committee Members for their perseverance and hard work towards the submission of this Report to this august House.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the purpose of the review was to compare and analyse the performance of the Ministry in terms of its administration, legislation, organisation structure, financial management, functions and programs.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Report, in its recommendation, clearly indicates the Inconsistency in submitting Annual Reports at the required time, and this clearly shows poor management and supervisory role by ministerial heads and even the responsible Minister, particularly when we are talking about the Minister for Productivity here. He should be productive, he should be producing, next year, he should produce the last year's report and not five to six years back.

Mr. Speaker, Annual Reports depict Ministerial performance and the usage of its budgetary allocation annually. There is also a backlog on Annual Reports submission also in the case of other Ministries mandated to the Standing Committees by Parliament to review its annual activities.

It is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that most Ministries delay the submission of their Annual Reports to this august House. The Ministry of Agriculture's last Annual Report that we have had here is the 2013 Report.

Where are the 2014 to 2018 Reports - it cannot be productive. The last Ministry of Forests Report was in 2015, where are the 2016 and 2018 Reports? The most updated one is the 2017 Report for the Ministry of Fisheries, that is good and we know the Ministry of Fisheries is performing.

The Ministry of Environment had no report at all, Honourable Speaker, Sir. The last Report tendered by the Water Authority of Fiji was in 2014. Where are the reports for the Years 2015 and 2018 - this is not productive, not performing.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, the Report does not reflect the Ministry's performances and achievements against the set targets in accordance with the Ministry's Annual Corporate Plan (ACP). This is a serious issue and even a boat sails into the high seas by the usage of a compass which ensures reaching the intended destination and its estimated time of arrival.

The ACP directs the Ministry's performance with the resources available in achieving Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The recommendations, Honourable Speaker, Sir, say in particular in the conclusion, "The Committee concluded that the overall performance of the Ministry of Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations for 2014, 2015 and 2016 had clearly highlighted the Ministry's KPIs, achieving the budgetary allocation expenditure level, but in Recommendation 5.2, the Ministry's Annual Report should reflect, it has not reflected, the Ministry's performance and achievements against the set targets in accordance with the Ministry's ACP, so they are conflicting each other.

5.2 Conclusion and Recommendation; which one is true? Sir, the Report does not reflect the Ministry's performance, so it is important that the Ministries do submit their Annual Reports to this august House.

We also noticed that one of the Parliamentary Select Committees is not sitting because of all these late Annual Reports. The Report does not indicate measures taken to address issues faced in the previous year's Audit Report. The Report shows a lack of coordination with the Ministry of Education towards the introduction of Life Skills Training in the school curriculum.

The Report shows the lack of practical knowledge and skills among new recruit workers mainly due to the abolishment of the Apprenticeship Scheme. We need to reintroduce that.

The Report clearly states that more men are chosen for overseas employment than women. There is a need for further negotiation overseas employment market to cater for women participation.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, I hope and request the Minister responsible to update the House today on the actions taken by the Ministry towards the seven recommendations stipulated above and that is our request, Honourable Speaker, Sir, for all the ministries to ensure that their Annual Reports come in the next year. With those comments, Sir, thank you very much indeed.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I stand to note the Standing Committee on Natural Resources' Annual Review Report for the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations for 2014, 2015 and 2016 Annual Reports.

Honourable Speaker, I would like to, first of all, acknowledge the great work that the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations is doing. We note that one of their KPIs is protection and development of children and youth, and pertaining to that, we note that the Ministry commemorated

World's Day Against Child Labour, conducted Child Labour Trainings to the Sugar Industry in the West and Northern Divisions, shared eradication of child labour practices with the Government of Papua New Guinea and conducted investigations into cases of child labour.

The Child Services Unit of the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation will continue to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations in this area. We wish to also commend the Ministry on being able to successfully provide opportunities to women to be part of the Seasonal Worker Programme with the first batch of 15 women going to Australia in 2015. It was also pleasing to note that women were also part of the seasonal workers to New Zealand.

We support the recommendation of the Committee to open overseas employment market for all sectors to cater for women participation provided the welfare and safety of these workers are ensured. On that note, Honourable Speaker, it is also pleasing to note that as of last year, the Ministry has done a lot in relation to this particular recommendation of the Committee, and I refer specifically to the opening up of a market for caregivers in Australia, a lot of women have gone on that programme.

It is also pleasing to note that in 2016, the Ministry reported the portion of the economically-active rural population in fulltime paid employment - an increase from 49 percent to 60 percent.

In 2016, the Ministry reported that the proportion of the economically active rural population in fulltime paid employment increased from 49 percent to 60 percent and that the proportion of own account and contributing family workers in total employment also increased.

Honourable Speaker, I stand to note the Report of the Standing Committee and in that regards, acknowledge the great work that the Ministry is doing. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. You have the floor, Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I wish to contribute. On the floor for debate are three Annual Reports; 2014, 2015 and 2016 of the Ministry of Employment.

I wish to begin, Honourable Speaker, by saying that this is the worst time in any history in Fiji to be an employee; worst time ever. Because all their rights, they have been exploited, their rights are being exploited left, right and centre beginning with the Government; the Open Merit Based Recruitment and Selection (OMRS) brought by Government. First of all the three-year contracts are designed to exploit the workers. It does not give them any right at all. Here on this floor, the Attorney-General was saying, it is the same thing, it gives them job security. Job security my foot.

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A contract is a contract. After three years, that is the end and it is sad to see all these employees being left out, being kicked out because of that, because it is a contract.

Then there is this OMRS. The OMRS has been used by this Government to remove indigenous workers from top positions. Go to the Civil Service, from the directors up, no more indigenous people because they are using OMRS to remove them. It is totally racist. They are using this to remove indigenous people from top positions.

(Inaudible interjection)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, you sit out. Honourable Speaker, is it a Point of Order?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, on a number of accounts, the Honourable Member is misleading Parliament by giving false information of which he has absolutely no proof.

Number two, Mr. Speaker, Sir, he is also inciting Parliament and Members of Parliament using racial vilification. There is absolutely no proof for that. He simply stands up all the time, making all sorts of comments and he thinks he can get away with it. There are certain standards that need to be adhered to, absolutely no proof there, Mr. Speaker, Sir. That comment needs to be withdrawn please with your indulgence.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Honourable Speaker, he can, after I have spoken, clarify something so do not distract me.

And the racist of them all is the Minister for Agriculture. There is no one above the level of directors who is native and even worse, at the Animal Health and Production Division. In an interview, one indigenous name came up, he said, “do not bring that up. You can check this later.” That is the sad situation on that side of the House. Now going back to the

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Bunch of racists, that is what you are.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You are a bunch of racists. That is what you are doing.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You are a racist.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is what you are doing. That is what they are doing to the indigenous people in this House. They remove them from all the boards, they remove all the Permanent Secretaries; they remove them from Directorship and up. Go check your facts. Go check your figures. Shame on you!

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- So I was saying, Honourable Speaker, that this is the worst situation to be employed. It is sad for any employee to be in Fiji and let me begin by an example. Last Friday, a worker came to me to say that 62 of his colleagues were terminated from Kokomo Resort. We went to the Ministry of Employment and I asked the lady at the front desk, “can you please check this out. These people have been made redundant. Did they follow the procedure?” The problem here was that they were not allowed to form a union. They could not form a union. The reply that we got from the Ministry was, “yes, they were given notice.” But the notice is not enough, Honourable Speaker, so the Ministry was happy and satisfied when an employer gave to it, a three-month notice that it was going to force the redundancy of 62 employees. That was all, just a notice. They should go further and investigate whether that was a fact because on Saturday the same employee was advertising four positions. So that is the reason why I am saying that this is the worst time for anyone to be employed here because their rights are being withered away and have been exploited.

(Inaudible interjection)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You listen to it, you are in the Government, it is your fault that you have taken away the worker's right. It is your fault you have taken away the right of free speech. You go to Geneva and they will tell you that, you come back here, you do nothing.

There are three things in my view that you look at to see the performance of any department and the performance of the Ministry of Employment, there is a lot to be desired. So I look at their report, I also look at the Auditor's Report, the Auditor's Re-assessment of the performance of this Ministry as well as the Report of the Committee.

If you look at the Committee in isolation, you would not get to the bottom of what is bad in this Ministry or in any Ministry. So looking at the Ministry of Employment here, for 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016, what did the auditor say about the Ministry of Employment? And it is here, first thing 2014 after looking at it, it came out with an unqualified audit report. You know what that means, Honourable Speaker, they do not know how to do their accounts. They do not know the debit and the credit.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I give you that. Now go to 2015.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- He is a joke.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You are a joke, you are useless.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You're a racist joker.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- In 2014, the auditor found that 38 percent of the arrears of revenue were more than five years. So they were just sitting down and not collecting the revenue, what were you doing? I do not know who was the Minister.

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Honourable Bala is good, he has been assigned here to correct all the problems that were there before. Honourable Speaker, 38 percent of the revenue were more than five years. The audit noted the Ministry had unrepresented cheques, cheques were unrepresented in the sum of \$71,000. Even worse, they were using trust account money to pay for their employees. You note this down, Honourable Usamate.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We do not believe anything you say.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well it is here. This is the Auditor's Report.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. MEMBER.- Hogwash.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Audit was provided unsigned copies of reconciliations. Audit noted unsettled balance of \$22,000 appearing in January. Then audit noted that a technical officer compliant had an accident with a vehicle and was not surcharged, why?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- You tell us.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, you tell us. You will have your time after this, but I am just reading this here, this is what was written.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Audit report or the annual report? What you reading from?

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- This is the Auditor's Report.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We are not talking about the Auditor's Report, we are talking about the Annual Report.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, Honourable Speaker, let me just correct them.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- He was not listening.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Because I said to properly assess the performance of a department, we need to look at three things;

- its report which is usually patronising to itself;
- the Auditor's Report; and
- the Committee.

So here I am reading from the Auditor's Report 2015 - Qualified. What does a qualified report mean?

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- (Inaudible)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Qualified means they do not know accounting.

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- They do not know debit and credits. They do not know how to do it and it goes further.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Listen to this, Honourable Speaker, contrary to Section 31 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act payment of \$360,000 were paid from the OHS Trust Account for payment of salaries for staff. Shame, you do not do trust accounts like that. It is a trust account, you do not touch it.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I know it because in my field we get audited every time. If you do not get audited, if you abuse your trust account, you do not get your PC.

So, the Minister should be sacked for abusing the trust account, it is stealing. It is outright stealing, it is thief to take money from your trust account and use it unlawfully and that is \$360,000. It is not funny, lucky for you Honourable Bala is there now to stop all these problems. But seriously, I think the abuse of funds was a very serious matter indeed. You do not touch the trust account and here you have \$360,000 and for that the Minister responsible should be sacked.

HON. MEMBER.- Who is the Minister?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Honourable Speaker, that is the shape of such things at that time.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Let me now come to the Annual Report for the three years and the most serious thing was the National Employment Centre (NEC). You know what NEC was supposed to mean? You are supposed to lead the Government in employment. I will not look at it in detail but it is sad, it is shameful. It is shameful what they did to this. The idea was great and there should be people employed.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, you look at the figure for 2016; 2014 was the biggest number of people that NEC got registered, could not even get them into permanent employment.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Have you got a report there?

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Honourable Speaker, since he has asked, let me show him. The figures are here, the target was 500 and they were able to achieve 3,227. Now, 2014 was alright. Now, we come to 2015; 500 was the target but they were able to achieve 415.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Better?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Worse, it is better that way. Then you come to 2016; 500 was their target and they achieved 338, ask Honourable Usamate he will tell you. He will tell you that the performance was bad, they were not meeting the targets, they were not being useful to the nation, most importantly NEC in trying to get people to be employed.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I hope you are true.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Having looked at all those, Honourable Speaker, what did the Committee recommend? The Committee recommended that you are useless. The Annual Report should be produced immediately the following year. What kind is this? Sir, 2014, 2015 and 2016 all in one report because you are lazy; it should one year one, one year one, one year one.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, because you are not doing your job. Honourable Speaker, 2014, 2015 and 2016; three Annual Reports consolidated. What kind is this?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What kind this? What kind of English is this?

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- People of Fiji are listening to you, young people are listening to you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I am using a language that you will understand better.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You are a joke. That is what you are.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Ministry's Annual Report should reflect the Ministry's performance, achievements and get the set targets in accordance with the Annual Corporate Plan. What is the point of getting targets? What is the point of getting corporate plans when you do not report accordingly in your annual reports? It is useless. That is the whole reason why you get into these performance targets, so that you can set it out in the annual report and you tell us, the reader, "This one has achieved 20 percent and that has not achieved 100 percent." May I say, that the Chairperson of the Committee was a very good person; Honourable Cawaki was very objective and that is probably the reason why he is not here, because he was able to tell that side of the House the truth.

The Ministry to indicate measures undertaken to address issues raised in the previous years audited report. The Honourable Attorney- General, asked me why I was talking about the Auditor General's Report. It says here, the recommendations within your Annual Report addressed the issues that were raised to you by the Auditor General and it has not been done here. It has not been done in many other reports from that side of the House. The Ministry to re-introduced the apprentice scheme and the Ministry has to review the recruitment selection criteria of the applicant's skills and experience.

Let me now begin, Honourable Speaker, I say again, this is the worst time for anyone to be employed here because their rights have not been protected and the performance of this Ministry leaves much to be desired, and I hope with the change, now that Honourable Bala has gone there (Mr. Fix-up) because he will fix up this Department. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I give the floor to the Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa.

HON. RO T.V. KEPa.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. Just very briefly may I make a contribution to the motion before the House.

On the recommendation on Page 28 of the report, 5.0 on the way forward - amongst the recommendations is that, the Ministry coordinates with the Ministry of Education for the introduction of life skills training, which I think is a very good idea. In the verbatim of this Report, it is stated that the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations is working closely with the Fiji Higher Education Commission (FHEC) and the Permanent Secretary (PS) stated on the day they were before the Committee, that they were looking into the system to create the kind of workforce that is relevant for the modern workforce. My question is: Is the system that she spoke about here, is it in secondary schools or at tertiary level? Going further Honourable Speaker, in terms of the Apprenticeship Scheme that is there in the Report, that was used in the Government Shipping Services and Government Printing which is no longer there, so where is the Apprenticeship Scheme still being used?

The Report continues that the Apprenticeship Scheme is going through a reform phase and they are looking to formulate it, so that it is relevant to the future. Any update on this Apprenticeship Scheme would be welcomed, Honourable Speaker. Very importantly, for the way forward, the Committee has recommended that the Ministry review the recruitment and selection criteria in considering the applicant's employment skills and experience. This is a very important point as this 2018 Parliamentary Paper was presented in Parliament, the same year that the Open Merit Recruitment Selection (OMRS) guideline was signed by the Public Service Commission (PSC). While the OMRS is open, meaning the positions can be advertised anywhere in the world and that is why we see so many expatriates, Honourable Speaker, in senior positions in the civil services. Some of whom have resigned recently citing family reasons. Here I looked at the OMRS Honourable Speaker, it was interesting, why are the expatriate Permanent Secretaries (PSs) confirmed and our locally born and bred PSs are almost forever on Acting. So that is the question that I am asking here Honourable Speaker.

The merit part of this OMRS Honourable Speaker, is silent on previous experience, life skills, labour skills and other skills so important in the modern work place as highlighted by the PS in this Report. What is lacking is because what is termed as merit based, does not place any value nor have any weighting on these skills so it may be a good idea Honourable Speaker for Government to look local rather than go global. That is why Life Skills Training is so crucial and that many people in Fiji do not have these experiences at home particularly in the urban and more affluent areas. So much so that Life Skills Trainings and Apprenticeship Scheme need to be re-structured and re-introduced in its basic forms in the schools so that it can include students who are not academically inclined, and that is over 90 percent of all students who begin school from Year 1, so that they may be given a chance at some form of employment opportunity later in life.

I support this motion before the House, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. I give the floor to the Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Speaker Sir, I rise to contribute to the motion by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources on the 2014, 2015 and 2016 Annual Report of the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations. (Parliamentary Paper No. 110 of 2018).

I commend the Ministry, its Permanent Secretary and officials, including Divisional Labour Officers on their work to ensure our workers are safeguarded and their rights are respected. I urge the Ministry to continue to dialogue with the employers and workers representatives and particularly the Employment Relations Advisory Board (ERAB) and the National Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Board (NOHSAB).

The area of employment amplified is that governments must carry out consultations, but the tripartite mechanisms unfortunately has broken down in Fiji and there has been zero consultations with workers particularly the civil servants since 2006. The issue Mr. Speaker, Sir, is with the policy of the

government since 2006, that is the silencing and crushing of trade unions and workers' rights. This has been taken up to the ILO annually over the last 14 years and the government narrowly escaped the ILO Commission of Enquiry by its tripartite arrangement signed with employers and trade unions.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Sir, having averted the Commission of Enquiry the government has failed to honour its promise to ensure that Fiji's laws comply with fundamental labour rights enshrined in the ILO Convention which Fiji has already signed up to. I repeat Mr. Speaker Sir, the government continues to oppress the workers of Fiji in limiting their freedom of association, rights to collective bargaining. The sad example of this is the breaking of the unity of civil servants by forcing them to sign up individual contracts rather than collective agreements with the civil servant union.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the collective bargaining power of workers gains some greater rights, like workers' rights that we take for granted today. We thank the Trade Union movement for basic workers' rights like sick leave, maternity leave, 8 hours working day and the 42 hours working week. These did not come overnight, they are now basic standards recognised by ILO Conventions because workers' collectively bargained for these rights.

The ILO Committee on Application of Standards met in June 2019 and laid down a deadline of November 2019 for government to honour its promise to respect workers' rights. This unfortunate but predictable ultimatum issued by the International Labour Organisation Committee and Application of Standard requires Fiji to make a progress report on its compliance with the mediated agreement, reform of labour laws by November 2019. Fiji has been given an ultimatum to report on compliance with the ILO Mediated Agreement it made with Unions and Employers in 2015 and accepted the direct contact mission by November 2019.

Information provided by government was considered however, the Committee observed serious allegations with regards to violation of basic civil liberties, including arrest, detention, assault and restriction of freedoms of association. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee regretted government's failure to comply with the required processes under the Joint Implementation Report (JIR). The Committee called up the government to:

- Refrain from interfering with the designation of the representative of social partners of tripartite bodies;
- Reconvene the Employment Relations Advisory Board (ERAB) without delay in order to start other legislative reform process;
- Complete without delay, the full legislative reform process as agreed under the Joint Implementation Report (JIR);
- Refrain from anti-union practices including arrest, detentions, violation, intimidation, harassment and interference;
- Ensure that workers and employers organisations are able to exercise their rights to freedom of association, freedom of assembly, speech without undue interference by public authorities; and
- Ensure that normal judicial procedures and due process are guaranteed to workers and employees, organisation and their members.

Government has been informed by the ILO Committee to accept the direct contact mission before the 109th session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva in November, 2019.

My question, Mr. Speaker, Sir, what is the outcome of that direct contact mission? Can the Honourable Minister update the nation on the timeline of the reform of the labour laws to be complying with Fiji's Treaty Obligation under ILO and honour the terms of the 2015 Tripartite Agreement that headed off to the ILO Commission of Enquiry.

The FijiFirst Government cannot blame anyone but itself for the unnecessary mess created which have a much bigger and greater impact on the economy and the lives of ordinary workers in this country.

SODELPA, Mr. Speaker, Sir, stands with the workers of Fiji and the Trade Unions representatives both in the public and private sector. They are seeking fair working conditions to restore freedom of expression, right to strike and collective bargaining.

The Government should seriously consider the implication of its refusal to respect fundamental labour and union rights and the continued breach of agreement; breach with the trade unions in 2015 contrary to our commitments to the eight core ILO Conventions. The chickens have come home to roost. The Government should take full responsibility and more sensible approach to industrial relation matters through genuine dialogue and consultation with stakeholders, for the good of our nation in reviving the tripartite mechanism. Mr, Speaker, Sir, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the debate and I note the recommendations of the Committee.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Aseri Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just like to make a brief contribution on the Committees Report that is being deliberated upon in this House.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to fully support two of the recommendations that have been made by the Committee especially the reintroduction of the Apprenticeship Scheme and the Overseas Employment Market.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you would know in the past Fiji used to boast some of the best workers in the areas of engineering, construction and other technical areas such as maritime cadets, carpentry, road surveyors, plumbing, tile-laying, and the likes. I think some of the Honourable Members in this House would commend the skills of these workers especially the Honourable Minister of Fisheries could also comment on one of his vessels that was last built by the shipyard and I think he would be happy with the conditions of the boat that was built then. And because, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because of the existence of the Apprenticeship Scheme we had such a good workmanship and this Apprenticeship Scheme, Mr. Speaker, Sir, used to be undertaken by the various Government Ministries like the Public Works Department who used to, not only train workers but also absorbed them into the workforce to enjoy what has been offered by the various government entities and government agencies.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, back in 2015, I had highlighted in this august House how the Australian Pacific Training Coalition had seen the vacuum created after the Apprenticeship Scheme was phased out by this Government.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, APTC has since provided a steady stream of workers for their own workforce and since then, I urge the Government to review its decision in the phasing out of the Apprenticeship Scheme and I commend the Committee's recommendations on the importance of correcting the mistakes of this Government.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the overseas employment market for all sectors to cater for women participation, I note the contributions by the Honourable Minister for Women and I commend the

Committee's recommendation and suggest that the relevant authorities consider the areas of caregiving, Mr. Speaker, Sir, where at present, our women are already engaged abroad.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, perhaps the scheme can ensure proper remuneration packages are made available for our women and security of tenure of those employment is emphasised. Now we are in 2020, we are talking about the 2014 to 2016 Ministry of Employment Annual Report, we can suggest that the emphasis should be put on the *Vuvale* Partnership that we had with the Australian Government.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I note that the recommendations of the Committee does not have anything at all on the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) within the Ministry. We note that the Ministry is heavily involved in ensuring the occupational health standards of the various employment sectors around Fiji and we would like to emphasise the need for the Ministry to ensure that there are skilled people employed by the Ministry in terms of carrying out the work of OHS. We do not want a repeat of the accident of the *MV Liahona* in the Kadavu Passage and I note that the Honourable Member from Kadavu has always highlighted this in the past, in terms of the accident because of the absence of skilled people in the OHS Department within the Ministry. I commend the motion before the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. I give the floor to Honourable Parveen Bala, you have the floor.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to respond to the debate and at the outset, I would like to commend the Standing Committee on Natural Resources for the work that they undertook in reviewing my Ministry's 2014, 2015 and 2016 Annual Reports.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to respond to the seven recommendations made by the Committee. But before I do that, I would like to comment on the issues raised by the Opposition Members and in particular, about the union movements in this country, the delay in the Review of the National Minimum Wage and the Labour Reforms and then I will come to Honourable Nawaikula later.

As far as the Review of the National Minimum Wage is concerned, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will be making a Ministerial Statement and I am going to update this august House this week on the progress.

On the unions, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is unfortunate but it is a reality that the unions are boycotting the ERAB, so what do you do? I mean it is good for someone to come here and stand up and say that government is not working with the union but they are our tripartite partners and they have chosen to boycott all the ERAB meetings that we have organised.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. P.K. BALA.- In regards to the Labour Reform, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform that, that process has been done. There has been amendments to the labour reforms with the tripartite partners and it is with the Office of the Solicitor-General for vetting.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are here to deal and debate on the 2014, 2015 and 2016 Annual Reports. All this time what we have heard from the Opposition is something outside the annual reports and this is not going to help us. I want to be within the framework of these three years' reports and I will go on to the minutes of the meeting that was held on 14th June, 2018 when my management were present to answer to the Standing Committee and after the comments were made by my management on certain issues, this is what Honourable Nawaikula had to say, "that is a very good one." He was referring to the reports that was presented to the Committee. Then he goes further. Honourable Nawaikula says, "can we just talk on another target because I am sure your Minister has made a presentation in relation to this?" There were

targets that were presented to the Members and this is what he had to say, “it is a very good achievement indeed.”

We have just heard about unions from the Opposition Members but this is what Honourable Nawaikula had to say, “just on ILO, can you just tell us briefly because these people are always going to Geneva.” It is mentioned here – Mr. Felix Anthony and his team. What is their role? What do they go and do in Geneva? This is said by Honourable Nawaikula in relation to that because I have been to them, he has gone to Mr. Felix Anthony for some assistance and I think he was turned down. And then further on, he goes and says, “please, can you take up this complaint on ILO C169, maybe we are low priority but what to do, they go and what they do there.” This is what he said in the Committee meeting. These are facts. This is not my Minutes, this is their Minutes.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other issue that Honourable Nawaikula raised is about the workers of the resort. I would like to inform this Honourable House that the Ministry has received a notice from the employer on 20th January, 2020 where 50 workers were made redundant by the employer. We are currently investigating the case to ensure that workers are paid their rightful dues by the company and no worker is unfairly treated.

HON. MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. P.K. BALA.- The Employment Relations Act empowers the Ministry to ensure that justice is done and any employer that fails to comply with the provisions will face the full brunt of the law. And then he has written a letter to the Ministry.

HON. MEMBERS.- Who?

HON. P.K. BALA.- He is trying to put words into my staff’s mouth and this is what I want to say here, Mr. Speaker, and I quote: “I am hoping you will agree with me, it is unlawful.” He is trying to say about the

HON. MEMBERS.- Oh!

HON. P.K. BALA.- This is what Honourable Nawaikula is and I hope next time around when a debate is held in this august House he makes sense of his contribution because people are listening especially the young ones, the future leaders of this country and if this is the trend of the Opposition, in fact, I am surprised with the contribution made by Honourable Leawere. I do not really know what he was talking about.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will go on the recommendations now. Much has been said about the recommendation and I think it is only right and fair for me as the current Minister to respond to all these recommendations that is:

- Recommendation 5.1 – Mr. Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is working towards this recommendation in ensuring that we produce the pending Annual Reports 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 on time as per the recommendation and this will be tabled before the end of the 2019-2020 financial year;
- Recommendation 5.2 – Mr. Speaker, Sir, this recommendation is acknowledged. My Ministry has adopted the Civil Service Standard Annual Cost Operational Plan template which now reflects links to the Ministry’s development plan and the overall National

Development Plan with clear performance indicators which are measured on a monthly, quarterly and on an annual basis;

- Recommendation 5.3 – Mr. Speaker, Sir, the auditor’s recommendation is to reverse the shared service revenue recorded in the OHS Trust Account and deposit it to the Consolidated Fund Account of the Government; this is what Honourable Nawaikula was talking about. The Ministry has rectified the issue and the shared service functions were discontinued in 2017, after the expiry of the contract between the Ministry of Employment and Ministry of Civil Service;
- Recommendation 5.4 – Mr. Speaker, Sir, the life skill training package was initially designed as part of the capacity building of unemployed registered clients with the National Employment Centre which focussed on personal development including values. My Ministry is currently in consultation with the Technical Educational Skills Training Unit of the Ministry of Education in reviewing the life skills training package;
- Recommendation 5.5 – Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Apprenticeship Scheme was under the Employment Ministry and implemented under the then Fiji National Training Council (FNTC) and later National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC). Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, with the merger, I think the Committee was not aware of this fact that the merger took place and that is why I am saying that there is some misunderstanding amongst the Committee at that point in time. Now with the merger of the former Government Grant National Higher Education Institutions under the Fiji National University, their Apprenticeship Scheme Reform is underway with the Ministry of Education being the oversight ministry. Our Ministry still runs the training for the maritime sector, Mr. Speaker, Sir;
- Recommendation 5.6 – Mr. Speaker, Sir, my Ministry continues to pursue overseas employment opportunities and in particular the participation of women. Now with the signing of the MOU under the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) between the Fijian Government and the Australian Government in April 2019, more such opportunities will be available under the age care and the other new sectors; and
- Recommendation 5.7 – Mr. Speaker, Sir, 5.7 talks about the Seasonal Work Programme and at that time we did not have this PLS in place. The final decision, it talks about who should decide the selection. So the final decision on the selection process, as I am sure this House will understand as I have mentioned so many times in this House, is entirely at the discretion of the employer. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, now we have PLS in place and this programme will definitely address this recommendation.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, for this opportunity.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Parveen Bala. Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Standing Order allows a Member like me to correct or clarify a point that was being stated before. There are two statements that were made that referred to me, that is:

- 1) Concerning the verbatim and I asked that, that be understood and read in its context of what was said there before the outcome was made; and
- 2) In relation to a letter that I wrote, I standby the contents of that letter.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua, you have the floor.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. I want to thank the former Committee for its work.

Honourable Speaker, there are some things that are unfortunately time immemorial, now the Report mentions statistics. The written resolution or success on some of the things that were brought before the Ministry are not mentioned. For example, Honourable Speaker, we have a file in our Headquarters belonging to a former employee of a company who is owed FNPF payout as well as wages, and he also suffered some permanent eye-damage. He was kicked out of work by his foreign employer who, I suspect, by now has obtained a local passport. Of course, Honourable Speaker, this happened before the current Minister's term began in November, 2018 and we sincerely hope that he does better than his predecessor.

For the reason of bureaucracy and other reasons, he has not seen the file, we will gladly show it to the Minister, we had raised this issue a few years ago but an election here in Government did not pay heed to this and the aggrieved keeps on suffering, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, we would also like to know about the status of the National Employment Centre (NEC). We would like to know if those who did get employment did so in their respective fields. We would like to know the numbers of successful employment opportunities that were created. We would also like to know the basis on which employment is offered to those on the database. Basically, we would like to know if those offered employment are getting jobs commensurate with their qualifications and experience.

Honourable Speaker, the Seasonal Workers Scheme is featured prominently as well in this Report and I recall that in mid-2017, the then Minister made an announcement that the villagers and settlements of those who breached seasonal worker conditions would not be considered for recruitment for four years. We call on the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations to make public all details of the Seasonal Workers Scheme, including the plight of those workers in New Zealand that warranted such an inhumane approach to blanket blacklisting because, Honourable Speaker, the statement by the then Minister where whole villages and settlements are being imposed with penalties of a four-year ban from the Seasonal Workers Scheme is not only discriminatory, it is inhumane and goes against the principles of International Labour practices.

Why is the interest of balance and fair play in this Government penalising a whole village for four years for the supposed action of a fellow villager. This, Honourable Speaker, rids off political sanctioning on areas that perhaps the FijiFirst Government realised was not friendly to them.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- And we are having whole villagers penalised by this Government for four years. How many more villagers have been put on this blacklist and is this still applicable? The way that the Seasonal Workers Scheme has been implemented needs to be investigated as we know that this is also being used as a vote-buying scheme for our rural communities. What we have been witnessing is the disempowering and demeaning treatment of our citizens. Many of them were being taken straight from their villagers to a foreign country for work without much thought for their care and support in that country.

Honourable Speaker, the NFP has stated many times before that employment-creation in the country is critical and abdicating our national employment obligations to New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific Island countries under the Seasonal Workers Scheme and similar initiatives like for teachers is commendable but is a short-term bandage solution for the national unemployment and low wage issues.

I would like to respond to what the Honourable Bala said about Unions. Honourable Speaker, Unions, I believe, are boycotting the Employment Relations Advisory Board (ERAB) because

Government is not complying with the timelines in respect of review of labour laws and the Essential National Industries (Employment) Decree (ENID).

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- I am raising this, Honourable Speaker, ...

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Honourable Speaker, I also ...

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Honourable Speaker, I also put it to this House that the Unions have stopped going to ERAB due to the continuous refusal of permit to march to highlight the workers' issues of this country.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Honourable Speaker, they obviously cannot expect the Government to work with them in good faith. Having said that much, Honourable Speaker, I thank the former Committee for their work. *Vinaka*.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I was not going to speak but some of things that have been said this afternoon, I thank the Honourable Minister as I think he has clarified most of the issues but we need to be very clear on some of the developments that have happened in this country.

In terms of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), it has eight core Conventions which protect the right of all workers in the world. Fiji is one of the few countries that had signed all of those eight core Conventions. Some of the greater countries that are always belittling Fiji in ILO such as the United States of America, Australia, they have not signed all those eight core Conventions.

We have made sure in this country, when we developed the Employment Relations Act, we made sure that all the requirements of the Conventions were internalised into those laws. So in terms of the eight core Conventions and the rights of workers, freedom of association, freedom of collective bargaining - these things are all protected in our national legislation.

The Honourable Qereqeretabua has basically stated that the Unions have not been participating in the Employment Relations Advisory Board, because they are talking about their refusal to give the permit. The Ministry of Employment has got nothing to do with permits. If you want the tripartite mechanism to function, you need to come to the party, sit and make sure you have the discussions. We are talking about the implementation of the agreement that was done in 2015 and the progression that we need to see in the laws - the revision of the laws.

If they do not come to the Employment Relations Advisory Board, then how are we going to finish that, how are we going to complete the review of the laws if you are not sitting there? This is like a circular argument, first of all, you say that tripartite mechanism is not working and then they do not turn up. How can the tripartite mechanism work if they are not there? So what are you talking about, what are your ideas like?

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. J. USAMATE.- This is absolutely ridiculous. There are other things that we are talking about here. People are talking about the National Employment Centre (NEC) and the Government's impact on employment. When Government tries to address employment, it does not rely only on the NEC, it has other mechanisms, it has the work of the Fiji Higher Education Commission, it has the Technical Colleges - all of these work together in tandem to address the issue of employment.

If you want to see the “proof of the pudding”, you look at the unemployment rate in this country. The last findings of unemployment, youth unemployment in this country is only at 4.5 percent. That is the “proof of the pudding”. If you want to see the impact of this Government on unemployment, look at what the result says - 4.5 percent, the lowest unemployment rate that we have ever had in this country.

All other Government agencies work towards their particular targets. The rights of the workers in this country have always been protected. This is the Government that has done it. Who increased the salary of civil servants - who did that? Who raised the salaries of doctors and nurses and all of these people? The kind of increase in salary that is being done here has never been done before. Who introduced the National Minimum Wage to make sure that we protect the interest of people

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. J. USAMATE.- This is the Government that did it, that looks after the interests of everyone in this country, especially the workers and we will continue to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Lynda Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I was going to speak more but I think I will just keep it in response to the Honourable Usamate, that he actually spoke before me because he would be aware of this issue that the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) workers are facing, who come right under his portfolio.

The problem of thousands of WAF workers who were laid off last year was created because they did not honour the collective bargaining, this Government-owned entity did not honour the collective bargaining and they wondered why the Unions do not come to the table anymore, it is because the Government is not respecting or honouring the collective bargaining of the Unions. When they were laid off last year, Honourable Speaker, the collective bargaining agreement had said that it would differentiate between temporary workers and permanent workers. But this was not the case last year when thousands of workers were laid off.

They went to the Ministry of Labour and made complaints and again this was addressed by the Ministry of Labour, and the Honourable Minister in terms of their poor supervisory role, because when they made those complaints to the Honourable Minister for Labour, it was referred to the Employment Tribunal, it is almost a year later now, the Employment Tribunal and Arbitration Court are going back and forth, back and forth, backlogs the cases, the Ministry is doing nothing to push this forward.

Honourable Speaker, these same workers who were laid off last year because they have filed complaints (which is their right to do), at the Ministry of Employment and the Tribunal. They are not considered for contracts this year and it is up to the Minister for Infrastructure to refute that but that is according to almost thousands of workers that have not been considered because they filed their complaints last year at the Ministry for Labour, and so it is very rich coming from the Minister for Infrastructure and also the Minister for Labour saying that they are doing their job, that the unions are not

coming to the table because of bad faith. No, it is the Government that is creating bad faith, not honouring a collective bargaining, not letting these same Water Authority of Fiji workers who have worked for 10 years to 15 years, Honourable Speaker.

They are experienced in their work and they have not been considered because they exercise their rights to file their complaints last year because they were laid off illegally. So, I would like the Government and both the Ministries to just reflect on that - the right of the unions not coming to the table because of bad faith.

Now, moving on, Honourable Speaker, the very same issue that the reports mentioned about the poor supervisory role of the Ministry, including their legislation are under the Employment Relations Act of 2007, Section 76(2) says, and I quote: “An employer must develop and maintain a policy to prevent sexual harassment in his or her workplace, consistent with any national policy guidelines under subsection (3)” which is a National Policy Guideline that should be brought about for the Minister to direct the National Employment Relations Advisory Board about a National Policy Guideline on Sexual Harassment.

Now, Honourable Speaker, in the last few months, this has been an issue that has been dealt with in the Fijian Holdings Limited. The first alleged incident that happened in Fijian Holdings Limited, there was no sexual harassment policy in place and I wish to ask each of the Government Ministers and Departments, how many of them actually have a Sexual Harassment Policy that the law says must be maintained? It is not just the Government but every other employer. It is a question that I asked,

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- It is a question that I asked.

HON. P.K. BALA.- A Point of Order

HON. SPEAKER.- You have the floor, Honourable Minister.

HON. P.K. BALA.- The Honourable Member is misleading the honourable House. She is saying that there is no National Policy. I have got a copy of the National Policy here. Do you want one? I would request her to stop misleading this honourable House.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. You have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Honourable Speaker, point taken, I just mentioned subsection (3) of that Act that requires the National Policy Guideline, I am glad that the Minister has pointed it out that it is there, it is very beautiful, it is written out but it is not being implemented. They have not implemented this particular policy in the Departments or even in any employer in this country - no sexual harassment policies.

We have seen what has happened in the last few months, they have failed in their job in supervising this legislation. So, Honourable Speaker, I would like him to reflect on that point also.

Today we have seen the Honourable Attorney-General using words that are ungracious in Parliament, calling a Honourable Member ‘a fool’, saying ‘you’re a joke’, he needs to be reminded, perhaps he should practice some graciousness in Parliament when he is addressing the Honourable Members and I am absolutely sure using the word “stupidity”.

HON. MEMBER.- ... you’ve been using that ...

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- He mentioned, “you are a joke” not less than 10 times and calling a Honourable Members “a fool”. I would just like to remind him to be more gracious. I am sure his father (who is sitting here) did not teach him those words, that behaviour.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Do not bring my father into this.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- He is sitting in Parliament. I am sure he did not teach you that behaviour. You should practice more graciousness in Parliament.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- For the last speaker, the Honourable Tuisawau.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir. I rise to contribute to the debate ...

HON. SPEAKER.- Now, everyone wants to take part in the debate.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- ... on the Ministry of Employment. I am just studying the recommendation 5.4 – The Ministry to coordinate with the Ministry of Education through the introduction of Life Skills Training in the school curriculum. This has been mentioned by one of our Honourable Members and I believe that it is very important and that particular recommendation could be changed not only in the school curriculum but also in Parliament in terms of life skills. Looking at life skills, this includes creativity, problem solving, decision making, the ability to communicate and collaborate along with social responsibilities, et cetera, which contributes to good citizenship.

The other critical issue about life skills is the reasons behind it and one of the main reasons, democracies need active, informed and responsible citizens who are willing and able to take responsibility for themselves and their communities and contribute to the political process. They should be aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, informed on political issues, concerned about the welfare of others, articulating opinions and arguments, active in their communities and act as responsible citizens. The reason I am saying that this should be applied to everyone is that we should be collaborating and that is a critical aspect of life skills; communicating et cetera. But as mentioned by my Honourable colleague, some of the communications are just insults from this morning and not only this morning but in the past and we have seen a lot of words used which demean the Members. Those words have been expressed every now and then, so I am not sure when that will end. The other issue about that is collaboration, consensus and problem solving. This is a life skill which, I believe, should be emphasised in this House particularly on the other side of the House in terms of solving national issues.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Collaboration and consensus, this has not been a feature of the Government of the day since the 2006 *coup* and even up to now with regards to, on this side of the House in terms of that particular life skills which we would like to emphasise and practice in our national issues, not only issues in terms of, we are collaborating in Committees but in terms of national issues where there are major differences which we represent a particular point of view which we need to sit down and discuss and that includes the Constitution, national legislation, et cetera. Honourable Speaker, Sir, that is why I

an emphasising that life skills there is not only for the school curriculum but also should be put in practice by this House.

The other issue which is of interest for me is the last one there, 5.7, the review of recruitment and selection criteria. This has been mentioned by few Members of the House, the Open Merit Based System. We have heard this morning that we are calling each other “racist”. The terms “racist” and “racism” can be used in a general way and by anyone but I suppose the key there is to have transparent and clear procedures and standards in place.

Unfortunately with the Civil Service Reform, some of that is not clear, in particular in relation to Job Descriptions (JDs) and also the process in formulating JDs, because if that had been clear, a lot of complaints which we are receiving today, we are receiving complaints nearly every day about the Open Recruitment and Merit Based System. The way I look at it, it is basically a lack of consultation at the JDs and Job Analysis stage which you need to do it properly in consultation with all stakeholders before you advertise the position. Not only that, but even with the Selection Committee, et cetera, how that is composed or how that is set up and who the Members would be.

So, Honourable Speaker, Sir, those kinds of gaps or issues in procedures lead to accusations of racism in the current situation. In addition to that, some of my colleagues have mentioned the three-year contract. We have received a lot of complaints on that that too, specific complaints from particular employees where that particular procedure, the real contract renewal procedure is used to victimise. Not only that, but the efficiency in managing contracts is really a huge issue, not only with the Ministry of Education but in other ministries where employees are at times just left there when their contracts ends and they have to go home and come back three months later or they are issued temporary contracts which contributes to job insecurity and at times, they are victimised by the banks.

These are the issues, I believe, which needs to be ironed out to prevent this discussion about racism, et cetera. Of course, we need to look specifically at how this is being practised. There could be racism, but it is something that needs to be further examined and maybe audited in terms of the implementation of the Civil Service Reforms. With that contribution, I thank you Honourable Speaker, Sir. *Vinaka.*

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Attorney-General, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, just very quickly, I would like to make a few comments in response to some of the issues that have been raised but I would like to refer the Honourable Members to Section 20 of the Fijian Constitution which quite specifically states and I quote:

- “20. –(1) Every person has the right to fair employment practises including humane treatment, proper working conditions.
(2) Every worker has the right to form or join a trade union, and participate in its activities and programmes.
(3) Every employer has the right to form or join an employers’ organisation, and to participate in its activities and programmes.
(4) Trade unions and employers have the right to bargain collectively.”

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these are constitutional provisions and these are provisions and rights that in fact, can be enforced if these rights are not being enforced, the employer, employee have the right to seek Constitutional redress either through the trade unions or individually in their own right. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is the prime law of the country and that is of course enforceable.

I would like to very quickly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, so all this nonsense about there is no rights et cetera, is completely incorrect. This is what is written down and that is what can be enforced. I would like to very quickly just reiterate some of the issues that have been raised.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Bainimarama Government and then the FijiFirst Government introduced minimum wage. That is a fact of life, no other government actually brought in the minimum wage. It has been continuously reviewed; \$2, \$2.32, \$2.64 and there is another review currently being carried out by the Honourable Minister under his guidance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again in addition to that, the civil servants have had enormous pay rises. We have had nurses that have been paid over 80 percent. Today, heads of schools get over paid \$100,000 in large schools; completely unheard of. Today the wages bill of civil servants alone including the disciplined forces is \$4 million a day.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the salary, if you look at the median of international salaries, Fiji is over the median rate and the World Bank and IMF study actually proves that. I would like to very quickly highlight some of the achievements at least in the past four years.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we were the first Government that gave \$2.9 million to the Fiji Christmas Island veterans, no other government gave that. No other government or no other ministry had ever given this type of compensation. They were effectively workers who were exposed to radiation at Christmas Islands through nuclear testing. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition as Prime Minister and as the Commander of the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces (RFMF), nothing happened then. It happened under our Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, ongoing programmes foreign employment service, we have today, Fijian workers, retirees, et cetera who were employed by other Pacific island countries, this Government started that programme. We paid for their travel, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and that is a very successful programme. There is a lot of things that have actually happened, I want to very quickly highlight some of these issues.

We actually carried out the amendment to the Employment Relations Act for our compliance with the four core international labour standards, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and we have been working with the ILO. The Honourable Minister, actually I think was very modest in the achievements that they have made regarding the relationship with ILO and it is a fact. Sir, ERAB is open to every participant and the unions for political reasons have refused to participate. There are far more issues, Mr. Speaker, Sir. In all the countries in the world, some countries actually beg for tripartite forums, we actually have one. The workers actually come, they negotiate, they talk, they dialogue, they talk about that and for some reason about the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF), I think they stated, they have no come to that. It goes to show the politicisation of issues, Mr. Speaker, Sir. We are the first Government that actually introduced the family care leave, paternal leave, increased maternity leave; none of that was mentioned by the other side.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, prior to 2007, there was a backlog of workers compensation cases. The Honourable Prime Minister with the assistance of doctors from the RFMF cleared the backlog. Thousands of cases, literally they were languishing within the system. We cleared that and today, we have reforms on the workers compensation, the Act that we have through the Accident Compensation Commission of Fiji (ACCF) now. Now, there is no fault provisions. In other words, if you are at work, if you get injured, you get paid. Before you had to prove, there was an element of fault in it too. It was a fault based system.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, we have allocated funding for mediation services with the Ministry of Employment. We have increased the mediation services. We have set up more employment tribunals. We have now, in order to create independence, the tribunals, Mr. Speaker Sir, are run by the independent judiciary.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, as the Honourable Minister highlighted, we had the Seasonal Work Programme which started with Australia and New Zealand, but the reality of the matter is this, that is just one way of our workers going there. There are a lot of people through the private engagement that actually go and work in New Zealand and Australia on short-term contracts now. We have electricians and other people who go there for two or three years, come back and set up their own companies. As I mentioned in Parliament before, in a span of two weeks, EFL lost 20 High Voltage Linesmen to a company in New Zealand. This is the level of attrition. It goes to show the level of training that our employers are actually putting in some of these workers because that makes them attractive for the lucrative employment markets in Australia and New Zealand.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, in collaboration with the various workers, we have been holding through the regularisation of 14 Assistant Labour Officer positions. Now, the Ministry is conducting labour inspections among 15,000 companies over the next five years to see compliance. Yes, there are employers who do not comply, there are employers who do not comply in terms of paying the right salaries and there are employers who do not comply in paying FNPF. Our job is to make sure that they do. We have to create firstly the right legal framework so they actually get charged. Before the fines and penalties were piddling amounts, people would rather pay their fines but not actually pay the right amount of money to the workers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, the Fiji Volunteer Service Scheme, we have done work through the National Employment Centre (NEC). The Employment Relations Tribunal, like I mentioned, has expanded its services. We now have the Fiji Mediation Centre running quite well where we are now having a lot of the matters between employer and employees resolved through the mediation services.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have to say this that the general quality and level of debate has significantly deteriorated this year. This is the first day. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The name calling, the racism that is coming out of that. The OMRS, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Whip tries to admonish us for the quality of the debate. She should actually first do the job of a Whip to admonish the people on her own side to see what quality of contribution that is coming from them. Rather than questioning, I mean for once, I agree with Honourable Tuisawau that he is actually focused on some reasonable process-type issues.

Honourable Nawaikula immediately jumped onto racial issues. Honourable Tuisawau highlighted if there are gaps in terms of processes, fix up the processes. He needs to also know that there is an appeal process. There is actually a separate tribunal set in place where appeals of civil servants go to. There is a permanent tribunal in place, none of them mentioned that. They did not mention that Public Service Commission (PSC), you have the ability to write directly as an aggrieved civil servant, if you have applied for a position, you did not get it, you believe the process is not correct, you write directly to PSC. No going through the Permanent Secretary, et cetera. You have the right to do that. They have not mentioned that. I do not know if they know that or not.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, all of these things are in place but to stand here and talk about that everything that is being done, there is some kind of conspiracy, we are all sitting here, putting in place processes to target one particular ethnic group; what a load of nonsense. They go on about, they are all in civil service, there are expatriates everywhere. There are only four expatriate Permanent Secretaries out of 21; only four out of 21 which is approximately 19 percent.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, only four of them, three of them actually hold dual citizenship. The four expatriates: Deborah Weiss, Bernadette Welch, Dimity Fifer and Joshua Wycliffe. Out of the four, three are women, they do not talk about that.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, three of them hold dual citizenship: Sanjeeva Perera, Jennifer Poole and Maritino Nemani. These people hold dual citizenship all of the others hold Fijian citizenships out of 21, what is the big hocus pocus about this? Everyone has the right to apply, we want the right person for the right job, we want the output, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

I can tell Honourable Nawaikula, if he wants to go down ethnic path, what were the shenanigans that took place, I can take an ethnic perspective to that, but I do not, we do not, this Leader does not, that Leader allows him to say that. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition allows his Members to do such a pedestrian analysis of OMRS. That is not visionary at all, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me clarify a few other things. The reality of the matter is, there are other expatriates and they are doctors, do they want us to send back the expatriate doctors, so we do not have the specialist? Is that what you want, with the kind of xenophobia that they have.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other point is also this: in order to form a Trade Union, they are saying it is so hard, read the Act. You only require seven members of any organisation to form a Trade Union, seven members, nothing is restricting them, Mr. Speaker, Sir. They said, “Oh, because we have contracts”, I think, Honourable Bulitavu, because we have contracts, you cannot have collective bargaining”. *Areh*, that is so such a pedestrian view of Labour laws. You can have contracts and you can have collective bargaining. Those contracts are based on the collective bargaining terms and conditions, very simple, throughout the world.

Countries have contracts and they have collective bargaining also. They are misleading Parliament, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, again the reality of the matter is that you talk about contracts in the private sector, people have 5 year contracts, 3 year contracts, civil servants today have 3 year contracts, 5 year contracts. No one is hanging and use it as sword against them, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other point also is this the ERAB is open to everyone and everyone can participate in that. The Trade Unions have been absent from that. The Ministers also told ILO, ILO knows about that. We had a meeting with the ILO and we said to them that it is open to them. They said that as long as it is documented that it is open to everyone, they cannot force them to come, that is their choice, and therefore ERAB is not going to work. You cannot have this tripartite body functioning with two persons.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality of the matter is, some of the issues that have been brought about is about we are not creating jobs, that the Kokomo Island Resort example was used, it is a private company, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it has got nothing to do with the Civil Service but definitely in terms of addressing any issues that may emanate from any private sector employer not doing the right thing, the Civil Service will deal with it. They still abide by the law and the law will be enforced on them.

And, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Minister will also tell us later on in the week about all the new initiatives they have undertaken in respect of hearing complaints. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the fact of the matter is that today, we have Members of the Opposition who do not talk about things like efficiency, who do not talk about things like productivity, but they are essentially clouded by political points scoring. They want to stand up there and say “We represent all the workers in Fiji, we are there for their rights”, but, in terms of practice under this Prime Minister, through this side of Parliament, we have done more for workers than ever before, Mr. Speaker, Sir, ...

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... and they translate, but I am afraid to say this, Mr. Speaker, Sir, unfortunately since last year, there has been a continuous assault starting right from the Leader of the Opposition on trying to undermine the confidence in the economy.

We have the Honourable Whip of the Opposition now saying that Corona virus will spread through the air - that is airborne. Mr. Speaker, Sir, these are the online petition, these are the times of fear-mongering, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that undermines confidence.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- A Point of Order.

HON. SPEAKER.- A Point of Order.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Attorney-General is misleading the House. Yes, I did not say that and he is making it up unless he shows proof of that, he needs to withdraw that statement. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the fact of the matter is that the Opposition has been continuously for political points scoring trying to undermine the confidence of our investors and our ordinary people in Fiji, creating all these rumour-mongering aiding and abetting it, Mr. Speaker, Sir, not coming out, at any point in time, even if they are not doing themselves, not coming out, at any point in time to say this should stop, and then on the same breathe, they want to talk about employment.

If they are going to be part and parcel of a conspiracy to try and undermine our economy for political point scoring and say there is Coronavirus, et cetera, what do you think will happen to the tourism numbers? What do you think more importantly will happen to the workers who work in those hotels?

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is of critical importance.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There are so many countries in this world, Mr. Speaker, Sir, where the Opposition are working hand-in-hand supporting the Government of the day, to ensure that there is no undermining of confidence, Mr. Speaker, Sir. You cannot come to this Parliament on one hand and talk about that we want to work with the workers, we want to create employment ...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Creating employment, Mr. Speaker, Sir, while on the other end for cheap political point-scoring you go out and carry out all these shenanigans outside, Mr. Speaker Sir. So, Mr. Speaker Sir, these people are completely disingenuous about their supposed support for the workers of this country. We are the true supporters of the workers in this country and creating employment and creating a conducive investment environment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Attorney-General for his contribution to the debate. I give the floor to the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, I was not going to speak on this motion but after hearing the Honourable Attorney-General and a few others on the other side, let me start by what the Honourable Attorney-General said with respect to the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. He quite conveniently read Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 which talk about the rights of workers and trade unions, et cetera, but he did not say anything about Section 5 which says that a law may limit or authorise the limitation of the right in the Section”.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- This is the point that I want to begin with. There are laws including the Employment Relations Act and Political Parties Decree which actually limit the right of trade union leaders ...

HON. MEMBER.- Which section?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ... and basically this Government with the Military government and the elected government have a history of wrecking the trade union movement, the workers, the trade union harmony that we had in this country.

HON. MEMBER.- Tell the truth.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Historically, Mr. Speaker, the tripartite infrastructure and the tripartite structure work very well in this country.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Nonsense.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- We had a harmonious as industrial relations environment in this country for many, many years until this Government wrecked that relationship and they are continuing to wreck that relationship.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The reason why trade unions are not participating in the Employment Relations Advisory Board, Mr. Speaker, they know that and then lying here, they are lying why they are not participating.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- In fact, Mr. Speaker, I heard earlier on that the Honourable Attorney-General was saying to the business people, “Do not believe the Opposition”. In fact if you look at the lies that this Government and some of the Ministers have been telling the people right through in the Elections, they lied the way into the Elections about many things. In fact, Mr. Speaker, someone someday will write a book about this Government’s lies, it would be 400 to 500-page book. So let us not get into who is lying and who is not lying because they know very well that they have been lying. They have been lying about the trade union movement, they have been lying about the workers’ rights, they have been lying to ILO, they have been lying all over the place, Mr. Speaker. Let us be honest. Trade Union Movement in this country has been applying for permits of peaceful marches. They have not even bothered to give a reason, they have not even said once why the permit for marchers have not been granted by this Government. And then they want to say they respect the workers’ rights, they respect the Trade Unions Rights and they expect the Trade Union Movement leaders to go and sit with them in the Labour Advisory Board.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- A march is not the reason for not sitting.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- They run a workshop and say that, “We are going to review the Essential National Industries list. They do not do that. So what do the Trade Union leaders do in this country?”

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Do not mislead Parliament.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- What do they do?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Do not mislead Parliament.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- All these things, Mr. Speaker, they talked about, in fact, there is clear evidence now, even the IMF admits, that wherever there has been a weakening of workers’ rights and Trade Union rights, you have problems with low wages, industrial relations harmony and issues with respect to the confidence in the economy. I keep hearing every time when the Honourable Prime Minister goes somewhere, the Honourable Attorney-General goes somewhere, they keep saying, “We are engaging in fear-mongering, we are creating fear, we are not patriotic, we are politicising the issues.”

When the Opposition calls out on the Government, Mr. Speaker, when we say - the Government has run out of money, they all know that they have run out of money, all the Ministers there, all of them. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, I will not name them, but privately all of them tell us.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- They tell us, they know that the Government is running out of money. They had to cut the expenditure by a billion dollars.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- When we call out, Mr. Speaker, and say that Government does not have the money to do all the things that they promised in the Budget, they are saying we are lying. But that is the reality, you cut the Budget by a billion dollars, you say you are going to do this in the Budget, and then you do not have the money, what do we say? We have to say that you have run out of

money, you have run out of funds. You are not telling the truth, tell the truth about the workers' rights, Trade Union rights and about what is happening.

Mr. Speaker, when they talk about politicising the issues, we are not, we are just pointing out the truth, and if they want to bring confidence in this country, if they want to bring back that harmony, Mr. Speaker, they ought to engage with the Trade Union leaders and Trade Union Movement with good faith. Walk down to the Union Office and then talk to them. It does not help the debate, Mr. Speaker, they talk about the quality of the debate. I am actually quite surprised to hear the level of lies that they can engage in.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- They try and mislead the people, not only here in Parliament, but they go throughout the country, they collect people, they run workshops and they give lectures to the people. They blame the Opposition, and instead of blaming the Opposition, they have now began to blame the people. So let us be honest, and I want to say this to Government, let us be honest. Get to the Trade Union leaders in this country, get to the Trade Union Movement, bring them back into the Labour Advisory Board and let us have an honest discussion about where we are going, otherwise we will continue to blame each other. Let us look at what the real problems are. The onus is on the Government to bring the trade union leaders, the trade union movement into discussion. So, let us not blame the trade union leaders. I urge the Ministers and the Government not to come and lie here about why they are not there. They are not there because you have not engaged with them in good faith. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Biman Prasad. I now give the floor for the Right of Reply to the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. You have the Right of Reply.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Mr. Speaker Sir, the Honourable Minister has already told us that he has tried the trade union but they are reluctant to come and have talks. I think he should not mislead Parliament.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Mr. Speaker Sir, I thank the Honourable Members for their contribution and I have no further comments. Thank you.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the Parliament will not vote to note the content of the Report.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of "Noes")

Motion agreed to unanimously.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, for the purposes of complying with Standing Orders with respect to sitting times, I will allow a suspension motion to be moved. I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Thank you Mr. Speaker. I move under Standing Order 6 that so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to sit beyond 4.30 p.m. today to complete the remaining items as listed on today's Order Paper. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to speak on his motion. You have the floor Sir.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. Under Schedule 2, we have one more item on the agenda, the motion by the Honourable Jese Saukuru and of course Schedule 3 as well and thus the request for the extension beyond 4.30 p.m. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there anyone wishing to take the floor? No one wishing to take the floor. The Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament, you have the floor.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- I have nothing further to add, Sir. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote. The question is that under Standing Order 6 that so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to sit beyond 4.30 p.m. today to complete the remaining items as listed on today's Order Paper.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of "Noes")

HON. SPEAKER.- As no Member opposes, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

Honourable Members, on that note we will suspend proceedings for refreshments which will be served in the Big Committee Room and we will resume in half an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.24 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 5.00 p.m.

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE - REVIEW MARITIME/OUTER ISLAND
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Honourable Jese Saukuru to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Mr. Speaker, I move that Parliament hereby resolves to establish a Special Committee under Standing Order 129 to review Maritime/Outer Island Development Programmes.

Parliament hereby appoints the following Members of the Special Committee.-

- a) Honourable Viam Pillay, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development (Chairperson);
- b) Honourable Selai Adimaitoga, Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs;
- c) Honourable Vijay Nath, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport;
- d) Honourable Jese Saukuru, Shadow Minister for Regional Development; and
- e) Honourable Anare Jale, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Is there a seconder?

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- I second the motion, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now invite the Honourable Jese Saukuru to speak to his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Mr. Speaker, I move that Parliament hereby resolves to establish a Special Committee under Standing Order 129 with the named Honourable Members, I table the motion as read in the Order Paper.

At the outset of my speech, Sir, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Business Committee for approving this motion to see the light of the day and thereby facilitate discussions on this pertinent issue and related matters.

Sir, Fiji is not its towns and cities. Honourable Speaker, the real Fiji is its rural and maritime areas where history rhymes with hope and the beauty of the Fiji Islands in the goodness of its people, wealth of our natural resources and serenity of our natural environment blends with the blue skies and the Pacific Ocean.

Honourable Speaker, in its inclusive socio economic development forward of the 20-year development plan (2017 to 2036) Government had assured us, and I quote:

“That all socio economic rights in the Constitution are realised, inclusivity will be at the centre of growth, development and the benefits of prosperity will be spread as widely as possible to improve the social wellbeing of all Fijians. No one will be left behind regardless of geographical location, gender, ethnicity, physical and intellectual capability, social and economic status.”

Sir, Article 7.2 of the ILO Convention 169 states and I quote:

“The improvement of the conditions of life, work and levels of health and education of the peoples concerned with the participation and cooperation shall be a matter of priority in the plans for the overall economic development of areas they inhabit. Special projects for development of the areas in question can also be so desired as to promote such development.”

Fiji has signed and ratified ILO Convention 169 and it is binding on the Government and all its agencies unless Government withdraws from the Convention.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, today 413,000 people or about 45.5 percent of our total population as recorded in the 2017 Census reside in our rural areas. Many rural communities have yet to share in the fruits of economic growth and development. Most rural communities are still denied access to basic services and utilities. Less than two thirds of our rural households have access to tap water with the balance depending on rivers and wells for this basic right.

Rural villages and settlements are still undeveloped in terms of water supply and sanitation. The major challenge is to create an environment conducive to attract investment and opportunities for a better quality of life in our rural communities. It is the responsibility of Government to provide the enabling environment for national development through the development of better infrastructure, improved utilities and opportunities for the people to develop their natural resources. The same applies in the maritime and outer islands.

The implementation of the Rural and Outer Island (ROI) Development Programme should be revisited, reviewed and realigned to the current need of our rural and outer island communities.

Sir, the Look North Policy was a Government initiative especially for the Northern Division. The Look North Policy was envisioned to have far reaching impacts both demographically and economically. It has the potential to alter the traditional dynamics of Fiji’s population flow, to arrest the urban drift and to keep many Northerners happy where they are, with jobs and a sustainable future. It may even encourage more Fijians to move to the North, a prospect that undoubtedly pleases the residents of Vanua Levu as a whole.

Sir, the objective of this motion is to establish a Special Committee under Standing Order 129 to catalyse development for our people in the maritime and outer islands. The Eastern Division includes Kadavu,, Lau, Lomaiviti and Rotuma. The Division is the largest in the area but has the smallest land area and it has sea borders with the Central, Northern and Western Divisions.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, before I move to the Development Programmes needed for the Maritime/Outer Islands which I envision the Special Committee will explore, I wish to deliberate on two issues that are pertinent to these areas:

Rural to Urban Drift - Honourable Speaker, Fiji’s rural population is around 46 percent of our population. This is compared to 70 percent in the late 1970s, so there has been a continuing decline in the rural population. A combination of out-migration, the extension of urban boundaries were the main causes of decline in the number of rural dwellers in the following provinces;

- a) Ba Province by 28,465 with a rural proportion of Ba’s population decreasing by 47.8 percent in 2007 to 31.2 percent in 2017.
- b) Cakaudrove Province by 2,840 with a rural proportion of Cakaudrove’s population decreasing from 85.7 percent in 2007 to 78.2 percent in 2017.
- c) Kadavu was the only island in the Maritime Zone that recorded an increase in its rural population.

- d) The population of rural Macuata in Vanua Levu (Fiji's second largest island) dropped by 4,875 and mainly attributed to the movement of people out of rural areas, while Macuata's population decreased from 60.3 percent in 2007 to 58.8 percent in 2017.

Sir, it is the pressures of the modern cash economy that will continue to drive people from their homes in the rural and maritime areas to urban centres in their search for employment and a quest for better education. Some succeed while others fail and they join the unemployed queue.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, I urge the special committee to consider the infrastructural development programmes that are pending for the maritime and the outer islands. When proper infrastructure is built and modes of transport linking villages to urban centres improve, we may see more people move to villages where the cost of living is much cheaper and they do not pay rent because they reside in their own homes, they plant their own food, get fresh sea and river food, and raise livestock if they want.

The second issue that I want to talk about, Sir, is on border security. Mr. Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary-General once said, and I quote, "Good healthy democratic societies are built on three pillars. There is peace and stability, economic development and respect for the rule of law and human rights but often we take stability and peace in terms of security and economic activity to mean our country is doing well. We forget the third and important pillar of rule of law and respect for human rights because no country can long remain prosperous without that third pillar."

Sir, the Pacific Islands are now an integral part of the drug highway and is at the centre of cocaine trafficking boom. The explosion in the number of boats carrying cocaine and methamphetamine from Latin America to fill the Australia and New Zealand markets is causing havoc for our Pacific Island States.

Sir, it is a drug route never heard before. A multibillion-dollar operation involving cocaine and methamphetamine being packed in household, sailing boats in the United States of America and Latin America, and transported to Australia via the Pacific Islands, more often thought of as holiday destinations than narcotic hubs.

I have talked about infrastructure development. Dr. V.K. R.V. Rao, an Indian economist once said, and I quote:

"The link between infrastructure and economic development is not a once and for all affair. It is a continuous process and progress in development has to be preceded, accompanied and followed by progress in infrastructure if we are to fulfil our declared objectives of a self-accelerating process of economic development"

Infrastructure development involves fundamental structures that are required for the functioning of a community and society. The eight elements of infrastructure development that I propose, Sir;

- 1) Transportation: The Government must ensure safe, efficient, affordable, environmentally-friendly, sound and sustainable inter-island transportation services.
- 2) Energy: Under SDG 7.1, the percentage of population with electricity access should be 100 percent by 2021.
- 3) Water: Access and affordability to water is a basic human right recognised in the 2013 Constitution. I am informed that the Government's rural water supply programme will be augmented to provide access to clean water to rural areas and to meet the target of 85 percent of rural communities having access by 2021.
- 4) Green Infrastructure: Long-term sustainability of renewable access energy resources based on the principles of the Green Growth Framework.

- 5) Digital Infrastructure: An increased household penetration of broadband in Fiji to 70 percent by 2021 as per SDG 17.6, however, Mr. Speaker, Sir, our people in the maritime and outer islands continue to suffer from digital connectivity issue despite all the hoopla about *Walesi*, digital Fiji and they continue to be left behind contrary to the promise in the Government Strategic Plan that no one will be left behind.

Social Infrastructure promote a caring environment where everyone is safe and protected. The Government Services are to ensure that there is a right policy mix to encourage the proper business environment. And there should be resilience in developing and enforcing building standards for new home construction that require improves resilience to cyclones and flooding.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, many in the Maritime Zones and outer islands are still awaiting the grant for homes assistance they were promised four years ago after the severe *TC Winston*.

I will move on to sustainable economic activities. In summing up the work of Sustainable Development Goals, the Prime Minister of Norway, Erna Solberg said, ‘a little less conversation a little more action.’ Honourable Speaker, the goal of community sustainability is to establish local economist that are economically viable and environmentally-sound and socially responsible achieving its goal. This goal requires participation from all sectors of the community both to determine the community needs and to identify and implement innovative and appropriate solutions.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, the maritime and outer islands have the capacity to articulate growth in all the sectors of our economy.

In agriculture and food systems, community efforts can preserve agriculture land, encourage sustainable agriculture practices, support local food producers in facilitating the production and distribution of locally produced foods through farmers markets and cooperative food buying programs with an average of 7.11 percent contribution to GDP for the last 9 years. Agriculture is a key sector of our economy if it is properly supported.

On fisheries, aquatic wildlife play a major role in sustaining healthy marine and fresh water ecosystems. It is therefore important that communities associated with fisheries and aquatic ecosystems responsibly manage these resources. Community participation can provide support for sound management practices and remedial programs as well as for persons and industries engaged in commercial and recreational fishing. The contribution of Fisheries Sector to GDP is currently on low at 0.67 percent but this can be enhanced with an export emphasis.

Forestry and Wood Products: Trees are important for both urban and rural ecosystem. Mature trees maintain desirable micro-climates and shelter wildlife. Trees also have economic values as a raw material used in producing paper, building, furniture and other wood products. Value-adding is key to the growth of the Forestry and Logging sector that currently contributes 0.25 percent of GDP.

Manufacturing and industry, economically healthy business and industries with minimal environmental impact on communities should be encouraged. Communities should work to attract and support such industries and to reduce or eliminate negative impacts from existing industries.

New approaches like the tax free zones must be explored to further enhance this important sector that currently contribute 10.53 percent of GDP. Small Businesses are sources of employment and providers and consumers of goods and services that sustain the local economy. Their operation should support the local ecology, minimise energy use and waste and utilise recycled products and materials.

Technology: Technological advances in business, health, education and the environment provide new opportunities for communities. More information products are available and some may have environmental implications. Communities must be current and guide their economies accordingly.

Economics and finance: Residents from all segments of the community can play a role in the future of their local economy. Working together of business and Government leaders, local non-profit organisations and citizens can analyse needs and resources and guide the economy.

Local financial institutions should be encouraged to invest in sustainable community initiatives.

Land survey: Honourable Speaker, it is in the interest of Government and resource owners to work together in mutually supportive ways. A major part of the maritime outer islands are still unsurveyed to demarcate land boundaries and to encourage cooperative efforts and inland preservation, sustainable agriculture, growth management, appropriate development of rural resources, improve trading and tourism and development of low impact regional planning and transportation systems.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am moving this motion that revives the true spirit of bipartisanship in this House and beyond its perimeters uniting our people and guiding them to consider policies and programmes beneficial to the interests and aspirations of those who live and travel to our rural and maritime areas. With these few words, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I commend the motion before the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member, for his motion. The floor is now open for anyone wishing to participate in the debate. Honourable Minister Koroilavesau, you have the floor.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I wish to make a short contribution to the debate before the House.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, the FijiFirst Government is committed to provide quality service to all Fijians, inclusive of rural and maritime islands.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- As I have alluded to in previous sittings that over the past years I have visited 50 communities in rural and maritime islands to ensure that we continue to provide services to our Fijians. In some visits I had moved around with the Honourable Minister for Forestry as both fisheries and forestry are natural resources of high value in our rural areas.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, these visits include the whole of Lau Group, Yasawa, Vatulele, Yanuca, Kadavu, Lomaiviti, Taveuni, Kioa, Rabi, Yadua, Kia, Naqelelevu, Cikobia, to name a few. I have visited some places twice to guarantee that our community needs are provided.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, during these visits, the Ministry of Fisheries have commissioned two new Fisheries Stations, namely Moala and Cicia. Additionally, we have assisted communities in solar-powered freezers to help them to contribute and improve their livelihoods through income-generation.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, in the last three weeks, we have installed solar freezers in Yanuca, Serua; Yadua in Bua and Nairai in Lomaiviti. Apart from this, the Ministry of Fisheries values the need to protect vulnerable resources from being exploited. Through the collaboration of fisheries association, we have assisted rural communities with fibre glass vessels to support service patrol and provide access to markets.

Honourable Speaker, our visit to these communities are not limited to fisheries priorities. As I have stated, our Government commitment to service delivery also takes into account priorities of line agencies and ministries. We normally invite other ministries to accompany us, especially from the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and others. Therefore, Honourable Speaker, we are undertaking two important things in our visit: We include our line agencies and ministries whose services are needed in these islands; we provide

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Then why are you trying to say? If that is being done? Why are you bringing the motion again? You are just complicating and doubling up on efforts that have been done in the past.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Honourable Speaker, it just shows how confused they are.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- We provide written matrix to all the questions and queries received from communities to ministries and agencies responsible for their actions. Honourable Speaker, Sir, an example of this is a request we received from the head teacher in Yadua recently. During our visit, the head teacher highlighted that they need assistance in the delivery of their school furniture. Through our current working arrangement with the Ministry of Education, we were able to deliver the school furniture through our Nabouwalu office. So there is a lot of collaboration already happening between Government ministries and agencies and this should be sufficient to avoid the reproduction or doubling up of the efforts that are already on the ground.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, we must be very careful in dealing with maritime and rural outer islands.

HON. MEMBERS.- Why?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- It is not a one-size fit all scenario and Government need to prioritise development needs that are suitable. For example, Naqelelevu which at the moment has only one family will be totally different from the needs of five villages in Ono-i-Lau, including one village in Vatoa. So we should not consider it as one-size fits all. We cannot over promise, each requests needs to be scrutinised by Government agencies before a decision is made.

Honourable Speaker, there are existing arrangements to support the current Government's goal of providing efficient and cost effective service to our rural and maritime communities. I am not in support of the motion due to the fact that there are extensive consultation processes currently in place and the motion will only duplicate matters. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. MEMBER.- *Vinaka.*

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I rise to support the motion and I will speak on the inter-island shipping network and also on the domestic air services. I know in just the recent debate, there were words thrown across the House blaming each other that we are misleading or

that we are lying. Therefore, Honourable Speaker, my presentation this afternoon is based on the five-year development plan of this Government.

On the inter-island network shipping, it says the goal is, “Safe, efficient, reliable and affordable shipping services,” and the five-year development plan is from 2017 to 2021. The second paragraph reads and I quote:

“Government in the next five years will ensure improved inter-island transportation in the maritime region. Investments will be undertaken for construction and upgrade of jetties, waiting sheds, slip ways, navigational aids like light houses and beacon piles and assistance for purchase of smaller boats for inter-island connectivity. Funding will also be channelled towards developing small boat landings in the maritime regions and other coastal areas.”

Honourable Speaker, I read that out to remind the House, particularly the Government, with that kind of commitment, how much is given to the Ministry’s budget? That Ministry, Rural and Maritime is one of the Ministry’s that has got the least budget, Honourable Speaker.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- I will pick on one of the policies as highlighted in this five-year development plan and that is on the development of maritime infrastructure. I will just pick one of the strategies and that is, “Upgrade and construct new infrastructure, jetties and berthing facilities in the maritime islands, including construction of waiting sheds.”

Honourable Speaker, I am not really sure how many new jetties this Government has constructed.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- If at the most, may be two. Otherwise all these are existing jetties from previous governments’ efforts. Honourable Speaker, and for the waiting sheds, I remember putting up a post when I went through Natovi and then someone responded and said that the Vunisea passenger shed is worse off than Natovi. I look across the House, almost everyone sitting across the House have gone through Natovi and just in the last week or so, Honourable Jone Usamate was there, Honourable Koroilavesau has gone through there, Honourable Minister for Health has gone through there and also the Honourable Prime Minister, I believe Honourable Speaker. And no one, no one none of them has ever highlighted the condition of the state of that waiting shed.

HON. MEMBER.- How do you know?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- I bring up those waiting sheds in this House, Honourable Speaker and still I brought that up again this morning because how can you be looking at major infrastructure when even waiting sheds like that does not catch their attention even though they go through there and they use it. They say, “do not leave anyone behind”, they do not go and use that shed, they go and sit in their air-conditioned cars, Honourable Speaker.

Even when you go to Nabouwalu, I believe the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure was even approached and was given their request on the non-availability of electricity supply in the waiting shed. He is aware of that and even when they are aware of that, the 5-Year Development Plan is saying, the strategies that they will construct waiting sheds but still.

Honourable Koroilavesau is reminding me that outer islands, all right fine. Is there a waiting shed in Lakeba, Honourable Speaker?

HON. SPEAKER.- Yes.

(Laughter)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- In Vanuabalavu we will have to go and use the *dilo* tree. All other jetties, Honourable Speaker have got no waiting sheds even though it has been promised in this 5-Year Development Plan. Year 2021 is just in front of us and the big amount of money is given to infrastructure and we have heard from the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure that waiting sheds, I remember he said that in one of his addresses that waiting sheds will be constructed. There is none in Vanuabalavu, none in Lakeba and even in the previous term of Parliament.

I think it was Honourable Karavaki that brought up that the people of Lakeba wanted the jetty to be constructed in Wainiyabia and I believe the Minister for Economy had agreed to that, but until today there is nothing happening in Wainiyabia.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Honourable Speaker, we will now move on to domestic air services and the goal – unlocking our economic potential through consistent and reliable domestic air services. Honourable Speaker, I would just like to remind the other side of the House particularly those who were in the previous term of Parliament, I had tabled a motion in this House and the motion was to review the current domestic flight business model with the view to reducing flight cost to allow affordable low cost domestic services for the people. Guess what, Honourable Speaker? That motion was defeated by the Government side and yet that was in 2015. Yet, this 5Year Development Plan is telling us that they will do that.

That is the problem with this Government, they only talk. They are big on talking but no action. They talk and they mislead the people that all these will be done but those are just simple examples, Honourable Speaker.

On the policies, Honourable Speaker, may I pick up on one policy that is to ensure consistent and reliable air services. One of the strategies they said that they will implement to achieve that is continue with the upgrading and maintenance of rural airstrips.

Honourable Speaker, all these airstrips, no upgrade has been done.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Most of them have not been upgraded apart from Rotuma. The last time I was in Vanuabalavu, the flight to Vanuabalavu only goes once a week and the airfare is almost \$300 one way.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. MEMBER.- We could go to New Zealand.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- That is the truth, \$300 one way.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Do you know why?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Honourable Speaker, any rain not even a big rain or any slight drizzle, the grassy patch gets all soggy and then the flight will not go. And then in here, they are talking about safety and reliable air services.

Another strategy is that they said in this Plan, continue to provide subsidy to the domestic air service providers under the Domestic Air Service Subsidy Programme. What kind of subsidy when we have this \$300 airfare one way? And I tell you, Honourable Speaker, Ono-i-Lau is almost a thousand and even Rotuma too, Honourable Speaker.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Do not ask me about the cost, this is your 5-Year Plan, this is your strategy that you are going to carry out. See that is the problem, you are good on paper but there is no money to implement these strategies.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Hear, hear!

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Honourable Speaker, the third strategy the Government is saying to provide an operating grant to the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji for air transport purposes and a further subsidy to service uneconomical domestic routes. After saying all that and yet they defeated that motion.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Excuse me, this was in 2015 and now 2021 is just in front of us and still nothing has been done. If you are really serious reduce the airfare to Vanuabalavu to \$200 one way.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Honourable Speaker, another strategy in this 5-Year Plan is ensure better air service infrastructure facilities at all airstrips located in outer islands. This is what you are saying, this is what is in the plan and then the strategy to achieve that, implement the programme to facilitate the development of new airstrips and upgrade current airstrips to ensure provision of reliable, quality domestic air services. Honourable Speaker, when you fly to Gau, the pilot will have to do one circle and another circle so that they chase away the horses.

Honourable Speaker, even in Vanuabalavu too, now the new fence is in but before that they had to try and get the animals off the airstrip.

HON. ADI S. ADIMAITOGA.- That was like that.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Selai, I wish I hear that from the Honourable Minister for Economy because you do not look after money. All these strategies can only be implemented with the relevant, appropriate budgetary allocation, Honourable Speaker.

Before I sit down, Honourable Speaker, in 2015 the Lomaloma Jetty was temporary repaired and the Government side had said at that time, still now the same Government, that the permanent repair will be undertaken soon after that. Up until now, there is still that temporary repair. No permanent repair, Honourable Usamate has been done to the Lomaloma Jetty.

With that being said, Honourable Speaker, I would urge the Government to go read your plan and make sure that appropriate budgetary allocation is allocated in the upcoming Budget so that all these strategies can be implemented and achieved, so that they really will make the difference in the people's lives in the maritime/rural areas, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise not to support the motion.

(Honourable Members interject)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, just this morning, you must have heard Honourable Nawaikula saying “why is this Minister constructing this foot crossings and doing the openings of foot crossings?” You see, Honourable Speaker, Sir, how serious they are about the rural and maritime communities.

(Honourable Members interject)

Look at them, here, Mr. Speaker, Sir, they are bringing a motion to talk about servicing the rural and outer maritime community and here, when we go around and deliver service, they say that we should not be doing that.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I know that they want those things to be done but they do not want us to do that. They are jealous of us, they are worried that what they did not do, what they were supposed to do, we are doing it now, we are delivering now.

(Honourable Members interject)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, they are very worried when every day when they wake up, they pick up the paper and see how we deliver services to the people, to their doorsteps. They are very worried!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

(Inaudible interjection)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Are you jealous?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, through the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development, through the Ministry of Health, through the Ministry of Infrastructure, through the Ministry of Agriculture and to every Ministry we reach out to the rural and maritime community.

Honourable Jese Saukuru mentioned that the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development has got a very small budget.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the budget to construct a road, a bridge is not in the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development. The Budget to construct a health centre is not in the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development, it is in the Ministry of Health.

HON S.V. RADRODRO.- We know that!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- The Budget to construct a school is not in the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development. You do not know, that is why you are saying that! It is with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts.

(Inaudible interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- The Budget to construct or do a pond for aquaculture is with Ministry of Fisheries.

(Inaudible interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, they said that we are not doing enough for the Rural and Maritime community. I will give you the result.

(Inaudible interjections)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- *Wawa!*

Mr. Speaker, Sir, 2017 and 2018, in the Central Division in the Rural, Interior and Maritime Division, in the first quarter of, we spent \$226,000 alone. In 2017 and 2018, in the Central Division alone.

In the Central Division, in the second quarter, we spent \$152,000. In the Western Division, in the first and second quarter, we spent \$376,000.

In the Eastern Division, in the first quarter, we spent \$89,000.

In the Northern Division, in the first quarter of 2017-2018, we spent \$383,000.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can read down, read each and every itemised expenditure we did. Mr. Speaker, Sir, under the Self-Help Programme, the numerous projects to improve the livelihood in the rural and maritime communities. Mr. Speaker, Sir, these projects are supposed to provide the communities, the households, a sustainable source of income. Projects will include aquaculture, agriculture, in terms of establishing nurseries, in terms of helping them with establishing small dairy farms, in terms of poultry farms, in terms of providing them with boats and engines so that they can engage in artisanal fisheries, in terms of providing them with women's club, in enhancing them into bee farming.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, similarly we have got numerous projects that were on the books for the last two decades that we have addressed through the Ministry of Waterways and Environment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the 2018/2019 fiscal year, we undertook a number of riverbank erosion projects to protect and secure rural and maritime communities.

Nadakuni Village: We spent \$894,000 on the protection work, about to be completed. Wainiwaqa Village River Bank, we spent \$902,000, it is 60 percent completed. Nadaro Village Protection Work, \$3095, fully completed. The Ba Methodist High School Protection Work, we spent \$43,000 and the project has been completed. The Vunivau Village Bank Protection Works, for \$500,000 and is fully completed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the same year, we spent \$637,000 for the Namoli Village Coastal Protection Work. We spent \$987,000 for the Lamini Village Coastal Protection Works.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the first time ever, two years ago, the Honourable Minister for Economy announced that we would undertake rural residential drainage work. Never before, the villages in the interior community were assisted to undertaking drainage in the village area. You go out and see, you can talk to people in the interior and in the maritime divisions how they were affected during flooding and now we have begun to undertake drainage works to secure the communities in the rural and maritime divisions.

In the Central Division, for Naduri Village, we spent \$28,000 to protect them. Vaturua Village, we spent \$18,000 to secure and protect them from flooding. Tauli Settlement, we spent \$13,000. Nakadi Settlement, we spent \$43,000. Vakabalea in Navua, we spent about \$804,000. Veiwawa, Navua, we spent \$13,400. Nakaulevu, Navua, we spent \$3,000. Tokotoko, Navua Settlement, - \$6,600. Rovadrau, Navua - \$11,000. Nakaulevu, Navua - another \$5000.

In the Western Division, Nasau in Nadi, we spent \$31,000. Nabitu in Sigatoka, we spent \$26,000. Tovatu, Sigatoka, \$37,000. Nasau, Sigatoka, \$35,000. Barara, Sigatoka, \$38,000. Naceva in Sigatoka, \$43,000. Ciri in Sigatoka, \$28,000. Ciriwai in Nadroga, \$18000. Nukuloa in Ba, we spent \$5000. Barara in Sigatoka, another \$38,000. Maro Village, we spent \$37,000. Tavarau, Ba, we spent \$14,500. Toko, \$7000. Balata, \$900 worth of drainage. Korovuto Village, \$21,000. Sabeto in Nadi, \$7,400.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the Northern Division, Bulileka - \$34,000. Korowiri - \$4,000. Buliyaki - \$9,600. Nubu Village, \$16,000 worth of drainage. Lagalaga Village - \$18,500. Vagavaga, Nadogo - \$16007. In this way, we spent a total of \$418,000 for the entire Northern Division in the Year 2018.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the Central Division, we spent \$173,000 in 2018 to undertake the protection of securing the villages in the Rural Residential Programme.

In the Western Division, we spent \$339,000 to secure the villages.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have to protect the rural and maritime communities, we have come up with new programmes noting the issues and the challenges that they are facing now, which they did not face about four or five decades ago - issues relating to Climate Change, issues relating to natural disasters. Mr. Speaker, Sir, through the Ministry of Agriculture, a number of programmes have been designed to assist the rural and maritime communities. The programmes are divided into two categories, the demand-driven programmes and the Non-Demand Driven Programmes.

Under the Demand-Driven Programmes, for the rural and outer islands, they have got the Dairy Industry Support Programme with the Export Promotion Programme, we have got the Food Security Programme, the Rural and Outer Island Programme, we have got the Sigatoka Valley Development Programme, all geared towards assisting and improving the livelihood of our rural communities in a sustainable manner rather than just giving out things to them.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, over the last, since 2013, we have spent \$18 million to support the rural and maritime community to improve their livelihood. Majority of these programmes were given to group of cluster farmers so that they are able to work as a team and develop the specific industries. About 40 percent of the individuals were given assistance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the assistance that are given to the rural and maritime community is to ensure that they are able to source their income in a sustainable manner so that they then grow on their own. Mr.

Speaker, Sir, it is really unfortunate that the Honourable Member is saying that the Government is not doing enough to assist and improve the livelihood of the rural and maritime community. We are totally focused through the Ministry of Waterways and Environment, through the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development, through the Ministry of Agriculture which fall under my portfolio to ensure that we reach out to the rural and maritime community. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have made a priority that we reach out to them who are there, who look forward to us making their lives a little better over time progressively.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, they do not understand the development in the rural and maritime or in any area will be done progressively and incrementally. The first step is to accept that they need assistance to find out and do a scoping where the gap exists. Secondly, is to commit resources which we have done incrementally in every budget and thirdly to ensure that we then take the service out and assist them. The assistance that we are providing is to ensure that it is intended for those who need them to make a difference to them in terms of both the children's future as well as the household. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I rise to support the motion before the House and that motion is very simple. It is to resolve to establish a Special Committee under our Standing Orders of Parliament, and we are mandated through the Standing Orders to establish one and the purpose of the Special Committee is to review our current Maritime and Outer Islands Development Programmes.

I think this particular motion has come out after the Standing Committee on Natural Resources had toured the Lau Group and from interactions where the Committee went for submission on the petition that was tabled by the Honourable Anare Jale on the shipping services in Lau, they also collected issues that were raised during those public consultation by members of the public on things that they have would like to improve in economic development and other Government services in the area.

Again, this motion is not pulled out from the air, it came from the people given that the people want some improvement in the current services that the Government is currently providing which we all know sometimes and many times it is very slow in service delivery and also the inconsistency of the current programmes that are there and given that this maritime dwellers who are there should not be left behind.

This morning, just before the break, the Honourable Attorney-General went out of topic in terms of the motion on the Annual Report for the Ministry of Labour and tried to defend the policies of the FijiFirst Government, knowing very well that the FijiFirst Government now is becoming very unpopular to the people.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- People know that there have been false promises, false starts and also poor service delivery and the people have come to know the lies that has been spread and the various exposure that has been done given the recent development on how the people are not getting what they were promised before elections. Again, the contribution by the Honourable Doctor Reddy proves that the Government is very desperate, they are moving around the country, opening all these foot bridges, the Honourable Prime Minister on Northern Tour, with all the meetings and *talanoa* sessions, we move around the country too through our Committee, Justice Law and Human Rights.

Something that I would like to share with you, Honourable Speaker, Sir, when we move around the country for Bill consultation, most of the people who come to give contribution on the Bill come to seek for assistance. Sometimes we have to adjourn our Standing Committee meetings to allow these

people to ask the Chair, Assistance Minister for help and other things that they want to raise in their community on development issues and other programmes.

Once we went to a community in Vatubogi, Bua (Honourable Rohit is laughing away), we, Opposition Members went back into the Parliament bus and they sat there getting questions from the members of public in Hindi. That day they also asked about *Walesi*, “why *Walesi* is not on, why the borehole water system is not on?” They were busy defending themselves there while the Honourable *Tui Namosi* and I were laughing with the crowd at the back. That shows how people are very frustrated with our rural community, that there is poor service delivery and that is why there is a need for a review. This review becomes the mirror for Government to check itself whether efficient and sufficient work has been done in this area.

The setup of the Committee, we have very capable Honourable Members, the Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Honourable Selai Adimaitoga, Honourable Vijay Nath; they are all Assistant Ministers and in the Opposition we have Honourable Jese Saukuru and Honourable Anare Jale. I totally support the motion that this particular Special Committee be setup so that they do an independent review through the legislative lenses that they have as legislators to review the programmes in these maritime and outer island development programmes so that the executive Government is made informed of what the people want.

What the Honourable Ministers are saying in this House is totally different from what people are saying and what people are facing in our communities. They are using flowery and big words to try to prove and gain the confidence of our people, but they are becoming unpopular, I can say. They are worried because in 2022 they will not be in Government, I do not know whether they will be this side or outside, and that is why they do not want this Committee to be setup because things will be exposed on the various programmes and the lack of service delivery that this particular Ministry is doing in servicing our maritime areas.

With that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I fully support the motion because it will allow the voices of our people who are maritime and outer island dwellers to raise their concerns on what kind of development really suits them and this would be an ideal opportunity to allow that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. I give the floor to the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- *Vinaka vakalevu*, Honourable Speaker. I rise to not support the motion before the House. I am talking from both the Government and the Ministry of Health perspective. Honourable Speaker, over the last few years, leading up to when I joined Parliament, I have noted the continued support there is for taking health programmes out into the communities, whether it be rural or maritime. With Government’s support, we went by the *MV Spirit of Free Enterprise* (SOFE) to Koro back in 2011, I think, and then we went on the Lau Trader. We went up to Vanuabalavu and Lakeba and then to Yasayasa Moala. There has been surgical outreaches in all the sub-divisional hospitals. So, Vunidawa, Korovou, currently they just finished in Wainibokasi, the Surgical Outreach Programme and these are all supported by Government because of the view of the Honourable Prime Minister is to leave no one behind. To reach the unreached and ensure that they are provided with the services.

Now, certainly when you solve an issue in a particular community than another issue surfaces, which does not mean that nothing has been done. It just means that, that has been put away and there is another issue that surfaces. When we live in this time of climate change and it is very dynamic, these things do come up. I will give an example, Honourable Speaker, with climatic sensitive diseases, we have had dengue, typhoid and at this moment as we speak, there is hardly any of them now because of the outreach programmes that are happening. I hear last year alone we (Ministry of Health) did nearly 500

clean-up campaigns all over Fiji which includes communities in the rural areas, communities in the informal settlements and those are the outreach programmes that we take to these Fijians.

Recently, we were up in Dada, Namosi where the Honourable Prime Minister opened the new Government Station up the highlands of Namosi; a very proud day for our people up in the highlands of Namosi. There were already Government departments beginning to operate in Dada, Namosi. They were beginning to provide services that before they would have to go all the way down to Navua. No other government has done this, no other government.

This Government took their Government station up in Dada. About three weeks ago, the Honourable Prime Minister was opening several development projects around Vanua Levu and also outside of Vanua Levu which included Koro. There were three bridges in Koro and in those areas there were not more than 20 million people. I am not sure about the popularities being talked about here but I can tell you they were so happy. They were so happy to have their bridge, they were so happy to have their classrooms, the teachers' quarters and this is the extent in which this Government takes its services.

We have 220 facilities all over Fiji. If we do not include Vanua Levu and Viti Levu, we have signed five hospitals, 15 health centres and 31 nursing stations all around the maritime areas. Recently we have put a nurse practitioner into Raviravi Nursing Station. Raviravi Nursing Station we put a Nurse Practitioner who is a Mid-Level practitioner who can be able to do both as a nurse but also perform procedures and prescribe medicines that before only a nurse cannot be able to do and only a doctor can. That is the level and the extent by which we are providing the services and taking it forward.

Honourable Speaker, the *MV Veivueti* was commissioned about one and half years ago and already it has made many significant trips all over the maritime areas. Last year it had to do about two trips to the whole of the Lau Group and beginning of this year after the cyclone we then had the *MV Veivueti* FEMAC Team and they went after the first cyclone, I believe it was *TC Tino* and they went over to Kadavu and our people saw all the 75 villages, all the 75 villages were seen, they disinfected them, they picked up those patients that were vulnerable, they treated them in Kadavu Hospital or brought them back with them on the *MV Veivueti*.

We also did the same after the second cyclone which I believe it was *TC Tino*. Our teams went all the way down to Ono-i-Lau together with other Government departments using the *MV Bainitakali* and the *MV Sigavou* and they were taken all across, not only were they there to assess, they did the necessary repair. We had some repairs that needed to be done at the Kavala Health Centre and during the week they were there, they finished the repairs that needed to be done. At the moment as we speak, we are currently doing major renovations in the Kadavu Hospital, Vunisea and also I believe Daviqele. That is the extent to which we want to take the services and ensure that our people in the rural and maritime areas enjoy the same type of services that we have.

Honourable Speaker, I just recently, last week we went on a Northern Maritime tour. We went to Yadua, Kia, Cikobia, Yacata, Qamea, Yanuca, Rabi and Kioa. The team from the Labasa Hospital, there were extensive amount of work that they did like dental extractions, small surgical operations, those who had diabetes, et cetera; they were so happy. When I was in Yacata they said, "Look, we are blessed because we have obviously the plane from the Resort that takes us about two or three times to Suva but we are even more blessed that these services have been brought here to us because when we go to Suva, then we have to go into the clinic to be seen. But here, it has been brought to our doors."

And again, even though they have the plane that they can travel to Suva two or three times a week, that is a made available to them, there was a significant number of the islanders that received treatment. That is the extent to which we are going.

I want to also add one important thing. This is the only Government that recognise its community health workers. They have been working hard throughout the years. Some of the women I have talked to they said 12 years or some of them even 20 years working as community health workers. They never received anything. This is the Government that has actually made sure that they are compensated for the work that they do.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- It is a levy?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- They are paid \$200 a month. So we have already a linkage that we have in place with them, they understand what their prescription of duties are? They are the first point of call. There are about 1,500 of them and then linked to our zone nurses, medical officers in subdivisional hospitals.

Honourable Speaker, even on top of that, we also have the medical evacuation which is about \$2.5 million or \$3 million a year. So, if anyone is sick in any maritime island and needs to be brought quickly, we do not hesitate when it is safe to be able to send a plane or send a helicopter across to bring them back.

Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity. As I have said before, I do not support the motion before the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua, you have the floor.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I rise in support of the motion that Parliament resolve to form a Special and Bi-Partisan Committee. So, we as Members of Parliament can actively listen to the people that voted us into this august House.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Honourable Speaker, it reminds me of what happened in this House last year when the Honourable Anare Jale brought a motion to bring a petition to look into shipping services in the Lau Group and much to my horror, all 27 Members on the other side voted against the motion. Even though they come from Lau themselves, married in Lau, mothers are from Lau, why is that? Is it just because the motion was brought forward by a Member of the Opposition?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Let me just speak to the motion, Honourable Speaker. I would just like to add a couple of points to Honourable Saukuru's motion. The two points are education opportunities and telecommunication needs in the maritime areas and I speak of Kadavu, obviously.

Education opportunities, Honourable Speaker, every year hundreds of children are uprooted from their villages and settlements in Kadavu so that they can be brought to Suva to attend schools in Suva and we all know why? Because their parents want them to attend better schools on the mainland. Now, it would be great if schools in the maritime areas, all of them were comparable to the best schools on the mainland but that is not so.

I would like to speak on telecommunications very briefly, Honourable Speaker, and in particular the need of professionals and I speak of teachers, in particular who are required to upload their reports online. Something which is *nahi* impossible for many teachers serving in the Kadavu area because they do not have proper telecommunications or access to data.

I want to reply to what the Honourable Minister for Health said about the outreaches that the Government has been able to undertake but outreaches are short term and we really need long term infrastructure improvement especially in Northern Kadavu. Lighthouses and beacons, many of them in the Northern Kadavu need to be fixed. I start with the solar lighthouse which has been out for more than two years.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- We do not need a lighthouse.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Maybe not in the Government vessels you travel in.

And also, Honourable Speaker, I just want to plead with Government Members, please vote for this motion and prove that you, especially those of them who are from the outer islands, have a real heart for the people. Please do something honourable and just prove the opinion that you are just protecting your jobs and are too afraid to rock the FijiFirst boat. Please vote for the motion, *vinaka*.

HON. SPEKAER.- Honourable Gavoka, you have the floor.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I would like to contribute to the debate on this motion and I fully support it.

Honourable Speaker, I will speak from an economic perspective specifically in tourism. The outer islands, in particular, the Lau Group, could be the next area for development to the tune of the Coral Coast; how the Coral Coast was discovered and the Mamanuca and the Nadi and Denarau area.

I think, Honourable Speaker, it is because of the great opportunities in the Lau Group to develop the overwater bungalow products.

As you know, Honourable Speaker, the Maldives is one of the most popular destinations today in terms of island resorts and they have a policy that is called “One island one resort”. In every island in the Maldives (they are mostly atolls), they have overwater bungalows and there is about 90 percent of all the products in the Maldives and the yield is very, very high and thus the success of tourism in the country.

The Lau Group, Honourable Speaker, with the constellation of islands around say, Tubou, to be the centre of the Lau Group and the other islands to have their own overwater bungalows would be the next frontier for tourism in Fiji.

We need to be careful here, Honourable Speaker, about tourism in Fiji is that the products are sometimes tired. It is always the land-based resorts but other countries in the world, like Tahiti, the Indian Ocean are going further out into the sea and building overwater bungalows and they appeal in a big way to visit as tourists from the Northern part of the Hemisphere, especially the Chinese, the Japanese and the Europeans.

If we can do this, Honourable Speaker, you make Tubou to be the centre, you fly by an average-sized plane from Nadi to Tubou to be the centre and they feed off from there by sea plane into the other islands in the Lau Group. If we can have one overwater bungalow resort in each of the islands in the Lau Group, you could actually be opening a new region for tourism in this country, and I would like that to be part of the dialogue for this Committee and I would ask that

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- They do not want tourists there!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I do not know about that, Honourable Speaker, because the ideas in the past to build resorts in Lau and it is for the beauty of what you see in Lau, you really need, Honourable Speaker, to capitalise on that and build something unique that will make the Fiji Tourism products much better than what it is today. You have the sea there; the scuba diving, the fishing, other forms of water sport.

It could really be opening up a new region for tourism in Fiji, so I would like to encourage the House to support this motion and consider angles like that that could be economically beneficial for the group, for the other islands and for Fiji Tourism.

The trend globally, Honourable Speaker, is the migration from the rural areas into the cities. It is happening all over the world, it is very hard to arrest it, but there is one way of doing it - by creating opportunities out in the outer islands.

Honourable Speaker, I would hope that the House would give this Committee the powers to sit and to listen and consider all the proposals such as the one that I am sharing to the House today.

Honourable Speaker, this question about ethnicity and the Census. The Minister for Fisheries opened his statement by saying “We are all for all Fijians”. That is fine and that is underlying their belief that you cannot differentiate and you cannot have census based on ethnicity. But let me just remind everyone, it is a known adage, leaders say this, “if you cannot measure, you cannot lead”. That is basically what it is. If you cannot measure, you cannot lead.”

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What do you want to measure?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- If you do not know what is affecting the native community, how can you lead them? If you cannot measure what is affecting the Indo-Fijian community, you cannot lead them. Even in the developed democracies, they do census by ethnicities - the British, the Americans, the Australians, the New Zealanders, why in Fiji that the FijiFirst Party decides that it is going to be discriminatory?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The Australians don't do it, they don't do it.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Honourable Speaker, in Australia, they would know exactly their numbers and what they need. So, Honourable Speaker, I just wish that they would change texts and embrace some of these ideas that we are throwing across from this side of the House and not oppose it today and adopt it a few years later which they have been known to do.

Today, please, support this motion and that could be a part of your dialogue to create a new tourism region in the Lau Group. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Inia Seruiratu, you have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. Let me start by commenting on Honourable Radrodro's remarks about the five-year plan.

We all know that plans are just guiding documents and not everything in any plan will be achieved. Of course, we have to prioritise resources as well, and anyone who has served in any Government, very well understands that, it is just a guide. Honourable Speaker, Sir, as we say in the military - a plan is better than no plan at all.

(Inaudible interjections)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, every Member of the Opposition before Elections and even now when they go out on consultations, they always warn the public - do not be deceived, do not be fooled by the amount of development that the FijiFirst Government is doing because that is the responsibility of every Government and any Government. They are worried so definitely this Government is doing something right, definitely this Government is doing something good for the people that they neglected when they were in Government and that is the statement they keep telling Fijians.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, infrastructure development, it is all there. You do not have to be blind, you do not have to be living abroad to ignore what is happening in rural Fiji. Of course, the Government has to create the environment so that development can continue to progress.

Let me focus on the budget in the Ministry of Rural Development. Honourable Radrodro, there are elements of rural development that are not with the Ministry of Rural Development. I will say, for example, rural water which is with the Ministry of Infrastructure, rural energy is with the Ministry of Infrastructure so do not work according to the budget allocation. You have to look at the whole of Government development programmes holistically.

While still on electricity and water, let me remind you, Honourable Member, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that this is the Government that took away the one-third contribution that was levied on the rural poor to connect the electricity and to connect their water. That is why these developments were so slow in yesteryears because they are already poor but yet we give them unnecessary load so that they contribute one-third towards their water and electricity projects. Even for roads, Honourable Speaker, Sir, I suggest to the Honourable Members on the other side, there is a good book by an Indian Professor called the “Economics of the Poor”. We need to read that book because while we take away the one-third for water and electricity, they are saying that is freebies. Is that freebies? Do you really want us to assist rural Fijians? They are saying that, that is freebies. But to us that is why we exist, we are here to serve the interest of every Fijian ...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- ... particularly those in rural Fiji. Mr. Speaker, you go around Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, I hope the Honourable Bulitavu was there in Dreketi Lailai and Lekutulevu to see how people were relieved when their roads were improved and bridges were fixed. I do not know what he is going to say when he visits that place next.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- You should see the satisfaction in the people when the bridge was built because they are worried about Elections, we are worried about service delivery and that is why we exist. We serve the people, that is leadership, empowering the people. What the Honourable Prime Minister say – it is a leg-up, we assist them and of course they already have and they are not handouts. See, this is it, the people are listening, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Honourable Speaker, I was in Bua, I saw her as well.

(Laughter)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- I do not know what we were doing in there (both of us) and the *Mata Ni Tikina* from Kubulau came to see me. Honourable Speaker, Sir, Kubulau, previously, their only connection was by bus through Wailevu *Tikina* into Savusavu to Namalata Village and there is no connection into Nabouwalu. So the *Mata Ni Tikina*, for him to come from Kubulau to Nabouwalu to attend the Provincial Meeting or for whatever reasons, he needs to come to Nabouwalu, he has to take \$250 to hire a carrier. Honourable Speaker, after the meeting if he has to return, the carrier waits for him or he hires another one, it is \$500 return. Today, it is \$14 - \$7 each way by bus.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- This is the impact that development can create on the people. Honourable Saukuru on economic development when we create the infrastructure, when we create the environment definitely the economic activities will boom. I will give Qaranivai, for example, if the Honourable Bilitavu has been to Qaranivai lately, Agro-Marketing Authority, which is now based in Savusavu, they are giving the communities in Qaranivai almost \$20,000 now every week on fish alone. Why? Because the road from Nukusere to Lagi was constructed by this Government and they have joined into Qaranivai by this Government and that is why there is an agent now in Qaranivai buying fish from the *Tikina* of Dogotuki, Udu and even on the other side, bringing \$20,000 worth of fish almost every week. This is just an example, Honourable Speaker, Sir, they still have not come to Saqani and I urge them to go to Saqani as well.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, but basically this is the simple answer to the Honourable Saukuru in 2009, Government created what we call the Integrated Rural Development Framework. The mechanism for rural development is already here. Let the Civil Servants work on that document - Integrated Rural Development Framework and that Rural Development Framework has the mechanisms to review, revise the plans that are already in existence.

Of course, I agree rural Fiji has a lot to contribute but Government is creating the environment and of course we look forward to more participation of our rural people in meaningful activities, not only socially but economically as well so it is already there, Honourable Speaker, Sir, and I do not support the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Adi Litia Qionibaravi, you have the floor.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, I rise to support the motion before the House. Much has been heard this afternoon on the developments that have been carried out by the FijiFirst Government. I would like to say that the plights of the people in the Eastern Division needs the attention of this House. You have been in Government for the last 14 years, the people are still crying out for better services. Mr. Speaker, Sir, a lot has been said, issues have been raised this afternoon. There is something that I would like to say, that the people in the Eastern Division have like their forefathers inherited the islands that they live on. Some live on infertile soil and have to rely on other alternative means for their sustenance and their source of income generation, Sir.

A challenge is communications or the digital divide. I will only speak to issues that have not been raised this afternoon. To speak to us in Suva, most of the islands have to climb the highest peaks on their islands to get a signal. That is a continuing challenge. It means that they cannot access a digital Fiji platform whilst those in urban areas gallop ahead in terms of development and communications whilst they are left behind.

It also means that they are out of the loop when there is consultation on Government policies or laws, unless delegations visit to speak to them in person. That is why we support the motion before the House, as a Special Committee will hear the plight of the people of the Eastern Division and maritime zones and in more of them in the solutions of their development challenges.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, consultation is the cornerstone of good governance. If the Government consulted the people, the people would have a stake in the changes that will come, that is, they have been heard and Government has considered their situation. We were very disappointed, Mr. Speaker, Sir, with the unilateral decision that was announced last week that requires those who registered before 2017 to bring their birth certificates to renew their voter card and prevent married women from using their husband's names, unless they changed their names.

How can the majority of people of Fiji, let alone the people from the Eastern Division, obtain birth certificates when people are facing hardship with increasing cost of living, increasing fees and licenses, increasing transportation cost and in particular, for those in the Eastern Division? We would not have an outcry if the Supervisor of Elections had consulted with the major stakeholders, including the political parties, Sir. May we suggest that the Elections Office send out teams to every community in Fiji and in particular, the Eastern Division and take with them an officer from the Office of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to facilitate the provision of birth certificates through Government's e-Government platform.

Despite the relative isolation, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Eastern Division has produced State leaders, the *Turaga Bale Na Tui Lau*, Ratu Sir Josefa Vanayaliyali Sukuna, *Turaga Bale Na Tui Nayau*, *Sau ni Vanua o Lau*, the late Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara - Prime Minister of Fiji, Mr. Laisenia Qarase - Senior Civil Servant and former Prime Minister, as well as religious leaders, politicians, senior civil servants, senior executives in the private sector. To name a few, the late Ratu Isireli Caucau - former President of the Methodist Church, the late senior Minister of the SVT Government - Mosese Qionibaravi, the late Church Minister - Mr. Alipate Cakau - the founder of Fiji Assembly of God Church, the late Minister Konisi Yabaki, the late Commander of Fiji Military Forces - Colonel Paulo Fanifau Manuelli and Senator Sosefo Inia.

These statesmen and politicians, senior members of this country did not push for the development of the Eastern Division. They looked after the development of the rest of Fiji. Just before the event of the 2006 *coup*, the SDL Government was just beginning to implement the Rural and Outer Island Development Programme which included the people of Eastern Division. If that plan was implemented, the situation of the people of the east would have greatly improved. It is time, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to consider the plights of the maritime and the Eastern Division in totality. It is not too late and I commend Honourable Saukuru for his timely intervention and proposal for the Special Committee under Standing Order 129.

I have heard what the Honourable Members from the other side of the House said this afternoon, but we are of the view that special consideration should be given to listen to the voices of the people of the Eastern Division so that a total plan is prepared that will look at their issues in totality. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we all need to work together, be able to improve the livelihood of the people of the maritime zone and Eastern provinces. I urge the House to come together and support the appointment of a Special Bilateral Committee to widely consult with the people and put together recommendations that will coordinate the development programmes implemented by various Government agencies, including viable crops such as planting hybrid coconut trees, et cetera, reducing the rural-urban drift, catalyse development and improving source of income, improving the way of living and inviting the people in urban areas to return and reinvigorate development in their own provinces.

To conclude, Honourable Speaker, Sir, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on the motion before the House. I support the motion. *Vinaka*.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. The Honourable Minister Vuniwaqa and then I will take the last speaker.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir. Fiji is not just towns and cities, I believe that was the introductory statement in relation to this motion and Mr. Speaker Sir, and there is no other Government than this particular one that knows that, that is true.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Mr. Speaker Sir, earlier today, we have heard this many times before, we have been criticised by the Opposition for going out so many times, almost everyday when we open up the papers and you see Ministers and the Prime Minister out in the rural areas and maritime zones and they criticise us for that.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- And yet they come into this House today and they talk about consulting people in the rural areas. They talk about the importance of consulting people who live in maritime zones and rural areas. What do they think we are doing when we are going out to rural areas and maritime zones? We get to hear first-hand from people who live in maritime zones and rural areas about matters that matter to them and their families.

I say this, Mr. Speaker Sir, in light of the Ministry that I am humbled to serve in.

HON. S. ADIMAITOGA.- Tell them, tell them!

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- I speak in particular about the programmes that fall under the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. I point first of all to the Social Protection Programmes that are there, that we take out to rural areas through the REACH programme. You have heard from other Ministers, Mr. Speaker Sir, about Government's footprint in setting up Government Stations in the rural areas and maritime zones. While that is happening, Government also has another programme that is taking out the services to those rural areas, to those maritime zones before Government stations reach them.

These are agencies within Government and outside of Government that provide critical services to Fijians all over the country, particularly targeting those areas in the maritime zones and rural areas. For the REACH programme, Honourable Speaker, from 2017 to 2019, over 8,000 individuals have been helped with over 27,000 services cut across the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Legal Aid Commission, Births, Deaths and Marriages Registry, Fiji Revenue and Customs Service as well as Non-Government Organisations that provide critical services to Fijians around the country.

The Social Protection Programme, Honourable Speaker, the Poverty Benefit Scheme (PBS) that looks after those families that do not have a source of income to look after their own. The Social Pension Scheme for those that have never been a member of a superannuation before, we have got the Disability Allowance for those living with disabilities. What the Ministry is doing in relation to this, because we understand that people living with disabilities will find it very difficult to access services in the Government stations, the Disability Unit along with Non-Government Organisations that serve people with disabilities in this country, they sweep the country, the rural areas, the maritime zones to identify

people living with disabilities, identify the particular needs that they have and distribute mobility devices, get access to disability allowances, et cetera.

We have got the Care and Protection Allowance specifically targeted at those children that have a single parent with no source of income and when we talk about rural, people living in rural areas and maritime zones, Government has the rural pregnant mothers food vouchers specifically targeting rural mums, women who are pregnant and who may have difficulty in accessing nutritious food. So, what does Government do? It provides a food voucher for them, it also encourages them to turn up to health clinics every month to enable them to make sure that the health of their babies and themselves are protected during that time.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, talk about elderly care. We have got three State homes around the country and we know that as a country, we have got about 70 percent of our population who are around 40 years and under. So, we know that in another four decades or so, we will have an aged society in this. Fiji will be an aged society, so what are we doing?

Strengthening infrastructure in that regards but apart from that, Government believes that the best care an individual can get will be within the community that he or she lives in. So, what do we do? Partnered up with Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) taking out training for caregiving, for people who live in maritime zones and rural communities to train them to look after their old in the communities that they have. They may not be able to access that particular training in town because it is so isolated, so we go out of our way to take these services, the training over to them where they live. We have taken out this training so far in Yasawa and Lomaiviti and that programme will continue.

We have heard about digital connectivity. Yes, we all agree that digital connectivity is something that will open up a lot of opportunities for those living in maritime and rural communities. But we also must know, Honourable Speaker, that connectivity lies with those private companies that run this particular service. So, what do we do? When we go out into the rural areas and people tell us, “we need connectivity; we need the phone to be able to be connected to the internet or even just a make a phone call.” What do we do? We come back and we go back to these private companies that provide this service. We sit with them and we tell them, “we have just been to this particular area, there is no connectivity, what can you do about it?” We do not come here and we preach about it because this Government, Honourable Speaker, political grandstanding is not our forte, service delivery is.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Service delivery, that lies at the heart of this Government inclusivity making sure that no one is left behind. And one only has to look at the programmes within my Ministry to know how true this is in relation to this Government.

So, Honourable Speaker, I ask myself, I am sitting here and I am looking at the motion. We want another Committee? We want a Committee to review what Government is doing? What is the point of that, a bi-partisan Committee? You can come here and ask us questions. Written questions, if you want data. What is a Special Committee going to do, to what Government is already doing for you? You have got your Annual Reports, you have got the Auditor-General Reports if you wish to go there and you can come here every sitting day and ask questions.

Honourable Speaker, I really cannot see any sense in supporting a motion like this so I do not support it, thank you.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. MEMBER.- Withdraw the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. I give the floor to Honourable Usamate.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I thank you for the opportunity to speak on the motion. First point that I would like to say on this particular motion, I agree entirely with the Minister that has just spoken. There has been nothing that has been said about the Opposition that adds any sort of credence to the need for this motion. There is absolutely nothing that has been said that tells us why this motion is needed. There is no need for such a Committee. As has been explained by the Honourable Minister, we can discuss all these things here and it is amazing when you consider the kind of work that Government is already been doing. As had been pointed out by the Minister for Defence, there has been a lot of money that is spent on infrastructure projects to try to make sure that people prefer to stay in rural areas and we know as the Honourable Gavoka said. It is a global phenomenon. Urbanisation is increasing. Fiji is now 55 percent urbanised. That is something that is happening all across the world. It is not something that is just happening in Fiji but Government realises this. There are a lot of investment going on, we try to make it more attractive for people to stay in the maritime islands, so they do not have this urge to come.

In terms of my Ministry, there has been a lot of focus on trying to make sure that everyone gets the essentials of life wherever they live or whatever island they live.

In terms of water, over the past five years or so, there has been about 113 projects that has been initiated from the Ministry; 113 water projects serving around 17,000 people all across the islands in Fiji; \$11.8 million worth of these water projects have already been completed. People are getting access to near water, safer water, cleaner water, water that is good for their health.

There is another \$5.6 million worth of water projects that are currently in progress and another \$13.13 million that has just been outsourced, so this shows the volume of effort and the amount of effort that Government is putting into place to make sure this essential of life; safe water, clean water is made available for the people in our country.

At the same time, one of the things that people come to urban areas is because of all these; electricity, power. Government has got our target to try to make sure that every household here in Fiji; by the year 2021 has access to electricity and to power. And for the last three years from 2017 to 2019 through our Rural Electrification Programme (REF), we have invested more than \$8.18 million for the installation of 2,153 solar home systems in the Maritime Communities to bring them that power, to bring them that light so that they can have light and can start to do things that they were not able to do before. This has benefitted more than 8,600 people all across these villages, parents, youths, elderly and children.

This also contributes, as I said to Government's plan to try to make sure to provide a 100 percent access to electricity by the Year 2021. There is going to be a difficult target to achieve because whenever you provide power, new houses come up and there is always a constant demand for electricity all across of our islands.

Government has also invested in the rehabilitation of electricity supply damage by *TC Winston* and *TC Keni*. For *TC Winston*, Government had invested more than \$5 million since 2017 for the rehabilitation of 14 villages in Vanuabalavu and Koro.

In this current Budget, Government has rolled over the balance of \$104 million and it is expected that power supply for all villages will be restored. That is something where there is a constant focus on, trying to make sure that we can provide power wherever it is needed all across the country.

Government has also invested around \$855,000 for the rehabilitation of 266 homes damaged by *TC Keni* and to promote the use of renewable energy, Government has undertaken feasibility study for the installation of 0.5 megawatts solar digit installation at Levuka and this focus on providing power will continue to increase.

One of the things that people are always worried about in the outer islands is transportation; moving people from one island to Suva and back but at the end of 2019, passages inwards recorded 9,310 and 11,838 passengers out, showing an increasing trend in the movement of people. There has been an increase in the number of franchise trips. We know that for every trip that goes to the maritime islands, Government has to spend maybe \$10,000 to \$13,000 just to subsidise their trip, just as we have to subsidise every flight that goes to the maritime islands.

So Government is investing, providing these subsidies so that the transportation is available. The number of franchise trips has gone up, cargo movement has begun to go up and also now, we are also seeing that through the Government Shipping services, there has been an allocation of \$3 million for the purchase of new vessel. The Minister for Health was talking about the *MV Veivueti*, there is an additional vessel coming in, so Government is making sure that all of these vessels are available so that Government's development work in all of the maritime islands can continue to be provided. We are looking at the re-fleeting, we are also mindful of the need to either upgrade or build new berthing facilities in the maritime areas where emerging markets are developing.

As a result of this, we have seen in some of these outer islands, especially the ones that have more land, mountains, like Moala for instance, the number of people moving back to Moala, the amount of crops that are coming out of Moala because the transportation systems have been improved and the assistance from Agriculture is having an impact on those islands.

The Ministry has allocated \$650,000 for the continuing upgrade of the Government Wharf and another \$700,000 for the completion of the construction of the retaining walls to ensure movement of goods from maritime islands to the urban markets. So there is also development here in the urban areas to make sure the transportation to and from the maritime islands is improved. There is a lot of investment also from my Ministry in terms of the Meteorological Services; Lakeba Meteorological, investment into that and also into Yasawa and Vunisea Meteorological Offices.

This year, we will be upgrading Viwa and Udu Point Meteorological Offices and also plans to upgrade Rotuma and Lakeba, to reconstruct Ono-i-Lau as part of our *TC Geeta* rehabilitation.

For Infrastructure Developments, there is a focus on the jetties summarised below. Detailed design and investigation of Ovalau and Taveuni bridges, almost \$1 million. The Vunisea–Vacalea Road (the road that runs from Vunisea to Vacalea) - the first cart has already gone through, there is a huge investment. That project is going to cost \$9.9 million, that will open up all of Naceva side coming up to Nakasaleka side, up to Vacalea, Namajiu, all of that sort of area will be opened up as a result of this. At the same time, the road is now running down from Vunisea, it is reaching Yawe and eventually it will go all the way to Lomaji. That will also open up all that part of Kadavu. People are moving back to Kadavu so all of this investment into infrastructure opening up the market is having a distinct impact on the people in that area.

Rotuma farm roads, investigation and design of six jetties, low-level crossing package. I was with the Honourable Prime Minister in Koro where we opened four bridges for more than \$4 million, having an impact on that island, helping it to recover from the effects of *TC Winston*.

Kadavu Island Road Maintenance - more than \$12 million. Kadavu Rural Road Upgrade - \$5.1 million. Maintenance for five jetties all across the country - around \$3.2 million. Investigation and design

of six jetties, Wainiyabia, Makogai, Vunisea, Moala and Nabukelevu - all of these are investment into those places to help them in their transportation.

The maintenance of jetties, Bau Landing, Oinafa, Kavala, Cicia and Lakeba for the existing one in Tubou, and we also know that the new jetty is going to be built in Lakeba in Wainiyabia or Oru - either one of those two sites.

In addition to this, we have maintenance work on periodic basis and we have always responded to numerous emergency situations relating to deteriorated jetties and crossings. The structures throughout the islands always require a lot of maintenance and this is why the Government has continued to try and provide.

At the same time, for our travelling public, the Government is now looking at the maritime travellers rights, to give them more rights. I think I have already discussed this at length in the Parliament earlier. We are also looking to try to help with incentive packages so that the kind of boats that travel to these maritime islands can improve. We have put in place the 20-year coastal trading licence for the first time and also the opportunity for companies that take up the franchise. This is to get a 15-year contract rather than an annual contract. These are some of the things that the Government has been doing to focus, to make it easier for people to move across the maritime areas into Viti Levu. So, what I am trying to say, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that there has been a lot of investment into the maritime islands in trying to make sure that their lives are improved and we will continue to do that so really there is no need for the committee that is being mooted by this particular motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Attorney-General, you have the floor. The last speaker before the right of reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir and thank you for your indulgence.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Ministers, in particular from this side, they have highlighted the respective work and policy implementation being carried out in the maritime islands in particular.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to respond to some of the queries raised in particular regarding civil aviation and *Walesi*. But before that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is very disheartening to hear Members on the other side continuously say, Member for Kadavu or Member from the Eastern Division. One Member always standing up, talking about easterners. We are actually concerned about southerners, easterners, northerners, everybody. We are concerned about everybody. Just because your father may come from Kadavu or your mother comes from Naitasiri, whatever it is, you actually should be concerned about everybody so at least, I hope the people who are watching this at home should know that this side of Parliament is concerned about all Fijians, not restricted to a particular regional area or island.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wanted to highlight also, Honourable Tabuya, before we broke up said that she did not say anything about the corona virus being airborne. This is just a post. She said, she is agreeing with someone. She said, “I agree absolutely but why not set up in Makogai or Nukulau, isolated from the population, why not use the medical ship for this purpose? The fear that corona virus has no cure and is airborne is very real and very valid for the people of Navua, Serua and Namosi.” Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is her post.

I would just like to highlight to Honourable ...

HON. SPEAKER.- There is a Point of Order.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- A Point of Order, Honourable Speaker, if the Honourable Attorney-General knows how *Facebook* works and that was a petition that was shared by myself. It is not my own words, this was a petition that was filed not by myself. He needs to correct that, he needs to understand how *Facebook* works, and it is shared. Shared is different from having your own comments, that is how *Facebook* works and I still stand by that, it is not my statement, it was a petition that I shared by the author who is not myself. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, the point is taken. Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is under her name, but anyway, Mr. Speaker, the point is this: Regarding Civil Aviation, the Honourable Salote Radrodro talked about two issues. Firstly, is the capital upgrade of airstrips and the other one is the subsidy. Just a point of perspective, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in 2006, the subsidy provided to airline companies providing air services to outer islands was \$300,000.

In 2012, the Bainimarama Government put it up to \$441,000.

In 2014, the FijiFirst Government put it up to \$1.26 million and this year it is \$1.85 million, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is a huge point of difference. Mr. Speaker, Sir, she does not understand how Civil Aviation works.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, in respect of the capital upgrades, Rotuma, of course, is also part of Fiji, it is in the North-West side of Fiji, had a \$13 million upgrade in 2018. We now have ATR 72s landing on Rotuma, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Only just last week, I met a gentleman whose family lives in Rotuma and they were so complimentary of the fact that they can now easily access their island and the fact that there is a lot more trade, a lot more visitation, a lot more connectivity now. Along with that, we built fire station and, of course, we have fire trucks now in Rotuma Island which was not actually heard of.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, Bureta Airstrip in Ovalau, in 2019, there was runaway overlay and there were civil works.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Lakeba in 2019, runway overlay and civil and drainage works.

Vunisea in Kadavu, as we speak, is getting a runway being currently reconstructed - all of these, of course, is costing about \$2 million to AFL itself.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again Labasa has been upgraded, I know it is not a maritime island but the fact of the matter is that these types of works have been going on.

I think the other issue, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as raised by Honourable Saukuru said that *Walesi* does not work, he has made a flippant comment. Today, if you go anywhere in Fiji if you cannot get or connect to *Walesi* through terrestrial means and again I inform Parliament what does terrestrial means, in other words you cannot connect because of the tower system, you can actually put a satellite dish that *Walesi* gives out, Mr. Speaker, Sir, or you can buy the dish. You can get a 100 percent coverage of *Walesi* anywhere in Fiji through the satellite or terrestrial means. It is completely incorrect to say that you cannot get *Walesi* coverage.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Honourable Bulitavu said they had a bit of giggle with one of the Honourable Member and someone say they cannot get *Walesi*, maybe they should have referred it to us, we could have told them what technology is.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is an organisation called *Walesi*. They have got offices now throughout Fiji, contact them they will tell you exactly what to do.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as part of that also, we have connected 711 community installations. In other words, we go to deep rural and maritime areas and in villagers in particular where there is a community hall and a lot of people cannot afford television, we actually give them a television set, we give them a *Walesi* set of box and if need be, we give them a dish ...

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So they get covered, Mr. Speaker, Sir. An island like Cikobia has already had two community hall installations, this year, another one to be connected in March. An island like Cikobia, which a lot of people consider as so isolated. They have *Walesi*, Mr. Speaker, Sir, so I cannot understand what they are talking about.

The Honourable Ministers from Women, Medical, Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Fisheries and of course, Infrastructure have all highlighted specifically what their ministries are doing in terms of maritime connectivity. When they have also highlighted the fact that the Budget actually sits with their ministries, not with Rural and Maritime Development, Honourable Salote Radrodro berated Government for having a small budget for the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development. But when they highlighted that the Budget sits with them they said “I know”. So why did they say that in the first place. This is the kind of hoodwinking that is actually taking place, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Honourable Gavoka, of course, introduced ethnicity and talked about the Australian Aboriginal experience. The Australian Aboriginal experience continuously, we have said, is so different. They used to go and shoot them after church on Sunday.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is true. Read your history, read your history!

Tasmanian Aboriginals were all killed by 1920. They were counted as part of flora and fauna until 1967, you should know that. So, the experience of the Aboriginal Australians is very different to Fiji. Do not try and confuse the matter, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and this is the problem.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other point

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You raised it, you raised it. Mr. Speaker, Sir,...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I am talking about census too now because you talked about it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have also a new initiative where Honourable Minister for Women touched on this, we currently are talking to the mobile phone companies. In fact the owner of Digicel was in town last week, we have had discussions with them and also Vodafone where we are going to get a tower sharing. So, tower sharing and usually the transmitters on the towers will ensure we also spread the network coverage of mobile phones. Apart from *Walesi*, we will get mobile phone network coverage. So you know that there are certain parts of Fiji, for example, that you can only get Digicel or certain parts of Fiji

(Mobile phone ringing)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is a mobile phone. Mr. Speaker, Sir, so there are certain parts of Fiji that only gets Digicel, there are certain parts of Fiji that only gets Vodafone.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Now, the customers will be able to have a choice. They can have either go to Digicel or Vodafone or have both. But what it also means Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that the upfront cost for mobile phone companies will not be actually in the capital expenditure, we will be reducing that, we are working with them in respect to what we call the “universal service access fund.” So we will be contributing towards the tower installation, but they would be spending a lot more money in the actual retail services. Mr. Speaker, Sir, all of these work has been done in respect of the aviation industry. I think it would appear, I was trying to think about the rationale, as to why they are proposing this.

This Monday we had a meeting with all our Assistant Ministers and the Backbenchers and they told us that at the Committee level at this point in time, the SODELPA Members in the Committees are rotating themselves. So there are two people sitting in one Committee, after a few weeks it changes, because apparently they all want to get a cut in the allowances. That is the problem, Mr. Speaker, Sir. They are changing the Committee Members and as a result of this, the work of the Committees are being stalled. You have two members from SODELPA sitting in for a couple weeks, in the same Committee, the other two come in and sit in the Committee again, and they have a different view. So our processes are being slowed down and now I think this Committee that they want to propose, this Special Committee is another way of getting some more allowances.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- And I think that is the real reason behind this particular motion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, given the fact that all the good works which has been highlighted by the Ministers, there is absolutely no need for this motion. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not support this motion. Thank you very much.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the Member that has gone out thought it was your fault. That was ringing instead of his. I now give the floor to the Honourable Saukuru for his Right of Reply. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to give my Right of Reply on my motion for the appointment of a Special Committee to review Maritime and Outer Islands Development Programmes. First let me remind the House that people of Fiji are watching us, they are listening to us.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Yes, yes.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- For your information the Attorney- General, it is the Opposition side that is contributing a lot to the Committee meetings. They are making a lot of contribution to the Committee meetings.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. J. SAUKURU.- I remind Honourable Waqainabete, the people of Yacata are listening to you and they are already disputing what you are saying in Parliament. Honourable Prime Minister, Sir, the students of Yasawa are still eagerly awaiting to ride in the bus that you gave them last year because someone is not doing his job here, the road is not being fixed.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have heard the opportune refusal and reservation by Government in supporting this motion. All I am suggesting, Mr. Speaker, in this motion is for the Government to take a holistic approach in looking at the needs of the maritime zone and outer islands. It is not about re-inventing the wheel or duplicating but to take a more coordinated approach so that we can effectively address the basic needs of our maritime and outer island population Mr. Speaker, Sir, the legislature, this House is an equal branch of the Government. Parliament is not subservient to the Executive, it has an oversight function. We are not a rubber stamp despite the best efforts of the Executive just as the Judiciary has an oversight function despite the many Decrees that limit its jurisdiction. While the Executive has its function to formulate policies and implement development programmes, it must not forget that Parliament has an oversight function.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. J. SAUKURU.- When a motion such as this is proposed, it is not an encroachment on the function of the Executive but the exercise of the oversight function of Parliament. I repeat, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Parliament has an oversight function and I was hoping for a bi-partisan response to the motion to be supported by the other side of the House, in vein the FijiFirst Government in this case the Executive arm should remember that we are now in democracy that it proclaims and we have had two elections already. It must submit itself to the oversight function of this House. It must be accountable for its expenditure of the resources of the State funded by taxpayers and it must be accountable to this; the people's House. Separation of powers argument should not be misused to seal the Executive from the legitimate exercise of Parliamentary oversight function by this august House.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Unfortunately, Government appears to be getting ready to exercise its numerical tyranny to again avoid Parliamentary oversight of its Maritime and Outer Islands Development

Programmes. This motion, Mr. Speaker Sir, was tabled in the interest of the people of the maritime and outer islands in Fiji.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. SAUKURU.- The islands are, I am afraid, its people are losing their people to the urban areas who leave in search of better opportunities, employment and education. The Eastern Islands are floundering for lack of development which needs to be coordinated in a robust, overarching policy similar to the Look North Policy. It appears that since shelving the SDL Government's Rural and Outer Island Programme (ROI) , the interim regime now the Bainimarama Government has not come up with the coordinated development programme for the Eastern Division.

Mr. Speaker Sir, I agree with Honourable Semi Koroilavesau that a one-size fits all approach will not work between the many islands. May I clarify Sir, that I am not advocating a one-size fits all approach, what I am just saying is that Government needs to coordinate its development programmes across all agencies. That is the objective of the motion. To have a Special Parliamentary Committee review the many disparity programmes and recommend a robust coordinated development programme for the whole division. Of course, at a local level, solutions are tailor-made but at a divisional level, there is coordination and synergy of these actions or the different agencies providing services.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Census of 2007 and 2017 show the continuing decrease in the rural population. That means the Government or the Executive whether it is SODELPA, FijiFirst or National Federation Party must work harder to reverse this strength. I know the Honourable Minister for Agriculture contributed to the debate. Agriculture feeds the nation, yet over the last 14 years its contribution to GDP declined.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Listen, Honourable Reddy.

We have now the rural millionaire programme, that is the success of our traditional concept of *solesolevaki* or working together in action.

Our people in the Eastern Division do have land though much less than the two main islands, it can be cultivated but they need better shipping services, Honourable Usamate and access to markets or value adding programmes to enhance the agriculture products.

I want to ask Honourable Reddy, how much of the Ministry of Agriculture programmes are in the Eastern Division?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Plenty.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Our people can only do so much fishing, given the assistance boasted by the Government side of the many fishing punts being given out. However, we do not need more attention from the Minister of Agriculture and I plead with him to increase the assistance from his Ministry to the Eastern Islands.

The Honourable Minister read out a long list of assistance programmes from his Ministry but the majority of them are for projects on the two main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. He said over \$18

million was spent in rural and maritime areas. I fear that the majority of this is for rural areas in the two main islands rather than the maritime islands.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is the point of the motion to focus the various Ministries of the Eastern Maritime Province and islands. We do not begrudge the assistance to rural areas but this motion, if Government listens wants to plead for the maritime zone population.

The maritime zone is often included as an afterthought to programmes to the rural population but the objective of this motion is to focus your conversation and discussion to the maritime and outer island zones. Thank you, Sir.

(Acclamation)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I thank the mover of the motion. Parliament will now vote on the motion.

The question is:

That Parliament hereby resolves to establish a Special Committee under Standing Order 129 to review Maritime/Outer island Development Programmes. Parliament hereby appoints the following Members of the Special Committee -

- a) Honourable Viam Pillay, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Regional Development (Chairperson);
- b) Honourable Selai Adimaitoga, Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs;
- c) Honourable Vijay Nath, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport;
- d) Honourable Jese Saukuru, Shadow Minister for Regional Development; and
- e) Honourable Anare Jale, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of “Ayes” and “Noes”)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, there being opposition, the Parliament will now vote.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	21
Noes	-	27
Not Voted	-	3

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, there being 21 Ayes, 27 Noes and 3 Not Voted, the motion is therefore, defeated.

Honourable Members, on that note, we will suspend proceedings for dinner and this is being provided in the Big Committee Room. We will resume in an hour’s time.

We adjourn for dinner.

The Parliament adjourned at 7.10 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 8.13 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I give the floor to the Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua.

QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

Dialysis Machines (Question No. 01/2020)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform Parliament as to why the provision of four new dialysis machines at the Lautoka Hospital and 10 new dialysis machines at the National Kidney and Research Centre as announced in the Budget Address of June, 2017 have not been provided?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Honourable Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Honourable Speaker, we have dialysis services currently being run at Labasa Hospital which is subsidised. We also have acute haemodialysis that happens at CWM and Lautoka Hospital for those who are acutely ill and need acute dialysis. There is also provision of dialysis in Lautoka City by two private health facilities and in Suva, the Kidney Foundation and the Kidney Hub Centre.

The purchase of a dialysis machine is an essential component and there were activities that were done:

- 1) The identification of a suitable facility to house the machine, for Suva, it is in Nadera, located conveniently in the midst of the population and in particular, we understand that majority of the kidney disease in this area is around there. For the West, we have identified two centres possibly one just outside of Nadi and possibly one just around Lautoka. We have yet to confirm which one we are going to use. I can assure us that we have gone out and started looking for our staff. Qualified Physicians are in short supply worldwide and it has taken time to identify, recruit and appoint a Nephrologist who will be coming to lead this role in the Ministry of Health.
- 2) We also have a local who has been trained locally - Postgraduate qualification, spent two years in New Zealand, who also at some stage will join him or her to carry on with managing the National Kidney Research Centre.

Given the time required to prepare and establish the state-of-the-art facility that provide high level service that we would like to give to the people, the purchase of the machine was awaiting the completion of the facility upgrade in Suva, so that we can purchase all the machines together. We have done that and we are procuring or procured 15 machines to cover our needs across the Ministry.

We are hoping to put 10 in Nadera as the building is actually completed. We have also procured other things that are needed such as emergency trolleys, Portable Suction Machines, Osmosis, Water Purification Machines, Monitoring Machines and that has been more than half a million dollars, not including the machines that we have bought. Once the machines come in, they will be inserted and we hope to have that up and running as I said, in six weeks' time, we will have our Consultant Nephrologist and after that, we will have that up and running and at the same time, we will be working on getting the West one done, which is again, as I said, Honourable Speaker, whether it is based out of Lautoka or just outside of Nadi, at the moment, our Western team are working in partnership determining for us which area we are going to use.

I would also like to inform the House that the Peritoneal Dialysis Fluid Warming Plates are expected to arrive into the country by June 2020 and this is another form of renal replacement therapy apart from chemo dialysis.

Honourable Speaker, in short, we have bought 15 machines and we hope to take 4 or 5 machines up to the West, *vinaka vakalevu*.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I have a supplementary question. Through you, Honourable Speaker, Honourable Minister, in the absence of the 40 dialysis machines as announced, how is Government subsidising dialysis for patients from families whose income is less than \$30,000 in the Central and Western Division to the \$75 per session as announced in the 2018/2019 Budget before the Elections. Why are such patients continuing to pay the full amount of \$250 per session? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member.

Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- I thank the Honourable Member for that supplementary question. We did a proper review of what it entails for those that we have identified and registered in the Central Division and also in the Western Division. One thing that we are very adamant on as a Government and as the Ministry of Health that those that are on the subsidy scheme, they shall only pay \$75.00 and nothing more.

We realised during the feasibility study that we ran a risk if we have that outsourced, then that will actually be more so that is why we want to run the subsidy in our own centres, which is in Nadera and the one in the West, because we can be sure that the person that comes in only pays \$75 and we will pick the bill for \$75 from the Government. *Vinaka*.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Minister had promised this House that Nadera would be up and running by July, 2019 bringing the cost down from \$250 to \$75. Now it is February, 2020, can he now be more definitive on the dates, the day Nadera will be operational at that cost? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Gavoka but I think the Honourable Minister has already answered that, but you have the floor, Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. We lost a senior nephrologist in the country who was working with us and obviously that person was involved in majority of the project discussions and organising it.

A nephrologist has to take the lead role in this and so we went through a competitive process to try and get a nephrologist. I can assure this House that we have recruited a nephrologist and that person is arriving in six weeks' time. That person will lead all the operational component of it which includes making sure that we manage dialysis patients and as I said, we have also got somebody locally who has been trained overseas to be able to support this person so it is the leadership in this area. It is a very specialised area and so none of the other doctors that work around this area will be very comfortable in doing dialysis except if we have a nephrologist. Thank you.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Can you give a time?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- We are hoping that by the middle of this year because we have got that person starting in six weeks' time. Once that person comes in, we will set in all the equipment and we hope to get Nadera up and running by the middle of this year.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. We will move on.

Consumer Protection in the Market
(Question No. 02/2020)

HON. V. PILLAY asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development explain the role of the Department of National Trade Measurement and Standards in ensuring that consumers are not cheated in terms of volume, weight (and other measurements) when they purchase a particular product in the marketplace?

HON. P.D. KUMAR (Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir. I also thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, consumers buy goods that are either weighed, counted or measured. The role of the Department of National Trade Measurement and Standards (DNTMS) is to facilitate fair trade by ensuring the use of accurate weighing and measuring equipment. This is done to protect consumers who can be easily cheated or tricked into buying under-weighed or under-measured items, not just consumers but also retailers who buy goods from the manufacturers, they can also be tricked into buying under-weighed or under-measured items.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the work of DNTMS is to promote uniformity through the implementation of laws, regulations and standards to achieve equity between buyers and sellers in the marketplace. This enhances consumer confidence, enables Fijian businesses to compete fairly at home and abroad, and strengthens the Fijian economy.

The Department officers undertake inspection and verification of weighing and measuring instruments used for trade and commerce. This is to ensure that the respective scales are giving accurate reading. For example, the scale used in the market or in the supermarkets will be verified and sealed as providing the accurate reading.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if there is a tampered seal or out-dated seal or there is no seal on the scale, the readings can be questionable. The department is responsible for scales ranging from market scales to weighbridge which is used at the Sugar Mill, for example, to fuel tankers, water meters, energy meters, to name a few. I thank the Honourable Member again for his question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua, a supplementary question.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, just a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister. Can the Honourable Minister assure Parliament that the Department also certifies or collaborates and certifies the weighbridges at the FSC Sugar Mills before the start of each harvesting and crushing season to ensure that cane growers get the accurate tonnage for their sugarcane crop? Thank you.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the answer is, yes.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will move on to the next Question for today. And I give the floor to the Honourable Mikaele Leawere to ask Question No. 3/2020. You have the floor.

Outbreak of Diseases and OHS
(Question No. 03/2020)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports inform Parliament as to what the Ministry is doing in terms of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) to ensure that workers at sea ports, airports and public health facilities are safe from any outbreak of corona virus, meningococcal or other diseases?

HON. P.K. BALA (Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I also thank the Honourable Member. Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me read out the law in regards to OHS, the subject matter that has been raised and it is very clear in regards to the responsibility. It says that “every employer shall ensure the health and safety at work of all his or her workers as regards to any workplace under the employer’s control to maintain it in a condition that is safe and without risk to their health.”

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to reiterate the assurance from the Ministry of Health that we do not have any confirmed case of corona virus in Fiji to date. And that as the relevant Ministry on OHS, the measures along with that of corona virus Steering Committee ensures that our workers at these Ports of entry and their health and safety are always protected.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am told that the Minister for Health will make a Ministerial Statement to update the Parliament on this subject matter. Mr. Speaker, Sir, at this juncture, I would also like to commend the proactive work undertaken by the Steering Committee, chaired by the Ministry of Health’s Permanent Secretary. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the proactive measures have already been undertaken by the Steering Committee which is designed to manage the health and safety risk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. We will move on to the fourth Oral Question for today, and I give the floor to the Honourable Joseph Nand to ask Question No. 4/2020. You have the floor, Sir.

Non-Compliance of Employment Laws
(Question No. 04/2020)

HON. J.N. NAND asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports inform Parliament on the actions taken by the Ministry in reducing the number of non-compliance reported to the Ministry and ensuring that workers' rights are well-protected?

HON. P.K. BALA (Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I also thank the Honourable Member. Mr. Speaker, Sir, whole of today we have discussed about the Ministry of Employment and it gives me an opportunity now to give some data on what the Ministry has been doing.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the labour standard service of my Ministry is responsible for the enforcement and compliance of the Employment Relations Act 2007, 10 Wages Regulations and the National Minimum Wage. My staff conducted labour inspections to ensure that workers are given their rightful and legitimate dues and to ensure that employers comply with the provision of the Employment Relations Act 2007. Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the last financial year, the Compliance Section of my Ministry has conducted a total of 3,907 labour compliance inspections, investigated and settled 3,034 labour complaints registered with my Ministry for non-compliance issues on wages due, annual leave, overtime and meal allowance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the total recovery for the last financial year stands at \$4.3 million which has been paid out to the workers. For the current financial year from 1st August, 2019 to 31st January, 2020, the Compliance Section has conducted a total of 1,750 labour inspections and has investigated and settled a total of 1,239 labour complaints or non-compliance issues. The total recovery for the current financial year stands at \$856,529.89 and payments have been made to all those workers, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The Compliance Section of my Ministry has charged 38 companies in this current financial year for non-compliance issue and the matters are before the Employment Relations Tribunal.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Compliance Section of my Ministry as part of the awareness and proactive approach in fostering good faith and harmonious as employment relations with workers and employers has conducted 2,989 on-site and face to face awareness on the Employment Relations Act 2007 together with the relevant Wages Regulation in the current financial year.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, employers and workers have been advised on the annual leave, sick leave and family care leave. We have also advised them on the hours of work and payment of overtime and meal allowance for the workers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. There being no supplementary questions, we move onto the fifth Oral Question for today. I give the floor to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Sitiveni Rabuka to ask Question No. 5/2020. You have the floor, Sir.

Update on Sale of Government Assets – 2019-2020 Budget
(Question No. 05/2020)

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications provide an update on the progress made thus far in the sale of Government

Assets as stipulated in the 2019-2020 Budget (page 322) which indicates that \$80 million of revenue will be raised from such sale.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir and I would like to thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for the question. I would like to confirm that, that \$80 million actually has been raised.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- I have a supplementary question. Does the Government have an inventory of saleable assets and whether local investors should be positively encouraged and even incentivised to buy these assets in a deliberate effort to keep Fijian assets Fijian-owned and using Fijian workers?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. When we divest these interests or shares in many of these entities, we actually look for obviously strategic partners, we go through a very transparent process. In this particular instance, as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would see that on Page 322, the \$80 million talks about the divestment of shares in Energy Fiji Limited (EFL). We have been through a fairly long and arduous process through that to ensure that we get the best people to put in, expressions of interest and indeed go through the tender process.

The ANZ was used as the investment advisors who actually seek out and also are able to deal with the transaction at an arm's length. Mr. Speaker, Sir, in this particular instance, we had for example, companies like Fijian Holdings and various other companies that put in expressions of interest. In the end, 44 percent of the shares were up for divestment in EFL, 51 percent to be maintained by the Fijian Government or retained by the Fijian Government, I should say, 5 percent as the Members of this Parliament would know, we had decided as a policy measures to give as shares (*ex gratia*) in other words free to all domestic account holders in Fiji. So every single person in Fiji who has a EFL domestic account has become a shareholder as long as you fill out the forms.

In that also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, any Fijian household that earns less than \$30,000 a year was entitled to 250 shares, domestic households that earned more than \$30,000 a year got 150 shares. So in other words, ordinary Fijians now have become shareholders in the EFL. What a good way to ensure that we all become shareholders within a company. In respect of the balance of the 44 percent, the 20 percent we received a bid from FNPF that was acceptable to us and the 20 percent was of course divested. The balance of from the 24 percent, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is up in the market and again our local companies and others can of course apply for them. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister for Economy. We will move on to the next Oral Question for today and I give the floor to the Honourable Sanjay Kirpal to ask Question 6/2020.

Climate Change and the Livestock Sector
(Question No. 06/2020)

HON. S.S. KIRPAL asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment provide a brief update on what are the response plans for the Ministry in mitigating the risks posed to the livestock industry relating to climate change?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to thank the Honourable Member for asking this question.

Climate change is indeed having an impact on the livestock sector via extreme weather conditions, as well as natural disasters. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the impact has found increased incidents of pests and diseases, poor quality of pasture as well as shortage of pasture, low availability of supplementary feeds and also its impact on availability of drinking water for animals.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, responding to the climate change, the Ministry of Agriculture has invested in the following areas to mitigate against climate change challenges:

- Genetic conservation - the use of resilient breeds for breed improvement;
- Introduction of heat tolerant breed through importing these specialised breeds from outside Fiji;
- Pasture development programme - use of drought and heat tolerant fodder plant for livestock nutrition;
- Development of water sources for large farms; and
- Extension improvement of livestock disease control programmes.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, animal genetic diversity is critical towards security and rural development. It allows farmers to select stocks and develop new breeds in response to changing conditions including climate change, new resurgent statistics and new knowledge of human and animal nutritional requirement. The effects will be more pronounced in developing countries and therefore we need to get our game up and get ready to deal with these challenges.

Conserving indigenous animal genetic resources for future food security needs is an adaptation because they have adapted to local conditions and survive better in times of drought and disaster than exotic breeds. The local breeds are imported for providing a broad genetic pool to draw upon as we improve traits and characteristics under changing conditions.

The Ministry is committed to its genetic conservation programme. We have been undertaking cross the between the chain pigs, the local wild boar and the imported pig. We are also undertaking crosses between local poultry, pre-arranged poultry which is more feed efficient and tolerant to local conditions with the imported ones which has a high in yield. We are also undertaking a similar kind of breeding programme with the dairy and beef cattle. We are developing stocks of drought tolerant high yielding pasture, I must say that we have established close to 900 medium to large scale livestock farms. So, they have their own source of, this drought tolerant high protein pasture which can also be kept for three months as silage.

To deal with any drought, it could go for a three-month period. We have also undertaken work to develop water sources through two sources. Firstly, we are targeting that by end of this year, we want all medium to large livestock farms to have their own independent water source as well as through the Ministry of Waterways and Environment, we are developing rain water harvesting ponds in these areas where in non-drought period, these ponds will be able to retain water and also recharge ground water. When this ground water is recharged then during the drought period, the ground water can be extracted by a borehole. Honourable Speaker Sir, we are also looking at how we could develop this livestock breeds to be resistant to pests and diseases. This is another programme that we are undertaking. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. I give the floor to the Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I want to thank the Minister for the Ministerial Statement, I am sorry, the answer to the question. I just wanted to ask through you, Honourable Speaker, of the Minister, could the Minister please inform Parliament whether dairy farmers

have used the juncao grass as pasture for their dairy cows, we know when there is lack of pasture after a prolonged spell of dry weather. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker Sir, if she thought that, that was a Ministerial Statement than I know what she will say when I read the whole statement that I have got here. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the answer to her question is, yes. In the Southern Division, the large scale dairy farmers most of them have established. From last year we have started to establish the pasture. The pasture can be harvested in three months' time. So, a number of them have started to harvest in a three-month cycle and the newer ones where we supplied the materials, at the end of last year, they start harvesting in a month's time. However, in the Western Division, they are not only dairy but beef cattle farms, for example, for the first time ever Yaqara has 25 acres of this high yielding drought tolerant, high protein pasture which now they do not have to worry about how they will handle the pasture situation during prolonged drought. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER.-I thank the Honourable Minister and we will move on to the seventh oral question for today and I give the floor to the Honourable Anare Jale to ask Question 7/2020. You have the floor, Sir.

Update on Ownership of Minerva Reefs
(Question No. 07/2020)

HON. A. JALE asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs update Parliament on the current dispute over the ownership of Minerva Reefs and the progress made to resolve this dispute?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- (Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I thank the Honourable Member for the question and I acknowledge the importance of this question to him personally as a son of Ono-i-Lau in light of the previous announcement between Fiji and Tonga on the issue of ownership of Minerva Reefs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the UNCLOS of 1982, United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982 provides the fundamental legal principles for coastal States to define and claim maritime boundaries including the extent of the continental shelf and to enjoy the rights, to manage the resource within their jurisdiction.

Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji shares maritime boundary with Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna and the French territory of New Caledonia and of course Tonga as well.

Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have agreed with the boundary with Tuvalu, of course, Wallis and Futuna as well. We are almost completing the one with Solomon Islands and hopefully the final rounds of negotiations will be over soon and we are aiming for August this year to have that signed.

I mentioned about New Caledonia, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have also agreed with New Caledonia but there is a new development to that. Vanuatu particularly over the ownership of Matthew and Hunter Islands is asking us if we can withdraw our agreement that we have already made with New Caledonia. However, that is an issue that they need to sought out amongst themselves and because we are free from that but Vanuatu seems to be more keen to use us as a leverage in their discussions over the ownership of Matthew and Hunter Island with New Caledonia if we can, but that will not happen, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Let me come to Tonga. Mr. Speaker, Sir, under UNCLOS, particularly Sections 16(2), 47(9) and 75(2), we have submitted our baseline points and of course together with our EEZ boundaries as per the requirements of UNCLOS.

Unfortunately, our friends from the Kingdom of Tonga have yet to make any submissions of their baseline points and of course their EEZ as well. However, they have made some submissions on the extended continental shelf and this is very interesting because it will affect Ono-i-Lau, Honourable Speaker, Sir. Because for us consistent with UNCLOS, Minerva Reefs fall within our EEZ. However, the claim by the Kingdom of Tonga is based on a Royal Proclamation and of course just traditional elements, I would say.

That Royal Proclamation made in 1972 was just to simply, because there was a group that established itself on Minerva Reefs and wanted to set up a Government but unfortunately when it comes to UNCLOS because the Tongans, Honourable Speaker, Sir, are saying that Minerva Reefs is an island but we are saying that it is a submerged reef.

The definition of an island under Section 121 of UNCLOS if I may read it, Mr. Speaker Sir, and I quote, “an island is a naturally formed area of land surrounded by water which is above water at high tide.” Of course in two of the same article, Article 121 except as provided for in paragraph 3, the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the Exclusive Economic Zone and the continental shelf of an island are determined in accordance with the provisions of this Convention.

But unfortunately, continental shelf from an island, but not out of a submerged reef. So this is the contentious issue that we have. As I have stated, we are saying that Minerva is a submerged reef. If the claim by Tonga that it is an island, then that will mean, based on what they have submitted to UNCLOS concerning the continental shelf, then their EEZ will actually be taken from Minerva Reefs as a baseline point. So therefore, Ono-i-Lau will be in Tongan territory. That is where Tonga is coming from.

To resolve the dispute, Honourable Speaker, Sir, that is the next part of the question, last week I had a good meeting with Lord Ma’afu in Nadi when we had the Defence Minister’s Meeting and we discussed on Minerva and if we can move forward on it because we have already made our commitment in 2017 during the World Oceans Conference that hopefully by 2005, we should be able to finish all these outstanding issues on maritime boundaries.

It is also very critical at this stage also, Mr. Speaker, if I may say, and I had a meeting also with the new Director General of the South Pacific Commission on Thursday last week. It is very critical now for us to register our baselines and all our claims because of the rising sea level. Maybe, who knows, in the next few years, some of these baselines will be under water again and this is why we need to quicken the process.

On resolving this dispute, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I have stated, we had a good meeting with Lord Ma’afu, Minister for Lands and he is also the Minister for Defence in the Kingdom of Tonga. We agreed, I wrote to him on 31st May last year inviting them to come to the table for us to start discussions. He did reply to the letter and he indicated that his team would come in November last year. We were waiting, they did not turn up, so the intention now in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is for us to approach them again, so that we can start with the discussions. That is where we are with Minerva Reefs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, we will move on to the eighth oral question for today and I give the floor to the Honourable Veena Bhatnagar to ask Question 8/2020.

Parenthood Assistance Payment Scheme
(Question No. 08/2020)

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications provide an update on the number of applications processed by the Births, Deaths and Marriages Office for the Parenthood Assistance Payment Scheme and the impact on civil registration?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I give the statistics, I would like to just highlight that birth registration or civil birth registration is in fact considered to be a fundamental human right under Article 24 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child. Fulfilment on the right to be registered at birth is closely linked to the realisation of the many other fundamental rights such as socio-economic right, right to health, education, right to movement and of course, the right to participate in civic processes amongst others.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as part of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 under the title of “To leave no one behind” again another Target 16.9 of the 2030 Agenda calls on States to provide a legal identity for all including birth registration.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it also calls Target 17 that by 2030 all countries should achieve 100 percent birth registration and at least 80 percent death registration by 2030.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in Fiji, as we know that we launched the Parenthood Assistance Payment (PAP) Programme in which fundamentally the mother of the child is entitled to \$1,000 upon the birth of a child if the mother earns less than \$30,000 annually. The option that she has of registration is that she can register electronically. If she registers electronically, in other words through a phone, puts in the application, there is no fee for the registration and there is no actual fee for the birth certificate itself once she is physically given the birth certificate.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the \$1,000 assistance is broken down by way of, once the registration takes place, the mother has the ability to nominate the bank in which she wants the \$1,000 deposited and then of course, armed with that, once the registration takes place, she goes to the bank and \$1,000 is actually put into the bank account. She can immediately withdraw \$500 for the rearing of the child, the balance of \$500 is then something that can be withdrawn or that amount can be withdrawn when the child goes to Year One or primary school.

The idea is, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to inculcate or institute a culture of financial literacy and of course, a culture of savings. The child, of course, is also given a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) so they actually get within the system itself and of course, they have the bank account on the child’s name which the mother actually operates, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Since its inception, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have processed 20,427 applications as of 31 January, 2020 which means we have disbursed funds to the tune of \$20.427 million to these parents. What is really interesting, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is the statistics. We, of course, have been monitoring the registrations. If you register your child within two months of the child being born, it is considered to be what you call

“in-time registration”. If you register the child after the two months, it is late registration, various fees are actually applicable.

Interesting enough in 2016 when the Ministry of Health through its system had 19,180 births, only 19.9 percent of the children were registered within two months of the child being born.

In 2017, out of the 19,646 children born, only 20.1 percent were registered within the two months. We started PAP, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in late 2018 and we had 19,736 births and 33.4 percent were registered within the first two months. In 2019, Mr. Speaker, Sir, with the birth figures of 17,913, Mr. Speaker, Sir, 80 percent of the children were registered within the first two months of the child being born. So obviously the PAP has provided to be an incentive for the parents to register their child but more importantly also, the feedback we received Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that the ability for the mother to be able to sit in her hospital bed and to be able to send the application through the app that is there has proven to be actually very useful. It becomes a one-stop shop, they do not have to go running around, et cetera and they just go once, they get their registration done, they get the birth certificate, if they do it through the phone, it is completely free and they get the account opened with the bank itself.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other important thing is that now with the BDM offices opens in every urban centre including places like Korovou, Keyasi, Levuka and Nabouwalu, people actually do not have to go long distances. Only a few years ago in Fiji, the BDM offices were only in Labasa, Lautoka and Suva.

Today it is in every urban center including these places that I mentioned, Korovou, Keiyasi, Levuka and Nabouwalu and of course we intend to extend the services of BDM. But as far as the PAP is concerned, Mr. Speaker, Sir, you see a significant increase in the registration of children which is a fantastic thing and of course, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are able to have a wonderful impact on the lives of these mothers who have just given birth to these children and of course the children themselves and at the same time create a culture of savings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy. We will move on to the first Written Question for today. I call on the Honourable Peceli Vosanibola to ask Written Question No. 9/2020. You have the floor, Sir.

Written Questions

Sustainability of Pine Industry (Question No. 09/2020)

HON. P.W. VOSANIBOLA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Forestry inform Parliament on the quantum of standing stock of pine trees, how much of this stock will be harvested over the next five years and replanting efforts to ensure sustainability of the pine industry?

HON. O. NAIQAMU (Minister for Forestry).- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. We will move on to the second Written Question. I call on the Honourable Aseri Radrodoro to ask Written Question No. 10/2020. You have floor, Sir.

Breakdown of Treated and Untreated Piped Water Provisions
(Question No. 10/2020)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services provide to Parliament the total number of households according to Divisions, who have treated piped water provisions and untreated piped water provisions?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45 (3).

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. For the third Written Question, I give the floor to the Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa to ask Written Question No. 11/2020. You have the floor, Madam.

Rehabilitation Works - Schools Damaged by *TC Winston*
(Question. No. 11/2020)

HON. RO T.V. KEPA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications inform Parliament of the list of schools damaged by *TC Winston*, status of rehabilitation and the associated costs?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will provide a written answer to the question as provided under Standing Orders. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I thank all Honourable Members, the Questions time is now over.

Honourable Members, I thank you for your contributions for today's sitting. It has been a long day and I thank you for your forbearance. The Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m. Thank you.

The Parliament adjourned at 9.04 p.m.