

THURSDAY, 28TH APRIL, 2016

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

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present except the Hon. V.R. Gavoka; the Hon. S.D. Karavaki; the Hon. N. Nawaikula, and the Hon. Ratu N.T. Lalabalavu.

MINUTES

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, I beg to move:

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Wednesday, 27th April, 2016, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Acknowledgement of Hon. Members and Visitors in the Gallery

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to this sitting of Parliament. A warm welcome to yet another group of politics students from the University of the South Pacific and other members of the public joining us in the gallery, and those watching proceedings on televisions, internet and listening to the radio. I thank you for taking interest in your Parliament.

Admissibility of the Suspension Motion Without Notice

Honourable Members, several points of orders were raised during the proceedings of Parliament on Tuesday, 26th April, 2016.

The Opposition raised queries regarding the admissibility of the suspension motion moved by the Leader of Government in Parliament, to suspend Standing Order 46, to enable the Honourable Attorney-General to move his motion without notice.

Standing Order 6 sets out the way in which Standing Orders can be suspended. Standing Order 6(2) requires that the suspension motions or motions which have the same effect as suspension motions must not be moved, except with the Speaker's permission.

The Speaker is empowered to allow a suspension motion without notice, if he or she considers that it may be necessary to do so for the proper conduct of the Business of Parliament or urgent necessity requires. The substantive motion which was supposed to be moved by the Honourable Attorney-General related to proposed amendments to Standing Order 37, as well as Standing Order 99.

After considering the suspension motion, as well as the substantive motion, which the suspension motion was moved in relation to, I rule as follows:

- (a) I am referring to these proposed amendments to Standing Order 37, for deliberation by the Standing Orders Committee, in order for them to report back with their recommendations in the next sitting. I am, however, going to allow the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move another suspension motion later today, to allow a substantive motion to amend Standing Order 99, as I am satisfied pursuant to Standing Order 6(2) that urgent necessity does, in fact, require this, particularly due to the successful amendment yesterday of the Financial Management Act 2004.
- (b) Before the Financial Management Amendment Bill 2016 is assented to and commences, it is urgent that the relevant Standing Order provisions be amended. I am also mindful that this was brought to the attention of the Business Committee by the Honourable Attorney-General.
- (c) Finally, a motion will also be moved by the Leader of the Government in Parliament, to formally adopt and amend the sitting calendar, to facilitate the changes to the fiscal year. The amended calendar will be circulated to all Honourable Members shortly. Members are requested to note that these dates have been approved in principle by the Business Committee and is recommended to Parliament, pursuant to Standing Order 22(1).

After noting numerous points of order raised during the adoption of Minutes, it has become clear that there is some confusion as to what exactly is being confirmed by the item of business entitled “Confirmation of Minutes”.

- (d) Pursuant to Standing Order 31(2), that item of business is solely for the purpose of confirming the Minutes of Proceedings of the previous sitting. It has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the *Hansard Report*, which is governed by Standing Order 32. If you take issue with the *Hansard* transcription, the recourse is outlined in Standing Order 32(2). If there is any dispute, I am the final arbiter of the matter, as empowered by Standing Order 32(3). I hope this is clear and there is a clear understanding by Members of the difference between the Minutes and the *Hansard*.

Reshuffling of Government Committee Members – Standing Committees

For the information of the Honourable Members, I have received communications from the Government regarding a reshuffle of Government Members in five of our existing six Standing Committees, the exception is the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, whose membership remains unchanged. The Opposition Members in these Committees, it should be noted are also unaffected by this reshuffle.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

1. Hon. Ashneel Sudhakar
2. Hon. Alexander O'Connor
3. Hon. Mohammed Dean

Standing Committee on Economic Affairs

1. Hon. Lorna Eden
2. Hon. Dr. Brij lal
3. Hon. Vijay Nath

Standing Committee on Social Affairs

1. Hon. Viam Pillay
2. Hon. Veena Bhatnagar
3. Hon. Mohammed Dean

Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights

1. Hon. Ashneel Sudakhar
2. Hon. Mataiasi Niumataiwalu
3. Hon. Lorna Eden

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

1. Hon. Netani Rika
2. Hon. Mataiasi Niumataiwalu
3. Hon. Alexander O'Connor

I congratulate the new Members appointed and trust that you will perform your roles and functions to the best of your ability.

We will move on to the next agenda item.

QUESTIONSOral Questions

Repair Works at PAFCO after *TC Winston*
(Question No. 54/2016)

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forests explain whether the repair works at PAFCO in Levuka after *Tropical Cyclone Winston* would enable Fiji to export to the European Union under the Economic Partnership Agreement?

HON. O. NAIQAMU (Minister for Fisheries and Forests).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Kiliraki and I thank him for raising the question on a topic that needs

to be addressed to clarify fisheries exports to the European Union (EU) under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

For the information of the House, the question needs to be directed to the Ministry of Trade and Tourism. However, we continue to export to the EU market, despite damages caused by *TC Winston*.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; in relation to the damages to PAFCO, may I ask the Honourable Minister, if he can enlighten us on whether there was substantial damages to the factory and how much would it cost?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, it is a separate question, but for the information of the Honourable Member, PAFCO comes under the Ministry of Public Enterprises.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Speaker, that is the same question that I wanted to pose. Can the Honourable Minister explain what socio-economic benefits for repair work for the people of Ovalau or the Lomaiviti Province in terms of employment and the improvement of working conditions in the province of Lomaiviti? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, that is a totally new question. As I had already mentioned, PAFCO comes under the Ministry of Public Enterprises.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Madam Speaker, thank you very much and I thank the Honourable Minister for answering the questions. But, the question I would like pose to the Honourable Minister, Madam Speaker, is, whether the repair works that were conducted at PAFCO whether due process of selecting the company that has been contracted has been followed?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, I have already mentioned in this Honourable House that PAFCO comes under the ambit of the Ministry of Public Enterprises. Therefore, all its operations, the appointment of the Board, the way it is being managed, all come under the ambit of the Ministry of Public Enterprises.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Is that a supplementary question?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to make a point that in the Business Committee, the Honourable Attorney-General has often pointed out that the questions should be directed to the relevant Minister. In this regard, he did not redirect that question to himself, he authorised that it

could be asked to the Minister responsible. That is the clarification that we need from the Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you for the clarification but I think the Honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forests is very emphatic as to who is responsible and to answer that question.

I will now give the floor to the Honourable Jiosefa Dulakiverata.

Fiji's Annual Assessment and Voluntary Contribution to MSG
(Question No. 55/2016)

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs confirm the Fiji Government's annual assessment contribution and voluntary contribution to the MSG, and whether this has been paid up to date?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA (Minister for Foreign Affairs).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and would like to thank him for his question.

For the information of the Honourable Member, as agreed to in the MSG Summit in Honiara last year, Fiji has paid half of its contribution and this was done on 25th January this year.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his response but bearing in mind that New Caledonia or the Kanaks have pulled back, how would their contribution as shared out amongst the countries, affect Fiji's contribution in terms of the Ministry's budgetary allocation for 2016?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Speaker, for the information of the Honourable Member, every year, there has always been a difficulty for the FLNKS to pay its contributions. That is quite a problem because it is not government, it is a political organisation. The decision taken by the Leaders last year was for this to be shared by the member countries - Papua New Guinea, Solomons, Vanuatu and Fiji.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; the current debt owed to the MSG is almost FJD2.9million. This was one of the reasons why the former Director General, Mr Peter Forau, resigned last year. If this trend continues and if the Government wants to retain its nominee to the MSG (the current Director General, Mr. Amena Yauvoli), is the Government prepared to pump money into the Organisation to keep it functioning, and how much?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to point out to the Honourable Member that, that is not Fiji's debt. Fiji has paid up its contribution over the years. Even for this year as I have said before, we have already paid 50 percent of the annual contribution.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Salote Radrodro.

Civil Service Continuous Recruitment - Breach of Retirement Policy
(Question No. 56/2016)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications explain the continuous recruitment into the Civil Service of people beyond 55 years of age which is in breach of the Government's own Retirement Policy?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question and thank the Honourable Member for her question.

Madam Speaker, I wish the Honourable Member read the regulations and the law in respect of this. If you read the Public Service Regulations, it does say, 'Retirement age is 55', but it also does say that you can recruit people beyond that age on a contractual basis. The Government Policy has been that it has recruited people over the age of 55 in particular, when there has been specific skill sets is required for that person to continue within the Service.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. A supplementary question, Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; I thank the Honourable Minister and Attorney-General for his response. The question I would like to pose is, why are we appointing people from overseas to take up Permanent Secretary positions when we have locals who can fill up the positions of Permanent Secretaries? After all, Government is advocating Fiji made, so why not we look at our own products in terms of our human resources? .

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The Honourable Member normally asks very, very pertinent questions but in this instance, I think he has not asked a pertinent question in the sense that we have merit-based appointments. We simply do not appoint people just because they are Fijians and they do not meet the criteria.

The advertisement for the positions of the Permanent Secretaries is carried out by the Public Service Commission which is an independent body and they then assess independently the people who have applied, and they appoint the best person for the job. That is what we want, we want the best person for the job. As they always talk about service delivery, we also want service delivery, we want better financial management, and we have to appoint the best person for the right job.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker; I thank the Honourable Minister responsible for the Civil Service for his response, but bearing in mind that people are most important resources. The human resources are the most important resources in any country, and also supporting the theme of supporting Fiji-made and also because the Civil Service, I believe, is the biggest employer in Fiji, and having to retire people at 55, there is a huge loss of institutional knowledge, institutional capacity and if we look around now we can see that weakness in the Civil Service. It is because

of the loss of these officers and any country at 55, the human resources are at its peak and Fiji has and the Government has found it in their time

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Hon. Minister to reply to the question, please.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Can I ask the question?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker ... (inaudible)

HON. SPEAKER.- The time was taken up by that question therefore, was the end of the second question and I now give the third question and the last question to the Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you Madam. A supplementary question; would the Honourable Minister be able to inform this House today or by way of correspondence, how many people beyond the age of 55 are employed, either contractually or otherwise, with the Civil Service?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Hon. Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member very well knows, as he has been in Parliament before that, that when you require statistical information, you need to give notice but of course we can provide that to you.

There is a review, Madam Speaker, that is currently being carried out and I will address that in my Ministerial Statement later on. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua.

Development of Elite Athletes – Secondary School Coke Games
(Question No. 57/2016)

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA asked the Government, upon notice:

With the upcoming Secondary Schools Coke Games, can the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports explain what programmes, finance and technical support have been provided to develop elite athletes at both district and national levels?

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU (Minister for Youth and Sports).- Madam Speaker, I must thank Hon. Ratu Matanitobua for the question. Yes, we have finance and technical support for those elite athletes.

With the commencement of today's Coca Cola Games at 4.00 p.m., we will see about 2,500 athletes from 127 schools around Fiji, converging at the ANZ stadium for the next three days. Madam Speaker, the Coca Cola Games is one of the avenues where athletes and coaches not only have an opportunity to showcase their talents, it also provides a gauge to measure the success of development that were carried out by the Athletics Fiji for an athlete beginning from primary school below the age of nine on to secondary school level.

Madam Speaker, the National Sports Policy provides the overarching framework through which sports development is coordinated in Fiji. The policy encourages national sporting organizations to develop a more strategic approach to the development of sports and support elite athletes' development to promote excellence at national and international competitions.

Madam Speaker, the National Sports Commission plans and runs development programmes in the rural and urban areas, in particular these are the Sports Outreach Programme, Educate the Educated Programme to reach teachers on school sports programme, and how they can deliver different sports.

The Train the Trainer Programme to train rural and urban sports coaches, officials and administrators and they have also the kids in community sports that introduce new sports to primary schools.

Madam Speaker, Athletics Fiji, as part of their development plan, have been conducting Level 1 and Level 2 coaching courses for the past four years, in partnership with the Oceania Athletics Association and also sports stakeholders in the Ministry of Education. About 80 percent of its participants are school teachers. These teachers, at the end of the course, will apply their knowledge while developing the students' athletics in their general Physical Education classes.

Madam Speaker, this in turn promotes age and ability, appropriate healthier forms of structure, exercise programmes which improve students well-being, metabolism, health and alertness, which all are important in grooming a well-rounded healthy student.

Madam Speaker, this also complements and supports the Ministry of Health's initiatives such as the 'Wellness Programme' in schools, the use of sports as a tool to combat non-communicable diseases and transforming our nation's future generation into an active, healthier and more disciplined generation.

So the Government continues to support the development of Secondary School Elite athletes through an Olympic Preparation grant of \$124,000, provided through the National Sports Commission to Athletics Fiji. This is being utilised by a number of secondary schools athletes such as Alesi Finau of Jasper, who is part of the national training squad, as well as a former Coke Games star and the current elite athletes, who are competing to qualify for the Olympic Games. So straight after the Coca Cola Games, Alesi Finau will travel to Australia for the All Comers Meet, supported by funds provided by Government.

Madam Speaker, the Government has allocated \$9.2 million funding assistance for NSOs or the National Sporting Organization to develop athletes at national and international levels through grants such as the Athletes Overseas Scholarship Programme, short-term expert grants, where specialist trainers are brought to Fiji, overseas tours grants to send our elites to international events and hosting of special events here in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, as we speak, the Ministry of Education supports elite athletes when they travel overseas for competitions or on attachments. It pays the salaries of teachers who coach and manage athletes and grant leave for other teachers who are involved, especially when most of the meets are done during school hours, or working hours of teachers. I thank the Honourable Minister of Education for his support.

Madam Speaker, Government with Athletics Fiji is working on a scholarship programme, geared towards funding the education of secondary, tertiary or ten targeted elite school athletes, earmarking their development for Gold at the 2019 Pacific Games in Tonga.

This programme will help athletes develop both on and off the field with the proper support and guidance from parents, coaches and national sports organisation.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the National Sports Commission have identified the need for the establishment of a National Academy of Sports which will develop and implement programmes, especially aimed at persons who excel as elites and for that reason, yes, the Government has programmes for elite athletes. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. There being no supplementary questions, I will now give the floor to the Hon. Jilila Kumar.

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, please allow me to take this opportunity to extend my warm and well wishes to all our athletes of all secondary schools in Fiji as they are going to participate in the three days' inaugural event of Coca Cola Games, and allow me, Madam Speaker, I would like to give my very special wishes to my teams, Jasper and Natabua, as they are going to defend their titles again in this Coca Cola Games.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Well of course, not forgetting Marist Brothers High School. I wish Marist Brothers High School a very special warm and well wishes. Marist Brothers High School, yes, I am part of the family now, Madam Speaker.

Lagilagi Housing Project
(Question No. 58/2016)

HON. J.N. KUMAR asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister inform this House when the Lagilagi Housing Project will be completed and how many squatters will be housed under this project?

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government, Housing & Environment, Infrastructure & Transport).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question by the Honourable Member and I thank her for the question.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, the Lagilagi Housing Project is a Government funded project in partnership with the People's Community Network for Squatters. The main objective of the housing development is to provide security of tenure and decent and affordable homes for squatters.

Madam Speaker, the project is expected to be completed in October, 2016. The number of families that will be accommodated after completion is 77 families. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, the Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- We do thank the Honourable Minister for the explanation given regarding the Lagialgi Housing Project. As we all understand, the Lagilagi Housing Project was initially targetted to house those squatters around that area. Unfortunately, when some of the houses have been completed the rental that was charged on those properties was too high for the squatters to meet that themselves, so some of the people from outside are now living there at the moment.

My question to the Honourable Minister is; how will he take charge of the squatters who are still there at the moment, who are supposed to be occupying those dwellings?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, when the MOU was done, the initial understanding was that the squatters who are residing at Jittu Estate will be accommodated. To some extent, the Honourable Member is right that there were few who came from outside, but that has been sorted out. We would have asked PCN to accommodate those who are sitting tenants at Jittu Estate first, and that should be priority because that was the understanding then, so they are working on that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, the question that I would want to ask has been asked by Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Anare Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Speaker, some of the squatters have paid some money with the intention of acquiring houses set up by the Lagilagi Housing Project but uptil now, they are still without a house. What will be done to recover the costs that have been collected from those squatters?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, some have paid their deposit and the reason for that payment is because they want a unit or dwelling there. The development is done in phases - Phase I, Phase II and Phase III. At the moment, Phase I is completed with 77 units. We are now into Phase II, also with 77 units, and Phase III will be 150 units where all those people will be accommodated. So, I do not think there is an intention for reimbursement.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, that was the third and last supplementary question. I now give the floor to the Honourable Samuela Vunivalu.

Addressing Communicable Diseases - Post *Tropical Cyclone Winston*
(Question No. 59/2016)

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform this House on how the Ministry is addressing the threat of communicable diseases post-*TC Winston* and flooding?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Madam Speaker, I rise to answer the question posed by the Honourable Vunivalu and I thank him for his question. In the aftermath of any event of this nature whether it is a cyclone or a flood, there is always a grave concern on communicable diseases and the impact that it has. The approach that has been taken in the Ministry in the aftermath of *TC Winston* is the same sort of thing that would also apply to the floods that followed after that.

The first step is always to get a group to sit and try to assess what the risks are for the different kinds of diseases that might occur in the aftermath of an event like a cyclone or a flood. As a result of that, they look at all the diseases that are likely to happen, the potential morbidity and mortality arising out of all those things that are happening in the aftermath of the event, and they take into consideration the fact that when you have an event of this nature, population are moving around. People converge into evacuation centres, there is a devastation on infrastructure, there is a lack of sanitation and water, there is poor waste management, people do not have enough nutrition because of the shortage of food, and people have difficulties in accessing health facilities.

Taking all of these into account, there is a realisation in order to address the risk of communicable disease, you cannot just approach it from within the realms of the Ministry of Health on its own. You have to have an approach that covers a wide range of Government agencies, so as a result, we pull together all of these Government agencies so we can have a collaborative approach in co-operating the input of all different Government agencies. Therefore, it is not just the Ministry of Health alone. That is the first thing that is always done – the risk assessment and identifying how we can address the risks from across different agencies.

The second step then is to look at all the likely diseases that might take place and prioritise these diseases in terms of the ones that we have to address in the immediate short-term, those that have to be addressed in the medium term, and those that have to be addressed in the long-term. Doing this allows you to focus your resources and your people into the areas in which you will have the highest likely impacts.

When you look at the major causes of communicable diseases that occur in the aftermath of an event like this, you have four different categories. The first category which is always the immediate priority is the infections due to wounds and injuries. In a cyclone, people get wounded because of flying debris or in the floods they might step on things that impacted and hurt their legs or their bodies, so that will always be the immediate priority that the health facilities will have to deal with.

The second type of diseases would be water borne diseases whether you have a cyclone or a flood, diseases like diarrhoea, leptospirosis, and all these kinds of events. These are also short-term priorities that the Ministry has to gear up, together with its partners to address.

The third type of area in which we have diseases that we have to focus on is diseases associated with travelling. In the aftermath of an event like this, people move to evacuation centres and when you have a large number of people in small area, there are all kinds of diseases that can emanate out of this. Acute respiratory infections such as flu, pneumonia, diseases like measles, meningitis or typhoid becomes an immediate priority.

The fourth area that we are always worried about in the aftermath of an event is vector-borne diseases, things that are borne and spread by mosquitoes, rodents, things like Dengue, *Chikungunya*, *Zika*, Ross River or virus transmission. Those are short and medium term priorities.

The first approach is to identify what the risks are, what the different agencies that we need to call in to address these risks, and then begin to provide the service. Obviously, in a large event of this nature, you need to have very good governance and co-ordination of all the bodies that are involved. Within the Ministry of Health, there is a public health intervention sub-cluster of the health and nutrition cluster. So, we have a Health and Nutrition cluster that brings in all the agencies that are associated with health, but under that cluster we have a sub-cluster that looks only at the public health components. So, it is this unit that coordinates all their activities that are undertaken.

As part of the co-ordination, they do four basic things. First and very important is the issue of surveillance, making sure that you have ways of identifying whether there will be likely outbreaks of diseases. In this cyclone, we have the development of an early warning and response system. This is where we set up 34 Government Health facilities all around the country where we try to keep track of the events of the likely diseases that will take place. Information on this is passed on or downloaded on to a mobile app, and this information is then sent to the Centre. This allows us to keep a tab on what are the likely diseases that will take place.

Together with the early warning and the response system is a normal lab-based surveillance system that collects data from all the health facilities around the country. After you have the surveillance, you need to have the ability to be able to deal with what you learn - the clinical management of the cases that

we have. In this, we need to make sure that we have infrastructure, we need to make sure that we have infrastructure, we need to make sure that the facilities are up and running as quickly as possible. In some of our facilities the whole clinic was destroyed, but we needed to make sure that the service could still continue to be provided, may be from a tent or from a nurse's quarters, but the service needs to be provided from the infrastructure.

Secondly, we need to make sure that we have the technical capacities and competencies of staff to be able to deliver service, and in this area we are very fortunate that in this event, we are able to call upon the assistance of our friends from Australia and New Zealand and other areas like the Rama Krishna and the Viseisei Sai and the FNU, also provide their staff in addition to the Ministry of Health to be able to provide assistance to all the people out there.

The third area where there is a focus on is prevention and control. In this prevention and control, we have had a lot of activities on Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). As I mentioned in my Ministerial Statement, we distributed about 60,000 WASH kits. We tried to make sure that people are having access to good water and so forth.

There were a lot of activities on vector-borne disease controls such as mosquito borne diseases like *Zika* and *Chikungunya* and *Dengue*. Although at the end of the day, if one of these preventative measures do not work, we can also resort to vaccines, which is something that has taken place for the Typhoid in Tailevu North.

The fourth area in which there is a lot of focus in the aftermath of a cyclone is making sure that we are providing information to the public. Risk information, dissemination on information on disease risks and its prevention and control internally within the Ministry and the Government, and also externally to the general public and these messages continue today. These are the general sort of areas in which the general approach that has been taken in order to address the communicable diseases.

I have the data that has been provided from the Ministry so far and in the period from post-*Winston*, 20th February to around 22nd of April, we have had about 60 cases of Typhoid; about 138 cases of Leptospirosis; 150 of *Dengue*, Measles about 2, *Chikungunya* 2 and *Zika* around 13.

So, we always have a fear of massive outbreaks and I think the biggest outbreak that we have had is conjunctivitis, then there had been a localised typhoid outbreaks or it has not been as bad as we feared, and that I think bears testimony to some of the efforts that were being put in.

At the moment, there is still a continued focus on communicable disease prevention and control. We still have a lot of focus on the typhoid outbreak that have taken place in Tailevu North. We have introduced a vaccination program now and together with the taking of blood samples so we can make sure that when we do the vaccination, it is targeted towards the people that on which it will have a likely highest possible effective impact.

The third thing that is being undertaken now is the National Clean Up campaign to prevent diseases born by mosquitoes, especially the *Zika* virus, *Dengue* and *Chikungunya*. This clean-up will be taking place from Saturday this week and on three consecutive Saturdays after that to keep the mosquito density to a minimum and this is something that we appeal to everyone and to this country - destroying mosquito breeding grounds. We need to be able to do that, we need to do that collectively, not just from Government working together in partnership with local government, but the whole community as a whole needs to get behind this.

From last week, we have commenced the implementation of our National Response Plan to the *Zika* virus. We will continue to enhance and intensify our response to the leptospirosis situation and we will continue to look and work with our partners for the funding of communicable disease prevention.

I think one of the things that I must mention here is the appreciation that we have to all the partners that have come to provide us assistance in this attempt to deal with communicable diseases. We have had, for instance, we have support from two Cuban epidemiologist who are still now based with the Fiji Centre of Communicable Disease Control in Mataika House, where we had the four epidemiologist from the World Health Organization based within the Ministry, the Centre and also out in the Divisions.

We have had communications specialists from the World Health Organization, specialising in risk communication, assisting our communications office to be able to provide the right kind of messages to the public. We have had the WASH cluster support officer from UNICEF helping us out and we have had logistics support officer assisting also the Fiji Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Services and the other one helping out with the post disaster needs assessment and we have also had the laboratory support from the SPC.

Technical meetings continue within our Divisional Response Teams, Emergency Teams and with all of our key programme partners and I must also express my appreciation to all the staff of the Ministry of Health and others who came together to visit people, to talk to people, to spend time to try to make sure that we do not have a massive outbreak of communicable diseases. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Hon. Minister. Supplementary question, the Hon. Kiliraki.

HON. RATU. K. KILIRAKI.- Supplementary question. I thank the Honourable Minister for the comprehensive response to the question. I wish to ask a question whether he can explain as to how they put long-term plan in regards to non-communicable diseases and this is would be associated with food distribution, the malnutrition that are reported and in regards to these people who will affect, maybe affected because of the food they eat to cancers and all the non-communicable diseases: hypertension and all those issues whether they have a long-term plan in regards to the non-communicable diseases. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Hon. Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Hon. Kiliraki for his question. The original question was about communicable diseases, this is about non-communicable diseases, but I do not have the full details and I can assure the Members of this House and the public that here is a strong focus on non-communicable diseases.

In my Ministerial Statement earlier this week, I mentioned the fact that in visiting the island of Koro and the children that we surveyed, we found that about 44 percent of them were malnourished at that time, but through the interventions that have taken place, through the feeding and the adding of micronutrients supplements to the children and also through the efforts of the NDMO in trying to broaden the kind of food that is made available to try to ensure that we can try planting of *kumala* and planting of seedlings, we hope to be able to enhance the kind of food that they have so that they can address these sort of issues.

In the bigger picture, the Government also has a National NCD Strategic Plan, which we are implementing and which we hope to work with a lot of partner agencies, not only to communicate to tell and to inform the public about the things that they need to do in order to minimise NCDs, but at the same time also try to create an environment in which it is easier for people to make the right choices about what

they should do or should not do. I can ensure the public that NCDs continue to be a major focus of the Ministry because as we know 80 percent of all premature deaths is because of NCDs.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, Hon. Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Supplementary question Madam Speaker. Can I ask the Honourable Minister how will he fund this program from this 2016 budget? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Obviously in the aftermath of a cyclone like this, we lay out our plans, but we have to pool funds to pay for the things that we have already had to do and plans obviously change and evolve. As a result of this, we are relooking at our own funding, what we can fund from within. We have the assistance of our development partners and through collaboration and discussion, we will need to try to find the best mix of using the funds that are available to the Ministry, but also working with our development partners to source the funds that they can have to assist us, in order to meet the requirements of trying to keep our population as healthy as possible.

HON. SPEAKER.- Now you are allowed only one supplementary question, I'm afraid Hon. Vadei. I cannot give you the floor. You have made your one supplementary question, you are entitled to only just one.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Only one.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, there being no other supplementary questions, I will now give the floor to the Hon. Alvick Maharaj.

Fiji Police Force Initiative
(Question No. 60/2016)

HON. A A. MAHARAJ asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration tell this House whether the Fiji Police Force has plans for new initiatives or to develop their existing programmes to counter the increase in domestic and social-law breaking activities?

HON. CAPT T.L.NATUVA (Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration).- Madam Speaker, I wish to thank Honourable Member for the question.

Madam Speaker, the Fiji Police is mandated by law to enforce all laws which it is directly charged with and strongly promotes and enforces Fiji laws and legislation, including laws related to domestic violence or any other offences. Madam Speaker, this is complimented by the enforcement of internal policies, one in particular is the No-Drop Policy which is specially applied to domestic violence. The policies in place do not only target members of the public, but also applicable to any member of the Fiji Police Force. We are trying to really enforce that.

Madam Speaker, the Fiji Police has nine key performance indicators which acts like a ruler for the Fiji Police, to measure its performance on an annual basis. The reduction of violence against women and children is amongst those performance indicators. It is a daily battle for the Fiji Police and through the years, has been trying to address these issues.

Madam Speaker, the Fiji Police has been adopting the Duavata Community Policing Strategy for almost three years now and we are re-enforcing the Programme. The intention is to try and incorporate all relevant stakeholders to be part of the initiative, and we need the contribution of the public to be part of this Duavata Programme where we have divided a community into sectors where policemen are assigned for each individual sector.

The Police have developed certain strategies to address this challenging situation. The Police are strengthening its Investigation and Crime Intelligence Division by committing more resources than before, and incorporating more training targeted towards all police officers in investigating. We are re-training our police offices in investigation programmes, and we are seeking assistance from our neighbours, Australia and New Zealand. This, Madam Speaker, will ensure that the police officers who are involved in societal programmes are more attentive, and produce comprehensive and positive outcomes of cases diligently.

Madam Speaker, through the existing Duavata Concept, the strengthening of collaboration with stakeholders and communities through more awareness campaign through public forums and *talanoa* sessions will enable a close contact and interaction with the public, to ensure confidence. We need the confidence of the public with the Police. We are trying to do that now. There was a barrier before but we are trying to reinforce that so that the public have more confidence in the police officers.

Madam Speaker, we now have a No-Drop Policy on crimes against women and children, and other domestic and sexual violence crimes.

Madam Speaker, there is also an initiative to change in the Police Procedures, the attendance and completion of investigation within 24 hours. That is one of the new initiatives that came up during the change of the new Commissioner of Police, and we are trying to achieve that.

The Police are in the process of strengthening the emergency call lines in collaboration with the local telecommunication providers. There were some comments about 919 and 917 emergency lines, and we are trying to reinforce that.

Madam Speaker, there is pursuit endeavouring on more smart deployments and utilising of resources for the future. Now that we have been allocated with more than 40 new vehicles for this year, which has contributed to the work of our policemen whereby they would be able to respond in time when the calls come from the general public.

We are also restructuring the Police Force. The last restructure was about 10 years ago, and we are targeting more resources in areas that we think are very important, like crime against women and children, the violent crimes, the cybercrimes and transnational crimes.

At the divisional level, the Divisional Police Commanders are encouraged to form Response Units and Taskforces, which was never done before, so as to effectively deal with crimes and help reduce the backlog.

Madam Speaker, the Fiji Police is not only enforcing our current legislation, but also at every opportunity, are creating awareness along the margins of the Duavata Strategy in its effort of combating these emerging issues. The increase in the reported cases could be an indication of the confidence by the victims to report to Police to address such activities with the proper procedure to follow.

Madam Speaker, finally, I wish to reiterate as I had previously done, that fighting crimes is not only the Police battle, and we need the support and help of every single person in Fiji.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, Honourable Ratu Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Can you explain how the community is associated to those Police Post all over Fiji? How has the community dovetail to their programme, to support what you have just said?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, as I have mentioned before, we are reinforcing the Duavata Police Programme. Before, there used to be only the community and the Police Post. Now, we are subdividing their areas of responsibility into sectors, and we assign a policeman to look after that sector. So, when people call, they call this particular individual. That is done because sometimes when the people call, there is no one in the office.

You will understand that in some of the Police Posts, there is only one telephone. We are making sure that a police officer is directly responsible to a sector, and everything that comes from that sector is reported to him, then he reports to his Station Officer. That is the initiative that we are trying to do now, it has only started this year but I hope it is a long programme. We have to have the confidence of the people to call the police whenever there are issues to be addressed.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his great concern on the protection of women.

I would like to ask the question; what is the Fiji Police Force's most immediate and urgent need, resource-wise, to ensure the effective implementation of the No-Drop Policy, the initiatives like Duavata Community Strategy, and also for all crimes against women, bearing in mind that what the Honourable Minister had mentioned is totally a different picture from the reality on the ground, as we know the continuous increase in crimes against women and children?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, I think in the last part of my response to the question, I mentioned that now, the public have the confidence of reporting, which was never done before. In a normal *iTaukei* community, sometimes they are reluctant to report incidences, but now they have more confidence because of the awareness campaigns that our police officers are doing, and people are coming up with issues. We know that it is rising but we are trying to address the issue.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his response to the question.

Fiji has one of the highest rate of domestic and social violence in the South Pacific or, if not, the world. From surveys, we are the fourth. From all the reported cases that have come to your attention, have you done any analysis and what do you think is the main cause of all these domestic problems?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT T.L.NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the question. I think everything starts from home and one of the very important thing is parenting. Also, one of the roles of the lay preacher in all churches is to try to instil what is supposed to be good parenting.

Now, children are able to see things that they should not see on the internet, and I know that in the Security Council, we are trying to come up with initiatives, if it is possible to stop all the sites, (the obscene sites), but it is very difficult at the moment. We are trying to liaise with Vodafone and Digicel of how we can do that. It is very difficult at the moment, because it is like a source of income to them.

Now, if all the parents of each house give what is supposed to be good parenting and tell the children what to do because the children of today are very volatile, like speaking against his father, et cetera and that is where it comes from and if it is not controlled, it would develop. The Police cannot do everything, it depends on parenting from home, village and from the community and that is what we are trying to address.

As I mentioned in my answer to the question, it is an initiative for all of us, if we are identifying that it is an increase, then, every Fijian should address the issue and not to blame the Police alone for not doing that.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I now give the floor to the Hon. Mohammed Dean.

Assistance to MSB Grant Recipients affected by *Tropical Cyclone Winston*
(Question No. 61/2016)

HON. M.M.A. DEAN.- Madam Speaker, before I ask my question, let me convey my sympathy to all Fijians who were affected by the devastation of *Cyclone Winston*. We hope and pray for them and at this juncture, I also commend the efforts of all those stakeholders who assisted the people of Fiji, who were affected by *Cyclone Winston*, particularly the Government, our foreign counterparts, business enterprises, NGOs and the people of Fiji

Madam Speaker, I rise to ask the question, as follows:

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism inform this House what steps will the Ministry undertake to assist its Micro Small Business Grant recipients who were affected by Tropical Cyclone Winston?

HON. F. S. KOYA (Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism).- Madam Speaker, may I also take this opportunity to wish all the athletes at the Cokes Games the best of luck and especially to those from Natabua and Jasper.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- And of course, R.K.S, Madam Speaker.

(Laughter)

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F. S. KOYA.- It seems like I am going to get beaten.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, I cannot emphasise enough the importance of the Micro and Small Business Sectors to Fiji. As the Honourable Members are aware, the Government's Micro Small Business Grant Scheme, prior to *Cyclone Winston*, had provided assistance to about 4,950 odd businesses in terms of start-up and expansion of businesses.

Now Madam Speaker, basically this led to the improvement of livelihoods to approximately 24,000-odd and 750-odd Fijians and indirectly impacted many others. Madam Speaker, a number of these businesses have been affected by the Cyclone and the Ministry has undertaken the following steps to provide support to these small businesses in the cyclone affected areas, and basically to stimulate some economic activities.

We have done some preliminary assessments of the damage of the businesses in the cyclone affected areas and through which the Ministry will identify medium and long-term strategies and policy initiatives for them.

Madam Speaker, this assessment included all the Micro and Small Businesses on the Ministry's database and it should be noted that the support will not just be limited to businesses that have received the grant but also those who are successful, but were yet to receive the grant and these are the Micro and Small Businesses in the affected areas. Through the assessments, we have calculated the cost of damages and resources and that will obviously require to get these businesses back on their feet.

A proper project paper has been developed by the Ministry, Madam Speaker, it has been used to liaise with donor partners also and also the Ministry of Finance to obtain the required funding, to provide the needed support to these businesses. The Ministry has also formed an Economic Activities Cluster Group, which includes key Government economic agencies that will collectively look at each of the Micro and Small Businesses that will require these assistance and the group will basically determine target and focus support.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, Hon. Alvik Maharaj

HON. A.A. Maharaj.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Can the Honourable Minister inform this House, what form of support will be provided to Micro and Small Businesses?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, as I had alluded to earlier in my response, there is an Economic Activities Cluster Group which has been formed, and this group include the key Government economic agencies such as the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism; Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Fisheries and Forests; Reserve Bank of Fiji and the Fiji Development Bank, to name a few.

The group will basically assess the extent of damages and the ability of an individual to restart their businesses. The group will basically have a collective plan, in terms of medium and long-term development of that particular area. It would also be responsible for determining the businesses that are to be assisted and ensuring that the support provided is holistic, Madam Speaker, to quickly get these

businesses back on their feet and will actually set in place some criteria, and that will ensure accountability and efficacy of the grant and long-term sustainability of the particular project.

Madam Speaker, as with all the Fijian Government initiatives, we are actually thinking long-term and therefore, the group will also make some policy recommendation to my Ministry. Thank you, Madam.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Hon. Viam Pillay

HON. V. PILLAY.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Honourable Minister, you have stated in your answer that the Ministry has undertaken preliminary assessment of the cost. Will you be able to let the House know what the total cost of the damages is and the areas covered? Furthermore, can you also provide a rough breakdown of the number of Micro and Small Businesses that are affected?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Hon. Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I thank the Honourable Member for this question. Madam Speaker, the initial assessment undertaken by the Ministry is a desktop assessment, which is currently being verified by onsite assessments by the Post Disaster Needs Assessment Team which is led by the Ministry. Therefore, it might be a bit pre-mature for the Ministry to release the total cost and the number of Micro Small Businesses affected that were part of the grant scheme. However, Madam Speaker, based on the path of the cyclone, it is estimated that at least 40 percent of the grant recipients may have sustained damages, and whilst the remaining number of recipients for example, in Savusavu as counted are being affected.

The total investment, Madam Speaker, by the Fijian Government in the future of the Micro and Small Businesses Grant, through the grant was approximately \$2.8 million prior to the Cyclone. Additionally, Madam Speaker, as per the assessment, we are looking into the following areas and specified number of Micro and Small Businesses that will be assisted.

Basically in terms of centres, for Rakiraki, Madam Speaker, the number of recipients is 531 and we had disbursed \$513,000 and the total cost of damages is probably about \$790,000. In the centre of Ba, it was about 226 which just came to about \$210,000 that was disbursed. In terms of Savusavu, we had 466 recipients and \$453,000 was disbursed and the cost of damage and recovery is probably about \$869,000.

In total, the cost of damage and recovery, we are looking at roughly about \$3 million and actual amount disbursed correlating to that, amounts to about \$1.9 million. If, Madam Speaker, in terms of undisbursed MSB Grant applicants, and if you look into the total cost of recovery, the recipients are about 3,172 so in total, probably roughly about \$6 million.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I give the floor to the Hon. Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his detailed explanation. Out of the 4,950 people assisted through this MSB, what is the success rate in terms of percentage?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, it will be premature for me to release any success ratings in light of the cyclone because we were in the process of determining it for the year. So, I will be lying if I said some figure right now.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

HON. SPEAKER.- The Hon. Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs and Sugar Industry; the Hon. Attorney-General and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications; the Hon. Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management; the Hon. Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism; and the Hon. Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts have given notice to make Ministerial Statements under Standing Order 34.

Each Minister may speak up to 20 minutes, after which I will then invite the Honourable Leader of the Opposition or her designates 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 (NFP) or his designate to also speak for five minutes, and there will be no other debate. Before we continue, is there a Point of Order?

HON. ROKO. T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, we are only seeking a clarification, we have received notice of the Hon. Prime Minister's topic but because the same issue was discussed on Monday, I am wondering whether the Standing Orders do not allow it for another six months? It is only a question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, for the information of the Honourable Members, Standing Order 40 outlines the requirements of Ministerial Statements. There is no restriction on Ministerial Statements, other than they be on a public matter of national importance. I have considered this criteria and have decided that this matter is on a matter of national importance and will, therefore, proceed.

I will now call on the Hon. Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs and Sugar Industry to deliver his statement.

Call for Restoration of the Great Council of Chiefs

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to make a Ministerial Statement about the calls by the Opposition for the Great Council of Chiefs to be restored. I want to explain to the nation why the Government opposed this on Monday, and I do so not only as a Prime Minister but as the Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs and, of course, as a proud *iTaukei* myself.

Before I do so, Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for those wonderful wishes on my birthday celebration yesterday and, of course, to the Leader of the Opposition for her kind words of support, and also to my colleagues, the Honourable Members of Parliament, and to the many hundreds of Fijians, who wished me well yesterday. As we all know, Madam Speaker, it is only another day in our life. Today, we will try to cure the hangovers from last night's grog session, and we are back on our feet to continue to do what we are required to do for the people of Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I want to say that as a Christian and for those of us who are Christians in this House, I want to add that every time you say our prayer in the morning, I also say *Emeni Jisu*, but to myself. I do not need to make an announcement of it because I see there is a vote-buying process.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- As a Christian, we all know that one day we will pass on and there will be a day of reckoning, we will front up to our Maker and no doubt, we will be asked as what we

have left behind as a father, as a son-in-law, as a wife or a husband, and as a good mother. No doubt, Madam Speaker, we will be asking this question in our afterlife. We will also be asked what kind of person we have been. Have we been good Christians?

There has been a lot of talk about racism lately, about racism in the past, and I think as a Christian I have been taught to love my fellowmen. These are my fellowmen here, Madam Speaker, people I have been taught to love, not only as a Christian, but we have been brought up in that environment and no doubt in my mind that we all have been brought up to love one another. So, it irks me as a person, as a Prime Minister to see racism rear its ugly head every now and then.

(Hon. Ratu I.D. Tikoca interjected)

Madam Speaker, we keep on hearing that voice now and then, and it is the voice of someone who does not think he will pass on to the other life.

(Hon. Ratu I.D. Tikoca interjected)

There you go again, Madam Speaker.

I think we should bring in this issue of equality. This is to get rid of the racism that has been rife in our lives, and if we get rid of this, I have no doubt in my mind, no doubt at all that Fiji will prosper.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, how many constitutions have been done in braille? The reason we did in braille is to tell the world and our disabled that we care for them and they are equal to us. The reason why we have brought Hon. Delana into this side of the House is to tell the disabled that there is no difference between him and me.

(Hon. Member interjected)

However, there is a slight difference, he has won himself a gold medal but I have not. We spoke about equality, and that is the reason why we have brought up this notion of making a Ministerial Statement about our opposition to the Great Council of Chiefs – an undemocratic entity in Fiji that brings about racial discrimination. I will tell you why, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I want to inform you and also this House that I am not talking about the chiefs here. We should differentiate the GCC which has been made political in the past, and our chiefs which are still very much part of our lives and there will remain with us.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- The Honourable Leader of the Opposition is sitting across the room from me, the Hon. Ro Teimumu Kepa; the Tui Namosi is still sitting there as Tui Namosi. Hon. Biman Prasad, who might be called a *Ratu* if he performs his duty well to the people of Fiji like we have done then we have been addressed as such in the public because we have done our work well. Those of us commoners had been also addressed as ‘*ratus*’, but I care very deeply about this issue, Madam Speaker.

I irk when I hear Honourable Members from the Opposition, members of the Naitasiri Province to say; “We want you to do this in Naitasiri.” The lady across the room says; “We want you to do this in Lau”, throughout the sittings in the past. We have had some of the biggest reforms in Rotuma. There is no one from Rotuma on this side of the House.

There is electricity now in Naitasiri, Madam Speaker, by me. I am not from Naitasiri, I am from Tailevu, I want to tell the people of Fiji that this side of the House and that half are here to look after everyone in Fiji, not just a group. So, as I said Madam Speaker,

(Loud banging and cheering)

I care very deeply about this issue and everything I do as Prime Minister is motivated by what is best for every Fijian, including the iTaukei, who I think have been given a raw deal in the past because of this race issue.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- (Inaudible interjection)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- You will keep hearing that voice, Madam Speaker, that is an interruption by a man who does not think he is going to pass on to the afterlife ...

(Laughter)

... and I believe passionately that restoring the institution of the GCC,, Madam Speaker, is not in the best interest of the *iTaukei*, and let me tell you why.

First of all, I have to say that with all the suffering and hardships in Fiji at the moment, this was an astonishing petition and a motion to move forward at the first Parliamentary sitting since *Tropical Cyclone Winston*.

(Hon. Members interjected)

Our people are still coming to terms with the loss of 44 of their loved ones; up to 40,000 homes either damaged or destroyed, along with 229 schools and other public buildings and infrastructure. Is restoring the GCC in the list most important at the present time? Yet, this is what the Opposition came here with on Monday ...

(Hon. Members interjected)

... the very first motion at the very first sitting of the Parliament since Winston ...

(Chorus of interjections)

... not to talk about our collective response to the present crisis or the rebuilding programme that lies ahead, but to drag us all back into the past.

Madam Speaker, those of us on this side of the House and that half, can scarcely believe that at this time, this is the priority of the Honourable Leader of Opposition and those Members opposite, sitting across the room, to try to breathe life into an institution that is long gone, an undemocratic entity and an issue that is irrelevant when so many of our people are in such a desperate state.

The GCC was disestablished more than 4 years ago in March 2012. Why waste our time on this 49 months later, trying to revive an issue that has nothing whatsoever to do with the current needs of the Fijian people ...

(Hon. Members interjected)

... to have made this your first priority in the Parliament since *Cyclone Winston*, I think Madam Speaker, on their part, is an insult to our people, given their present challenges. Madam Speaker, it is nearly 3 months since the last Parliamentary session, we in the Government were hoping that during this hardest time, the Opposition would use the time to work out where it is going wrong, heal some of its internal divisions, come up with some answers as to why there is such a disconnect between its agenda and the needs and aspirations of ordinary Fijians. Only yesterday, the Opposition put the interests of a single company with 3 employees before the interest of about 900,000 Fijians.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, it is now more than 9 weeks, since *Cyclone Winston* devastated this country, 9 weeks in which the Opposition had time to think about how it might contribute positively to the relief effort aside from its cash donations and get behind the nation as we confront the great challenge we all face to re-build Fiji. I seriously expected them to finally meet the challenge of being an effective Opposition, instead of the ineffectual rebel that they have become and, Madam Speaker, 'rebel' is the only word to describe the antics of Members opposite, like the Honourable Tikoca, constantly interjecting, nothing positive, no vision, no new ideas, no solutions, rumbling grumbling, presence who constantly harps on about the non-existent threat to the *iTaukei* and threatens Honourable Members of this House, and doing so, has lowered the tone of these proceedings to the same level as his voice.

(Laughter)

We naively thought that with the fellow Fijians in crisis, the Opposition would rise to the occasion and join us in the task of doing a better job of serving our people.

(Hon. Members interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order.

(Hon. Members interjects)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- If you might listen

HON. SPEAKER.- We are getting into frivolous interjections, which really is disorderly in this House. Please be respectful, and we will be giving the Hon. Prime Minister more time for this deliberations.

Honourable Prime Minister, please continue.

HON. J.V.BAINIMARAMA. - Thank you, we naively thought that with the fellow Fijians in crisis, Madam Speaker, the Opposition will rise to the occasion and join us in the task of doing a better job of serving our people, fresh ideas, innovative suggestions, bring to this Chamber at least a degree of brain power and common sense, because you all had ample time on your hands to think things over since *Winston*, while we have had our own hands full, dealing with this crisis. Instead, you come here with something that is absolutely no relevance to the present needs of the Fijian people or their future hopes and aspirations. The Opposition, Madam Speaker, wants to breathe life into an issue that was settled in 2012, not for the benefit of the Fijian people but for their own benefit, to try to restore the power and privilege of the elite and reassert political chiefly supremacy over commoner *iTaukei* and every other citizen.

Madam Speaker, it is also pointless, so unnecessary. Just think of what we have achieved as a nation in the four years since the GCC was abolished: we have a new Constitution that establishes this Parliament as a Supreme decision making body in the country, and we have had the first truly democratic Elections in which almost 60 per cent of the electorate voted for change, voted not for SODELPA which

went around campaigning that a vote for FijiFirst would mean the loss of *iTaukei* land, *iTaukei* culture, *iTaukei* identity, but they voted for FijiFirst Government to take our nation forward.

(Chorus of interjections)

... voted emphatically, stop raking over the whole arguments of the past and chart a new course.

HON.SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, on a Point of Order, this continuous barrage of interruption is unacceptable at the Ministerial Statement level, Madam Speaker.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.-_He should be removed Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER. - Point of Order. I have made a warning before and I will not make another one. Please, can you stop the interjections otherwise, I may have to use my Standing Orders rule.

HON. J.V.BAINIMARAMA. - Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER. - Please let us give respect to the Honourable Prime Minister, and again we will give him extra time for all these interjections. Thank you Honourable Prime Minister, you may continue.

HON. J.V.BAINIMARAMA. - I wanted to ask you, Madam Speaker, when other Honourable Members opposite are going to finally wake up. When are they going to come to terms with the fact that they went to the nation with their politics of division and were rejected? When are they going to become an effective Opposition worthy of their name and to do their job properly? When are they going to stop being obsessed with the past and turn their minds around to helping Fijians create a better future?

This is our future, sitting at the back of the room there, Madam Speaker, and by the way, when will the current NFP leadership develop a spine and confront the prejudices SODELPA, prejudices that the founders of the NFP stood against, Madam Speaker.

On Monday, we had a line of Opposition Member, giving a succession of History lessons but it is a sign of how much they have lost the plot, that most of those lessons were factually wrong, so permit me Madam Speaker, to give the members on the other side a basic lesson in History that is grounded in fact.

The astonishing claim was made on Monday, that the GCC was an indigenous organisation stretching back to before Colonial times. Wrong, Madam Speaker, Madam Speaker, it was established by the British in 1876, initially as a Native Council, two years after our islands were handed over to Queen Victoria by Ratu Seru Cakobau and the other chiefs who signed the Deed of Cession.

So the institution, is not indigenous institution at all; it was a British institution, set-up by colonisers, and it was set-up so the British could govern and control the indigenous population through the chiefs at that time, Madam Speaker, the British used the GCC to serve their own purposes. They have hereditary chiefs of their own – they are Dukes, Earls, Barons, et cetera, so they were very comfortable, dealing with the hereditary chiefs in Fiji and not with the troublesome commoners but people like them, who owned their power to an accidental birth, people who could order everyone else to fall in line.

Madam Speaker, this arrangement worked well for the British until they left 94 years later in 1970, but let us not kid ourselves. The whole system was about control. The British with the support of the chiefs, decided what was best for ordinary Fijians whether they like it or not.

In fact, Madam Speaker, Ratu Sukuna's father, Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi opposed giving commoners the right to vote in the Legislative Council because they said the chiefs knew best what was good for the commoners, that they could not think for themselves. Ordinary *Itaukei* did not get to vote directly for their own representatives until the General Election in the mid-1960s, Madam Speaker. That was the mindset at that time, that the commoner *itaukei* had to be led by those born to rule because they were too backwards to decide anything for themselves.

Madam Speaker, times have changed, unfortunately...

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- *Na yalomatua.*

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ...the mentality of the Opposition has not. They accept that ordinary *itaukei* now have the right to vote, but still think that they are happier when they are told what to do and what to think by their chiefs whereas we on this side of the House and that half of the House, respect the basic common sense and intelligence of the ordinary *itaukei*.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Everyone knows that.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- And uphold their right to be free of this mental straitjacket, and make decisions for themselves.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, let me finish the history lesson.

After the British left 46 years ago in 1970, the Native Council which then became the GCC, continued. Its members were guaranteed a certain number of seats in our old Upper House (the Senate), and they enjoyed the degree of power because of this, and influence out of all the proportion to their actual contribution to moving the nation forward. We all know this.

The racist 1990 *Constitution*, this unelected group of heredity figures enjoyed the right to choose our President and our Vice President. The claim was made on Monday that the GCC was the stabilising influence. If this is true, Madam Speaker, why did we have to go through the traumas of 1987 and 2000? Why did they allow the removal in 1987 of Dr. Timoci Bavadra, the elected Prime Minister of Fiji - the first *itaukei* commoner, the first ever non-high chief and from the Western Division? The burning and looting of Suva, the shameful attacks on innocent people in 1987, and more in 2000. What did the GCC do to prevent that? If the GCC was such a stabilising influence, why did some prominent chiefs actively participated in these events and others support them? What did the GCC do to free Dr. Bavadra and his cabinet colleagues from detention in 1987? What did the GCC do to end the scenes of Parliament in 2000 - the Chaudhary Government lockup for 56 days? The whole nation was crying out for a stabilising influence from the GCC but it merely stood by during these terrible episodes that set our nation back to two decades.

Madam Speaker, the claim was also made on Monday that if the GCC returns, it can preside over the process of opening up more *itaukei* land for development purposes, but history again tells us otherwise. The GCC members had the chance to secure the renewal of the leases on *itaukei* land that expired during the 1990s and the early 2000, but they sat firmly on their hands. They did not do anything at all, and that failure, Madam Speaker, left many of our citizens dispossessed. It robbed *itaukei* landowners of the benefits of those leases, and again retarded our national development.

Madam Speaker, there is no logic to the argument that if the GCC is restored, we will not have any problems in Fiji, instead of focussing on the wrong most pressing national issues like job creation, education, infrastructure development, the empowerment of our youth and women, prudent financial

management and economic growth, the Opposition gives us this needless slideshow and wants us to divert our attention away from the most pressing issues of all, rebuilding our nation after the devastation of *Tropical Cyclone Winston*.

Madam Speaker, the fact is that in the end, GCC had become so politicised, so divisive that it was a significant obstacle to improving the lives of ordinary Fijians. It was certainly a major obstacle to the most important issue of all, our pursuit of a common and equal citizenry to finally build one nation and move forward together. It was also an obstacle to the development of the *itaukei* themselves, as I have said, the unfair distribution of lease moneys which favoured the chiefs, deprived the ordinary *itaukei* people of the share they were entitled to. My Government put a stop to that, by regulating the equal distribution of lease moneys, and this has not only empowered ordinary *itaukei* but strengthen the chiefly system by removing a source of conflict and latter resentments

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, in 2007...

HON. SPEAKER.- I am giving extra time to the Honourable Prime Minister because of the interjections that were disruptive.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker in 2007, the GCC was suspended and five years later in 2012, it was removed from the regulations that established it in the first place. I make no apology for it because it benefits the country and as I have indicated, also benefitted our chiefly system in Fiji. Our chiefs retained their titles and position in the *vanua*.

As I have pointed out Madam Speaker, the Opposition Leader is still *Na Gone Marama Bale Na Roko Tui Dreketi*. The fact that the GCC (the institution) has not met makes no difference at all to her status. She is another chief who continues to play an important role in the lives of many of our people. Ro Teimumu is a politician, so, of course, she can expect a degree of rough and tumble in political life, but her traditional role as a high chief continues outside this House. Most chiefs have actually benefitted from the abolition of the GCC and let me tell you why.

Madam Speaker, by placing them about politics, we have increased the *mana* of the chiefs in Fiji. Above politics, they are now more respected because we have removed them from their political frame, and they can once again focus on their traditional roles and be a force of unity rather than division in our national life.

Madam Speaker, the more enlightened chiefs accepted we are now a meritocracy in which every citizen enjoys equal opportunity, and they do not want the GCC to be reconstituted because they recognise that removing them from politics has strengthened their position in the *vanua*, less conflict, more respect, no politics.

Madam Speaker, four years after the door closed once and for all for the GCC, only the Opposition wants to open it again, to wind back the clock, to restore the power and the privileges of the elite because SODELPA is the party of the elite.

(Chorus of interjections)

It puts the privileges of some Fijians before the rights of all, and we have seen that in the past sittings from the words that were spoken.

Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House and that side, oppose this motion and defeat it for a very simple reason, the GCC was undemocratic and completely out of keeping with our new democracy, it is most irrelevant. While those opposite tried to restore the power of the elite, we insist on upholding the rights of everyone. While those opposite anchor for an age of privilege for a time in minority, we are empowering every Fijian to fulfil their dreams and fulfil our nation's destiny.

Above all, Madam Speaker, we insist on the supremacy of this House, our Parliament, the democratically elected House of the people, and we stand resolutely for a Fiji, not gazing backwards to an age of elitism and privilege for some, but a modern nation with its eyes set firmly on creating a better future for everyone.

I appeal to SODELPA, Madam Speaker, and the three NFP Members who make up the Opposition to play a positive role in and outside Parliament, and to become more relevant to the people of Fiji, most especially. Put aside those attitudes that are more rooted in the 19th Century, join us, the rest of Fiji and the world in the 21st Century and fix your eyes on the future and not in the past.

The chiefs are here to stay. I have said that continuously in the past, Madam Speaker,. We discontinued the institutionalised and politicised the GCC to strengthen the chiefly system in Fiji and that system is stronger and more relevant today than it has ever been because our chiefs are now above politics. Our chiefs can no longer be compromised. In fact, the removal of the GCC as an institution is not in contravention of the ILO Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal People. Madam Speaker, the removal of the GCC has and will lead to a more effective governance of the *iTaukei* people and to more effective marriage between democracy and culture.

Madam Speaker, just because we no longer have the GCC does not mean that our chiefs do not exist. Our chiefs are here and they are here to stay until kingdom come. They are much more lucky to be secure in the hearts and the minds of the *iTaukei* and indeed other Fijians if they command respect and lead by example, if they are forces for unity, rather than division. Madam Speaker, as long as that happens, there will always be a chiefly system in Fiji. Thank you.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Leader of the Opposition or her nominee to have the floor.

HON. RO T.V. KEP.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Prime Minister for making his Ministerial Statement on an issue that I know is very close to his heart, the Great Council of Chiefs, because I remember when the Honourable Prime Minister was Commander of the RFMF, they used to host the GCC Meetings up at QEB. He was the best host and I congratulate him for that. Honourable Prime Minister, you are the best host ever, before and after.

Madam Speaker, the GCC or the *Bose Levu Vakaturaga* is like the *Arya Pratindhi Sabha*, the Rotuma Council, the Fiji Muslim League and other such organisations. We are servants to the people, meet to discuss issues affecting their people.

Madam Speaker, it is discriminatory to call these bodies, 'racists' and 'elitists'.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- (Inaudible)

HON. RO T.V. KEP.- Listen, please.

(Laughter)

HON. RO. T.V. KEPA.- It is a human rights violation to suppress one community, the very community that are the indigenous of this land.

In terms of *Cyclone Winston*, which the Honourable Prime Minister has brought up, Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House donated 10 per cent of our hard-earned salary to assist in the rehabilitation work that is much needed.

(Chorus of interjections)

So, we are assisting in that way and other ways behind the scenes and not in front of the media necessarily.

Madam Speaker, the great statesman, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna was the first Fijian leader to publicly acknowledge that Fiji had become a multi-ethnic country and that public policy or management of native land ought to be processed or to be based on a two pronged approach that recognises the sociological reality. This was the essence of his vision which he conveyed to the GCC in 1936. He told the gathered chiefs that if other communities are poor, and we heard that on Monday, Madam Speaker, we too remain poor. If they prosper, we prosper, but if we obstruct other people without reason from using our lands following the laggards, there will be no prosperity, strife will overtake us.

Madam Speaker, the GCC is not a product of our colonial past. The GCC is a product of inter-provincial peacetime unity and it was there long before the British came. That is why it was so easy for the Colonial Governor to gather the chiefs together because they were already meeting in their own organisations.

The GCC is a body of servants whose main ambition is to grow their communities and use their institution as a platform to raise their issues that are being faced at the village or provincial level. Madam Speaker, there is evidence that the GCC existed way before British colonialism came to Fiji.

(Hon Members interjected)

Like the Honourable Prime Minister, Madam Speaker, the GCC is not perfect. When the GCC is re-established, which it will be, it may take on features that reflect the Fiji we are in today. Let me say that the GCC is a traditional institution that has since been widely accepted as part of our indigenous lifestyle. It is very much a part of our indigenous form of governance and within that space, we, as indigenous Fijians, felt that our science, medicines, fashion, navigational and maritime rules and techniques, dances and our history were all protected and given a sense of prominence.

Madam Speaker, the 2006 *Coup* was carried out to clean up corruption. Until to-date, there has not been one solid evidence proving the SDL Government was corrupt. The GCC was removed because it was hailed as a relic of colonialism and that it was a racist collection of chiefs. Time has proven that again as not true.

Madam Speaker, the last decision made by the GCC is probably the reason why the Honourable Prime Minister dissolved them. On 7th December, 2006, the chiefs of this land met at the Vodafone Arena and after presentation by the then military dictatorship, they ruled (this is the GCC) that the *coup* was illegal and called up soldiers to leave the barracks and return home to their people. The response from the military dictatorship then was that these chiefs are good for nothing and it is best that sit under a mango tree and drink homebrew.

((Hon. Member interjected))

HON. RO T.V. KEPA. This was the price, Madam Speaker, that the GCC had to pay for standing up for democracy.

So, the comments made by the Honourable Prime Minister, calling the GCC ‘undemocratic’ is untrue. The GCC is part of the democratic framework of Fiji. He also had the audacity to call our chiefs and their institutions, ‘undemocratic’. The GCC has never in its history organised or facilitated a *coup*. They have not used their authority to change State policy. They have never used their authority to discourage national unity. They have never used their authority to demand that Police investigations against them be dropped. Never, Madam Speaker. Never at all! And, Madam Speaker, neither were they consulted nor were they allowed to give consent to the decision made by the Honourable Prime Minister in 2012 to dissolve the GCC.

Madam Speaker, when I say this, I mean it with sincerity. The chiefs and the indigenous of this land do not need the permission of the Honourable Prime Minister to practice their culture and to gather as leaders. If Government does not want to fund the reestablishment of the GCC, then we, the indigenous people, will fund it. We will run it regardless of what the Honourable Prime Minister or this present Government is saying because it is our human right.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Prime Minister for his words and wish him all the best in his endeavours. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable leader of the NFP or his designate.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also wish to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for his statement this morning, and I speak in addition and in support of what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has said.

Madam Speaker, we wish to say on this issue that it is interesting to note the attempts that re-writing of history and the place of communal chiefly grouping in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, if I may just quote an eminent scholar, lawyer and chief:

“What some observers and commentators have overlooked is the power of symbols in our society. For a significant number of *iTaukei*, the BLV or GCC represented some sense of themselves as a repository of knowledge and wisdom on matters *iTaukei* sitting at the apex of the Fijian administration system as it then was, and this is not to deny that many of them were concerned about reforming the institution and making it more relevant to the needs of some who may not have agreed with everything at the time”.

So, that sense of identity, Madam Speaker, is a sense of empowerment and it is needed in times of crisis and post-*Winston* was one of those times. The sense of empowerment, identity and cultural identity; those are empowering symbols which the Fijian people needed badly, also in the time of disasters.

However, moving on, Madam Speaker, the petition that was presented on Monday, is again been re-worded by the Government. The petition did not say, “Bring back the GCC or the BLV”, the petition said, “Send it to a Parliamentary Committee of this House of the people”, the house of ordinary people, all of the Fijians in this country to be consulted on whether or not it should be brought back. Madam Speaker, that was in accordance with our Party policy on this matter that the Fijian people be consulted on what to do with their institutions.

Moving on, Madam Speaker, I wish to say a little bit about what the chiefs as a collective, have got to this country. I do not think ALTO (Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Ordinance), ALTA (Agricultural

Landlord and Tenants Act) would have been possible, and the setting up of the Native Land Trust Board by the late Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna and his colleagues were to free-up Native land, Madam Speaker, so that all Fijians of whatever race or creed be allowed to use Native land, which is 90 per cent of this country for the development of this country, Madam Speaker. That is what the chiefs have given to this country.

They have allowed the development of this country, that was their gift and the National Federation Party was right there, Madam Speaker, working with the chiefs of this country, and the party of their choice at the time, the Alliance Party. That is the gift of the chiefs and the National Federation Party. This partnership continued very well, Madam Speaker, until we all know the start of the *coup* culture.

Madam Speaker, I would like to apologise in advance (it is a Fijian thing to do) to the Commander of the RFMF, if he is going to find my comments offensive, et cetera, I do not mean to offend anyone in this House at all, or outside. However, this is what the Government tries to do, bring issues that bring conflict to this House and bring division in this House, Madam Speaker. They have brought up this issue but we are here to speak honestly and freely. The only body that has brought *coups* to this country and caused this overhaul and turned us upside down, Madam Speaker, is the RFMF. What does this Government do with that body post-2006, Madam Speaker? The 2013 Constitution gives them impunity, so they can do as they please, break the law, treason ...

(Hon. A. Sayed-Khaiyum interjected)

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Absolutely, it started in 1987, 2000, 2006, Madam Speaker, and it continues. It has nothing to do with the chiefs, but that institution needs reform.

At the time of the SDL Government, no one thought that the Military would commit a *coup* against them because the Military is 99 percent indigenous and the SDL represented the majority of indigenous Fijians. No one thought that the coup would happen, but it happened. So, my helpful suggestion to the Hon. Prime Minister, "Please, Prime Minister, look into this body, try to reform it, try to make sure that some of their deeds go unheeded because your Government will suffer the same fate as they have been doing this for the last 30 years."

We believe in democracy, and I wish to address the last two points that the Prime Minister has raised, the leadership of the National Federation Party from 1997 until today, have had the spine to stand up and oppose every military *coup*, Madam Speaker.

HON. P. SINGH.- Hear, hear!

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- We have never condoned one, we will never, not against this Government or any other, never, Madam Speaker. That is the spine of this Party.

Madam Speaker, before I conclude, I wish to say that immediately after the Hon. Prime Minister made his statement after *TC Winston*, the Honourable Leader of the NFP called for national support and unity for his call, and the Hon. Leader of the Opposition also did the same. We also wanted this House to meet, Madam Speaker, but it was not allowed, but our ideas, three big ones have been taken by the Government and we thank them for listening to our ideas and implemented them on the issues of post-*TC Winston*. So, to say that we were not part of that was quite disingenuous, Madam Speaker.

To round-up, Madam Speaker, I wish to give best wishes to another institution from where quite a few distinguished chiefs went to school and the time before me, all the best Suva Grammar.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you very much, Honourable Members.

As you have noted, I have really extended the time for this particular session because it is of national interest, but do not take that as an example of something that is going to continue. We will revert to discipline and time after this, but thank you so much.

We will now break for tea and I apologise that we are going to shorten the tea break. We will resume this session at 11.45 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.25 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.46 a.m.

The Honourable Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Hon. Members, I welcome you back to this sitting. We will resume from where we left off this morning. I would now like to call upon the Honourable Attorney-General for his Ministerial Statement.

Civil Service Reforms

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Hon. Deputy Speaker.

The Honourable Deputy Speaker, this morning, in my first ministerial statement, I would like to speak about the Civil Service Reforms that are currently underway, and update Parliament regarding the Civil Service Reforms.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Civil Service Reforms was first announced by the Government in this House in the 2014 Budget. There were plans as outlined whether through a World Bank managed trust fund and with the financial assistance of the Fiji development partners, we engaged consultants from all over the world who would come to provide models of best practices to strengthen the Civil Service that has been plagued by years of dissatisfaction and complaints from the general public of inefficiency and ineffectiveness.

Also, Honourable Deputy Speaker, the idea was that the Civil Service Reforms actually helps us to comply with the Constitution. I think it is draconian to talk about the values and principles of the Public Service that have actually been enshrined in the Constitution, and the values and principles, Hon. Deputy Speaker, include:

- 1) high standards of professionalism including professional ethics and integrity;
- 2) promote faithful implementation of Government policies and administration of laws, being free from corruption;
- 3) efficient, effective and economical use of public resources;
- 4) prompt response to requests and questions from the public;
- 5) delivery of service to the public in a manner that is respectful, effective, impartial, fair and equitable;
- 6) accountability for administrative conduct;
- 7) transparency including timely accurate disclosure of information to the public;
- 8) prompt, complete and candid reporting to Parliament, as required by law;
- 9) cultivation of good human resource management and career development practices to maximise human potential; and
- 10) recruitment and promotion based on objectivity, impartiality and fair competition in ability, education, experience and other characteristics of merit.

The Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Government's vision for the nation obviously requires the recruitment of skilled professionals and an accountable Civil Service. The budget speech emphasised the need to ensure that the system that the civil servants work in, the technologies they work with and the rules of administration they follow, encourage and also support them. The ongoing Civil Service Reforms attempt to address these issues, Hon. Deputy Speaker, through a holistic approach, reviewing not only individual ministries, but systems of Government that are known to breed inefficiency and passivity.

Another focus of the reforms, Hon. Deputy Speaker, is to provide a modern system of governance that retains the level of consistency while still allowing high performing civil servants autonomy in regards to strategic thinking, innovation, and the constant improvement and excellence in service delivery.

A better Fiji for all Fijians: While the original pace of the reforms as has already been stated in this House, Honourable Deputy Speaker, was not to our liking, it was not as fast as we thought it should have been, it has picked up momentum over the past few months, and several reform programmes and activities are currently on-going with more activities under the reform being scoped to take place before the end of the year.

With the assistance of the various experts and taking into account the provision of the Constitution, Honourable Deputy Speaker, guidelines have been or will be developed to assist permanent secretaries with their new devolved roles. These guidelines will be developed, incorporating international best practices and standards.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, let me highlight the first initiative and that is the open merit recruitment and selection guidelines. These guidelines, Honourable Deputy Speaker, open up what was known to be an "infamous closed career circuit in the Civil Service." The highly qualified people from generally outside the Civil Service found it hard to break into the Civil Service, not just at the permanent secretary level, but indeed at the middle management or even lower middle management levels because generally, jobs were for men and women who are already within the Civil Service. The focus of the guideline is to recruit the 'best and the brightest' into the Fijian Government, regardless of whether these people are from within or outside the service, fostering open competition.

The guideline provides Ministries with a system that recognises equivalency within Government, while promoting fairness, transparency and accountability in regards to the recruitment, selection and even training processors in Government.

The guideline was approved in January of this year and officially launched a week later for implementation within all Government Ministries.

The implementation of the guideline involves intensive training for HR Departments and for Ministries staff themselves which is currently ongoing and this requires quite a lot of work.

Compensation Benchmark Survey: As announced a couple of weeks ago, Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Fijian Government has begun the review of the pay structure for civil servants. There is currently a compensation benchmark survey exercise being undertaken for all the Ministries, whereby internal job descriptions or descriptors are matched against similar positions in the private and NGO sectors, to determine the external market rate for each benchmark position. This is to ensure that the compensation being offered is in line with the rest of Fiji's employment market.

The compensation benchmark survey contributes to the foundation laid out by the open merit recruit and selection criteria, where the guideline provides a system that ensures open selection and recruitment. The benchmark survey will provide data to assist the Government, in particular the permanent secretaries, in retaining and attracting highly qualified and professional staff.

At the moment, Honourable Deputy Speaker, we have something like close to 145 different titled positions that are being surveyed and benchmarked against the private sector. Some of the positions as we all know, Honourable Deputy Speaker, in the Fijian Civil Service for many years, many of the structures have always remain since the colonial times. So, we never had the opportunity to change these positions and whether indeed some of these positions are required in this day and age, taking into account for example, technological changes and also the manner in which the business processes are handled.

Similarly, there has also been, if you like, a migration for many of the positions that we do require in Government. So, whether we, as highlighted by the Honourable Minister for Education, through the toppers scholarship, you will see there a number of scholarships being given for selected areas that is very low uptake by people who wants to join the Civil Service. So, we are giving scholarships to land surveyors, marine scientists, foresters, research people because there were not many people who find it attractive to go into these areas. Generally, parents push them to become doctors, engineers, lawyers and all those types of traditional roles that are seem to be not just well paying but seem to have a particular status. What we are trying to say is that the status in also being a forester and a land surveyor, or even being a nurse. Honourable Deputy Speaker, obviously, one of the ways that you can also attract people is that, if you are compensating them well and that is what is currently being done.

Job Evaluation guidelines: There is another matter that is being handled by the Reform Unit in the Civil Service,. The Job Evaluation guideline looks at identifying a methodology within the Fijian Government to determine the value of a position in relation to other positions in the same Ministry, to establish a rationale fiscally responsible pay structure within Government.

As we know, Honourable Deputy Speaker, that in many countries, for example in Australia, and some of the other countries when they had devolved almost to the right, where complete autonomy was given to the permanent Secretaries, sometimes the pay structures were not given a guideline that they should have been. So, there were sometimes, we had different positions being paid astronomically higher amounts of salary in relation to the others within the Ministry or in relation to the outside market. So, the idea is to rationalise those costs but you are still to be able to pay the right amount of money, to ensure that we attract the best and the brightest.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, again, having a flow on effect in being affected itself by the open merit recruitment selection guidelines, as well as the compensation benchmark survey results, this is due to begin in May.

We also, as we have talked in this House previously, there is the most definite need to improve or strengthen the planning cycle. We have also engaged with a planning consultant, to review Government's entire planning cycle, to allow individual ministries to better align their service delivery, staffing and corporate planning requirements. If all of these fall into place and the type of support the specialist staff get is the type of back up service that they get, the type of technology that may be required to ensure that the planning cycle is actually working effectively.

This is a very fundamental exercise by the Reform Unit, to ensure that given the new budget year, the Ministries and Departments are able to provide accountable, more forward thinking strategic plan to the necessary ministries such as the Ministry of Finance in a comprehensive and a timely manner.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the other guideline that is also currently being prepared, which will also guide the Permanent Secretaries, because we do not want to have in the devolved structure different sets of criteria being used for discipline guidelines, so we need to have a modern uptake on discipline guidelines and procedures, as well to provide a level of consistency across the Civil Service. The

consultation process for the drafting of these guidelines has already begun and approval and implementation should begin in July of this year.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we also have performance management guidelines training and staff development, to ensure that Ministries objectives and outcomes are met, given the human resource capacity of the various Ministries, guidelines will be developed to assist Permanent Secretaries in the overall development and management of the performance of staff.

Just in respect to training, there are of course certain training that is required across the board throughout all the Civil Service. I will take a very basic example, whether it is training in the new word version, so that is obviously all the PAS, et cetera, who will need to access that or even professional staff nowadays. They need to be provided training, that can be cross-cutting across all the Ministries and we can have big training sessions, but there may be specialist training that is required, for example, to do with audit. A specialist training required, for example, to do with a specific area in the Ministry of Agriculture that of course, will be done in-house. They will find the best resource persons for that, but we want to be able to identify those that will be done across the Ministry and those that we have done specific to the Ministry, in order to ensure, apart from any other things, is to ensure that we get the best return value for the dollar that is invested, as opposed to everyone else going off and doing their own thing.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, also we have individual Ministry reviews that are currently being undertaken. Various public sector specialist have been engaged in the reform team. In the past three months, three major Ministries have already been reviewed. One of the reports is still being written up. Of course, we know what used to be known as the PSC has been reviewed and indeed much of it has been implemented. The Ministry of Infrastructure has also been reviewed and a report is going to be discussed by Cabinet and then currently, the Ministry of Agriculture has just been completed and the report is being written.

At the same time, there are currently six ongoing reviews being undertaken at the respective Ministries and they involve the Office of the Prime Minister; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Public Enterprises; the Ministry of Fisheries and Forests and the Ministry of Lands. These Ministries, as you will note, Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Ministries in terms of deliverables, in terms of contact with members of the public and the reviews are being undertaken, many of the structures that existed in most of these Ministries, go back to some of them precolonial times or post-Independence time and those structures have remained in place, whether they are relevant to today's 21st century Fiji, is something that these reviews will actually be able to assess and also to provide better career paths.

This is the problem that we have seen in the Civil Service in the past, that when people are actually appointed to a particular position, they are normally plugged at the bottom end of the scale of salary that is there, and it is very difficult to move within that grade/band. So, essentially, if someone wants a pay rise, they will seek for a promotion, and generally the promotions have always been dealt with in matter of seniority, not necessarily the capacity or the capability or the efficiency of the individual civil servant themselves.

So, this is the culture we are trying to change. We want to reward people, we must have a mechanism though to be able to monitor that, to be able to be very transparent, that people who would perform well actually get rewarded better and more efficiently and, therefore, we will be able to attract more people. There are young people who are here, of course, who should be joining the Civil Service, we want to encourage them to come into the ministry or respective ministries, not just to encourage them to get in there, but they must also understand that they have specific career paths within the ministries.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, four ministry reviews have been scoped to begin in the second half of the year and they are the:

- 1) Ministry of Youth and Sports;
- 2) Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation;
- 3) Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development; and
- 4) Natural Disaster Office (which is obviously very very timely)

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we will also be reviewing the other Ministries later on. These reviews, look to take a forward programme of institutional modernisation that enables Ministries to address staffing and human resource challenges.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, these are some of the initiatives that have already been undertaken, many of them like I have said, will come into play in the second half of the year. The whole idea in particular also with the benchmarking if you are looking at the various positions is to look at how we can better reward people within their respective ministries and the various positions that are being held, and to be able to attract better quality of people to provide good quality career paths for our civil servants, to ensure that we give them the right technology and the right tools.

Hon. Deputy Speaker, you would know that a few years ago, the Honourable Prime Minister, made it a specific policy, in particular for those civil servants who live in the rural areas, to ensure that the conditions that they have are actually good and liveable conditions, particularly their quarters, to encourage them to go to the rural areas. If we, for example, do not look after their accommodation well, or not enough money is being made available for them to rent out the right places, we will not be able to attract good people, and therefore our ability to deliver services to the ordinary Fijians will be further diminished.

A number of things are on play, Honourable Deputy Speaker, and this is the update that I would like to give and I think there is a very bright future ahead for the Civil Service in respect of the salary review that is being undertaken, in terms of restructure that is being looked at, to be able to better modernise and also at the same time, to work together with the private sector to get better synergy. Government does not do everything well in all areas, we need to be able to work with private sector to be able to build that capacity because at the end of the day, we have to recognise that we are a country with a population of less than a million people. So, you cannot duplicate resources, you cannot duplicate professional efficiencies, both in the private sector and government. We need to be able to synergize with the private sector to get the best return for our dollar and for the benefit for all Fijians.

Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you. I will now call upon the Leader of Opposition or her designate.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Honourable Deputy Speaker, I must acknowledge and thank the Honourable Minister for the Civil Service for that briefing again on the Civil Service Reform.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, may I refresh our memory in this House, that in my budget response to the 2015 Budget, I had made a very clear request to the Honourable Minister, if there was indeed a plan for the Civil Service Reform, if I could be given a copy of that plan so that we can hold him accountable to his words, otherwise his words are just hot air.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- There is a saying that goes, 'Action speaks louder than words', and may I remind the Hon. Minister on what he promised on the 2015 Budget, and may I quote:

“The Civil Service Reform Programme include upskilling of civil servants, improving systems and processes of the leverage of latest technology, reward and an incentive-based performance review system, so that the Civil Service becomes competitive with the private sector by offering not only attractive jobs, but also long term job security.”

I just continued and said, “Madam Speaker, with that, I applaud the Civil Service Reform initiatives when I delivered my speech. Then I went on to question, where are the resources? There was no commitment in the 2015 Budget.

If we are talking about technology, I have not had the opportunity to take a peek into what they have right now in the Civil Service, but I can make a close analogy. Even us, Members of Parliament, we are not given any laptops or anything like that. So, if that is the situation with us, what do we expect from the Civil Service at large?

Also in terms of incentive-based performance review system, we have not heard anything and we cannot hold the Honourable Minister accountable because we do not have a plan. So, in terms of pay rise for the Civil Service, now we are hearing again that there will be a review. What kind of review, we do not now.

We are also talking about long term job security. Recently, we know as part of the Civil Service Reform, officers in the Civil Service have been given a redundancy package, and the redundancy package, I must state from what I was informed that it is very pathetic. There was no consideration in terms of service that had been rendered, to be paid some kind of compensation, Honourable Minister for Labour, and also there was no negotiation. It was just a directive that was given, you are paid and then you move out with your redundancy package, and I see some who have been here in the Parliamentary Complex.

So, in terms of job security, Honourable Deputy Speaker, what I must say is this, there is a culture of fear in the Civil Service. Also there is this culture of selective recruitment. It is obvious, we can see. Also, the culture of fear emanates out of the present recruitment system that is in place, the selective recruitment, and also because of the removal of the Public Service Appeals Board. The Civil Service now do not have a central avenue to take their grievances to, apart from the one that is in the Ministry and that one in the Ministry, Honourable Deputy Speaker, operates on a culture of fear. It does not ensure the natural course of justice to take place in terms of hearing and assessing the grievances of the civil servants.

Also, Honourable Deputy Speaker, in terms of those who have been laid off, a lot of them have been laid off but have not been given alternative jobs, so they are just being laid off and now they are adding on to the army of unemployment. We also see there is a discriminatory practice in place in terms of salaries. There is a very big and high offer that has been given to the base recruitment in the Military with no offence to the Military and those who have been recruited, but you look at it in terms of the Civil Service, there is a big pay discrimination, Honourable Deputy Speaker. If this could be taken into account when the Honourable Minister is reviewing the pay structure for the Civil Service, so that it is brought into some kind of alignment with the Military recruitment.

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Radrodro, your time is up. I will now call upon the Honourable Leader of NFP or his designate.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Honourable Deputy Speaker, I support the objective of the Civil Service Reform. I think the Honourable Minister has pointed out a number of areas where they are trying to undertake the reform. Honourable Prime Minister, listen carefully, please!

I want to make some comments on those with the view to suggesting some areas where the Honourable Minister might want to look at. I think he pointed out the values and principles of State Service

in the Constitution. I think they are all very good but I want to specially refer to the recruitment and promotion based on Objectivities 1 and 2 and also raise the issue about Section 127(8). This is a question to the Honourable Minister that he may want to address as to how he is going to, within the overall of Civil Service Reform Framework, deal with Section 127 (8) where the Permanent Secretary in agreement with the Ministers are going to make all the appointments, determine also the terms and conditions and the qualifications?

Honourable Deputy Speaker, if we want to create a neutral impartial, efficient and effective Civil Service, we ought to look at the recruitment at the lower level, where they start. I am not sure whether the Honourable Minister as part of this Reform in most countries. Honourable Deputy Speaker, Governments have put in place a very, very strong, difficult, merit-based exam before anyone, whether they come with a Degree or whatever qualification is required to do that to be able to get in the Civil Service because if we do not address the issue of merit, good criteria at the recruitment level, I am afraid we will have a Civil Service which will not meet the objectives that the Honourable Minister has outlined. In fact, I would add Honourable Deputy Speaker, that the Honourable Minister as part of the reform ought to do an audit of all the recruitments that had been done in the recent past, especially in the last one year or so, in terms of looking at whether this provision in the Constitution has been used appropriately to recruit the best people. Unless we do that, I think all the plans that the Honourable Minister outlined and they are good like “open merit recruitment, aligning the pay structure, providing appropriate benefits for civil servants who serve in the rural areas.” these are all very good intentions and I think the review would address that.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, as I said before, the Civil Service is not like a private sector organisation although we all want the culture of private sector corporate culture to be part of the Civil Service culture. However, the Civil Service, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is an institution which supports the Government of the day in a neutral, impartial, effective and efficient manner. No matter what happens when governments come and go, the Civil Service must remain a very, very neutral, independent and effective organisation. As part of that commitment, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I think the whole issue of developing a career path within the Civil Service, I can understand, at times you need to recruit people from the private sector and naturally many of those recruitments might be at a higher level where you need experience and technical expertise in certain areas. But if you create a Civil Service in an ad hoc manner and if the provisions of the Constitution are used by the Ministers and the Permanent Secretaries without an overall framework within which you have all these very strict criteria so that the recruitment, promotion, compensation is all streamlined, we will not have an effective and efficient Civil Service.

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you for your contribution, Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad. I will now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General, Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communication to deliver his statement.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker. Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise to give a report on the range of meetings that we had attended recently in Washington DC in New York from April 12th to 18th 2016 alongside the 2016 Spring Meetings with the World Bank and IMF.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, given that climate change now falls within the Ministry of Finance and Planning, I was firstly invited to speak at the Vulnerable 20 (V20) Group, the second Ministerial Dialogue in Washington DC.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the V20 was established at the inaugural meeting of the V20 Ministers for Finance at the Climate Vulnerable Forum on 8th October, 2015 in Lima, Peru in conjunction with the 2015 Annual Meeting with the World Bank Group and IMF. The V20 comprises of other members States of that Climate Vulnerable Forum and it is currently chaired now by Philippines, with members from various other continents including Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Latin America and of course

the Pacific. They also include vulnerable economies which are also land lot, so for example countries like Ethiopia, Afghanistan ranging to Madagascar, St. Louis, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Vietnam.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the V20 Ministerial dialogue brought together representatives of Government bilateral and multi-lateral institutions, and major development partners in the private sector to discuss and strengthen policy dialogue and cooperation to advance national priorities through our improved climate change finance environment. The meeting recognise the important role that the Ministry of Finance play in addressing this agenda through the mainstreaming of climate change, into international planning and indeed national budgets.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, given that Fiji is ceded to the membership of Climate Vulnerable Forum in late 2015, Fiji was confirmed as a V20 member when we were in Washington last. This membership allows Fiji to highlight shared interest and contribute substantively to discussions on finance and other means of implementation, particularly to foster significant increase in investment and climate resilience and lower emissions development and of course, for us it is climate adaptation.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Ministerial y Dialogue, the need for new global arrangements to make it easier for vulnerable countries like Fiji to obtain funding to adapt to extreme weather patterns which are being caused by climate change was emphasised. We highlighted how *Tropical Cyclone Winston* was a clear demonstration of the vulnerability of Small Developing States to extreme climatic conditions and natural disasters and of course as highlighted by the Honourable Minister for National Disaster Management is now occurring with increased frequency and indeed intensity.

We also called on the need for an international community to take urgent action to enable countries like Fiji to gain proper access to adequate levels of funding to enable them to build their resilience to climate change. As we have highlighted previously to things such as, if we have to think long-term, do we now take our electrical cables underground as opposed to overhead electrical cables because we know if we continue put them back up, you will be spending a lot more money because it can get blown down again. This, of course has major budgetary impact and we need to be able to think about long-term planning in terms of phased approach to, for example, going terrestrial with these type of initiatives.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, there are anomalies that exist in the present arrangements as we have said. For concessional financing these multilateral institutions that preclude Fiji from accessing concessional financing is a middle income country even though Fiji is highly vulnerable, as you have said including like other countries. We could have one climatic event that could set us back years as we have highlighted previously. Imagine if *Tropical Cyclone Winston* had actually gone slightly down south and gone through Suva through the middle of Viti Levu, it would have affected both the coast on the North and the South. We have taken out the capital, you have manufacturing in here, you have got the tourism sector, gone through Nadi, we would have been set back many years. This is why we are extremely vulnerable from that perspective.

Of course, as we have found out, many other countries, for example, in Africa and Central Asia, there are all facing very severe droughts, some of them have not had rain for three to four years. So even this one particular event can set them back for decades.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I emphasise the need for this to change the financing arrangements, highlighting the importance of enabling small developing and vulnerable States to focus on adapting to climate change by strengthening infrastructure to survive as opposed to adopting mitigation. As we know that Fiji's carbon emissions overall comparison with the rest of the world is 0.004 as highlighted by the Honourable Prime Minister last week when he signed the Paris Agreement, which we also were the first

country to ratify. So therefore, it is not mitigation per se, but it is adaption. Nonetheless, we have also given an undertaking to reduce our carbon emission by 2030 by 30 percent.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, while recognising the important role that the private sector can play, we also highlighted the difficulty for small and vulnerable States to put together what they call 'bankable projects' to get concessional funding. For example, there are many countries or companies that do offer or have access to funding to do say, solar farms but the reality is, when they talk about solar farms, they are talking about hundreds and hundreds of hectares of land where they put solar panels. We do not necessarily have that much of flat land where you can put solar panels easily but what we had suggested, for example, the other Pacific Island countries do that also in order to be able to access that fund, because if you do not have what they call, 'a bankable project' you actually lose out on the money, the ability to access that money. So what we suggested, we can take a regional approach and we have five or six countries putting together a project, we will be able to then have a bankable project because the current economies of scale do not exist.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the importance of climate finance should now be mainstreamed to development finance for small and vulnerable States which was also raised in Washington. Honourable Deputy Speaker, the V20 gathering ended with Ministers agreeing to translate the commitment into action and to continue to pursue transformative solutions to build climate change resilience for all affected countries. They recognised the important role the Ministries and Ministers of Finance play in addressing this agenda by mainstreaming climate adaptation.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the joint Governors meeting of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and World Bank for the South-East Asia constituency, we were informed that Fiji is one of the four countries in the Asia-Pacific Region where income inequality is on the decline since the 1990s as measured by the Gini coefficient. The Gini index, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is a measurement of the income distribution of a country's residence. In other words, this number which ranges between zero and one, is based on residence net income and helps define the gap between the rich and the poor, with zero representing perfect equality and one representing perfect inequality.

In 1990, Honourable Deputy Speaker, Fiji Gini index was 0.43 and in 2013, it reduced to 0.38 which is very significant, and we must continue down this path with the traditional methodology, as Honourable Biman Prasad would tell you, generally look at the GDP, the growth of GDP and you look at the GDP per capita but that does not necessarily tell you about the inequalities that may exist between the "haves" and the "have nots" so, once you grow the economy, you need to constantly ensure that the gap between the "have" and the "have nots" is minimised or is reduced.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, for the benefit of this House, Fiji joined by Nepal, Thailand and Malaysia is among the top four countries in their race towards reducing income disparity amongst this population. This is the survey that was been done by the World Bank and IMF, to be compared with larger Asian economies, Honourable Deputy Speaker, it is a radical achievement for a small Pacific Island nation. It is also remarkable when compared to resource rich regional economies like Papua New Guinea, which has witnessed increasing income inequality over the same period. Even countries like China, India, Singapore, Bangladesh, New Zealand, Japan, Australia, Vietnam and Indonesia, where inequality is notwithstanding the fact that these economies are growing, inequalities in fact have grown in these countries also at the same time. These comparisons have regional and global levels, Honourable Deputy Speaker, further authenticates the work of the Fiji Bureau of Statistics in carrying out the sums statistical surveys.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Fijian Bureau of Statistics, you will recall that in January this year, released the first results of the 2013 and 2014 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), which revealed that the overall incidence of poverty in Fiji is in a steady state of decline.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, to verify the observation of the IMF and the World Bank, we calculated another statistic, the Palmer ratio, which is another statistic that measures income inequality. It is increasingly used by the United Nations and is recommended for countries to adopt as it is a more intuitive way of understanding income inequality. It measures the ratio of the income share of the top 10 per cent to the bottom 40 per cent of a country's population.

In more equal societies, Honourable Deputy Speaker, this ratio will be one or below. Fiji, Honourable Deputy Speaker, the latest Palmer ratio based on the 2013 and 2014 HIES is 1.62 per cent. This is a significant improvement from 2.28 percent which was recorded in the 2008 and 2009 surveys, indicating that the richest 10 percent that used to make twice as much income as the poorest 40 percent, the gap is now becoming less and those at the bottom are now actually catching up. Therefore, for them to access credit is also very important as we talked about yesterday.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, it shows income inequality is on a declining path. Lower inequality, Honourable Deputy Speaker, drives growth and enables societies to enjoy longer periods of economic expansion and it instils confidence in the ordinary everyday consumer. Our declining income and inequality, Honourable Deputy Speaker, means to sustain economic growth we are experiencing over the past few years is quality growth, because we are growing and in doing so are reducing income disparity amongst Fijians. There is no point simply growing and only a handful of people will be benefiting from it. This is real progress, Honourable Deputy Speaker. It demonstrates very glaringly that the enabling environment created by the FijiFirst Government, through fiscal measures and social and economic policies are indeed translating into improved livelihoods, an income opportunities for the poor and the vulnerable.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this also shows Government's policies are inclusive, pro-poor and equitable and empowers people. Honourable Deputy Speaker, while attending the 2016 World Bank and IMF Spring Meeting, we were also invited to speak at a seminar organised by the World Bank Group and the IMF on development challenges in Africa, including adaptation to climate change. In this forum, we were able to share the many challenges that Fiji had dealt with effectively, ranging from our climate change policies and Green Growth Framework to the reforms that ensure the success of Fiji's national carrier, like Fiji Airways and looking at very strategic issues. We also learnt about their challenges and also we learnt some issues that we could also adopt in Fiji.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we also took the opportunity to highlight the many ways in which Fiji had made the most of its potential and that African nations perhaps could take a leaf out from. These included our Civil Service Reforms, the partnership with the private sector, effective Government service industries like tourism, with a proper management of a small national carrier and the critical importance of having one that is very viable, and even changes that we made to our taxation systems and to our fiscal year, to maximise the revenue opportunities and the efficient running of our economy.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, it was an honour for Fiji to be invited to address the gathering of small to middle income countries in Africa who share many of our challenges but who are sometimes struggling to deal with them. This seminar was a platform for these nations to be able to swap experiences and learn from the experience of outsiders.

Our invitation was a great vote of confidence in Fiji which is seen as a progressive small developing State that is effectively dealing with its challenges and at the same time making a disproportionate contribution to the global community. In comparison to some of the large resource rich African countries, Honourable Deputy Speaker, Fiji is obviously punching well above its weight in terms of our approach to development.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, at the 2016 Spring Meeting, we also signed the U.SD50 million loan facility, approved by the World Bank in December 2014, for improvements to the nation's transport

infrastructure. Honourable Deputy Speaker, as you know that this loan as we have highlighted previously is something that can be utilised over a period of time, it is not all taken at once because we need to have the capacity to be able to spend it and have actually a bankable project for these two, but the point is, Honourable Deputy Speaker, this is Fiji's first loan from the World Bank in 23 years and it demonstrates the level of confidence that the World Bank and IMF have in Fiji. We now have more than a \$102 million at the current exchange rate to improving Fiji's infrastructure and the performance of our economy as well.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we also met with the new World Bank's Vice President for East-Asia and the Pacific, Ms Victoria Kwakwa, who plays innovative rehabilitation measures implemented through the Government in the wake of *Tropical Cyclone*. The Vice President also emphasised the importance of Fiji strengthening its resilience against climate change prior to its long-term growth as well as pursuing appropriate macro-economic and social policies. Our re-engagement is welcomed by the World Bank which expresses willingness and support our efforts to strengthen our position as a Pacific Hub for the economic benefit of the region as a whole and indeed we invited her to visit Fiji.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we also briefed the World Bank on the various measures that have taken place; the disaster rehabilitation, strengthening climate change, adaptation measures, improving the effectiveness of social protection programmes. As was highlighted, we had paid those welfare recipients three months of a top-up, assistance to divest from the state-owned enterprises and developing the fibre optic capability in Vanua Levu. Honourable Deputy Speaker, for those Honourable Members who were not aware of this, Samoa is actually getting a loan to fund a cable to come from Samoa to land in Vatuwaqa which is connecting with Southern Cross cable and we have been given the offer and we are going to take up this offer. With that cable, we will actually pass between Taveuni and Savusavu, so it is very very appropriate if we build a pipe out of it, we can land in Savusavu and Vanua Levu, will have that fibre optic capability that so far it has not been and it is actually deserved, and the people of Vanua Levu do deserve, Honourable Bilitavu.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the delegation also met with the Multi-lateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) as has been highlighted in the press. MIGA is actually an ancillary company of World Bank that provides risk insurance in credit enhancements on foreign direct investment in developing countries. Essentially what it does by the Fijian Government signing an Agreement with them, it means now that MIGA and we ourselves when we, for example, call for tenders or expressions of interest for divestment or when we actually have general trade shows, the Ministry of Industry and Trade will go out with its team.

We can also say that if you come and invest in Fiji, if you are interested in buying shares in Fiji, this insurance is available to you. We do not pay the insurance premium but the private companies pay that but it gives them a sense of protection because they come into developing countries. Many developing countries, Hon. Deputy Speaker, actually have taken up this offer, Fiji interestingly actually signed the Agreement with MIGA sometime back in the 1980s but the full facilitation was not done and you will see that in our verbiage the ... in terms of EOIs, et cetera, will now be putting the wording for MIGA to say that it will actually be available to them. This, of course, will boost investor confidence in Fiji, bring in more money opportunities and benefits into our growing economy.

As we have highlighted earlier on, Honourable Deputy Speaker, we need to increase our capacity and strength in the areas of energy, housing, health care and, of course, agriculture in terms of getting quality for mineral inspection, to name a few.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we also have bilateral meetings with United States State Department where the key messages regarding the Fijian Economic Policies of Tropical Cyclone was discussed and, of course, feeding on to the Small Island Developing States Programme that we have.

The US State Department thanked and acknowledged Fiji's contribution towards the conclusion of the Paris Agreement and in particular, they thanked the Honourable Prime Minister for the lead international role that he has taken in conjuring up and highlighting this programme, not just in the Pacific Region, and the developing world but internationally. That obviously was cemented and manifested by the fact that Fiji, and we want to thank everyone in this Parliament that we were the first Parliament, first Government and first country to ratify the Paris Agreement, and that is an accolade that we obviously should also acknowledge.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the US State Department also acknowledged the progress achieved by the Fijian Government through the conclusion of the ILO Article 26 Complaint, and noted the successful conclusion of this matter in which Fiji was taken off the Governing Body's Agenda. It will also have a positive impact, on the GSP Review that is currently before the US State Department.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we were also invited to speak at the side event on the Monday in New York which was organised by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Region (ESCAP) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Korea to talk about the various financing projects regarding development and the integration and synergy between financing for development and financing for adaptation measures in countries such as Fiji.

We, of course, Honourable Deputy Speaker, highlighted a number of the issues that I have spoken about. We also discussed the need to build capacity, not just in Fiji but the other Pacific Island countries, to ensure that civil servants and people who are dealing with finance, have the knowledge to be able to navigate through the plethora of rules and regulations that actually gets you to accessing climate finance because it is very, very bureaucratic and most of the participants actually agreed it was quite bureaucratic, we need to simplify it but we have put our hand up to be a centre for learning in this respect to help the Pacific Islands countries and other countries. Indeed, Maldives has also expressed their interest to have a centre where we could provide this training.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the gist of it, of course, was about capacity building, and we are looking and working together with various international organisations to develop this capacity.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we also had bilateral meetings in the UN Office of the Higher Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing Countries, and again, we highlighted what the Hon. Minister for Natural Disaster Management has been doing in our approach to building better.

In all of these, Honourable Deputy Speaker, as I had highlighted yesterday, we have a great positive opportunity. Just to highlight, when they had a tsunami about 10 years ago in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia, a country like Sri Lanka lost 150,000 lives, people died from that. In the following year the economic growth rate was 7 percent, and generally, we will find that the growth rates of countries, in the rebuilding process tends to spike. As you know that after the Budget, the growth rate projected was 3.7 percent for our economy, Reserve Bank had said 2.2 percent, IMF is saying 2.5 percent, ADB is saying 2.7 percent, so we are focussed on ensuring that the spin that we have will, in fact, be in areas that will give us that level of projector and the multiplier effect, and there is a positive outlook.

Last but not least, Honourable Deputy Speaker, the ratings as I had highlighted, we had a B plus for foreign and local currency ratings, and short term rating of Fiji at B, and I thank you for allowing me the time to speak on this Statement. Thank you, Honourable Deputy Speaker.

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. We will now break for lunch, and we will resume after lunch to hear the two responses.

Honourable Members, lunch is provided in the Big Committee Room. The Business Committee Members are also hereby reminded that Business Committee Meeting will be held at the Small Committee Room. We will resume proceeding at 2.30 p.m. today.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.36 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.30 p.m.

The Honourable Speaker took the Chair.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will continue from where we left off, and I now call upon the designate of the Leader of the Opposition to provide his report.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, before I start, I would like to seek leave of Parliament to send our best wishes to the Queen Victoria School athletes who will be competing in the Coca-Cola Games starting today, especially after the devastation they experienced in the *TC Winston*. Their displacement and are scattering in the schools around Fiji, they still managed to form a team and compete in this year's Coca-Cola Games. Hence, the slogan that we are stronger than *TC Winston*.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Needless to say, also for the athletes of ACS, RKS, Waidina, Lomaivuna, Naitasiri, Wainimala and Namosi, who will also be competing in the Coca-Cola Games.

Madam Speaker, I would like to state that poverty reports available in Fiji remain doubtful for the large part, particularly when reports are being used by international organisations like ADB, the IMF or the World Bank in which they heavily rely on Government statistics and internal reports to determine their own analysis. Institutions like IMF, now use those so-called reports insight into Fiji to determine our actual poverty level, and their argument on why we, along with similar island countries of the Pacific cannot access concessional loans for climate change adaptation.

We, on this side of the House, have always thought that the poverty picture in Fiji was unrealistic. Had we painted the true picture in our official documents on what we are really facing on the grounds, perhaps IMF would have seen us differently as they should have.

Nevertheless, let me state that this picture painted by IMF is exactly what I had warned yesterday. This is the reception we get from playing with financial institutions like the IMF, and even the World Bank, who at the best of times, push their own political agendas against Small Island Developing States like Fiji.

We have been included in the 20 vulnerable countries in the world with regards to climate change and which was evidently witnessed by the world through *Tropical Cyclone Winston* is not enough to convince the super powers in financial assistance like IMF to disperse for us much needed funds, and I blame Government. This should teach Government a lesson that when wishing to promote the interests of our people with regards to important matters like climate change, first we have to be honest, and second we have to be consultative, Madam Speaker. Consultative could have meant including representatives from the Opposition to the meeting with IMF so that they know our collective efforts to these issues rather than assuming that the mission was only taken to obtain funds to bankroll our *TC Winston* rehabilitations apart from our wish lists.

Madam Speaker, the position by IMF is certainly disappointing, to say the least. They would do well to refer to one of our latest ADB Reports in 2014 which continues to highlight that despite the overall level of development and the moderately higher average incomes, Fiji is still a matter of concern with regards to poverty levels. They have also highlighted the increase in poverty for the rural sector which has been attributed to the influx of rural to urban migration occurring, because people have to find alternative options of livelihoods.

IMF should also be reminded that Fiji still has outstanding domestic issues that need addressing. Issues like:

- increasing in squatter settlements in urban centres which according to official reports increased from around 140,000 in 2007 to 200,000 at present.
- Issues like the restructure of civil servants has been alluded to by my colleague.
- Issues like the privatisations of local entities like FEA, Water Authority of Fiji and Fiji Roads Authority.

IMF should also be drawn to another indication of the higher level of poverty in Fiji. They should have been informed that an average household in Fiji, one family member at least has been sent to work abroad and the latest report from the Australian National University, Fiji traditionally a non-remittance country that has been highlighted is now becoming a remittance economy. With thousands of citizens having to work overseas and is joined by other Pacific remittance economies such as Samoa and Tonga, these remittances has significantly assisted Fiji's recent growth.

Last year alone, Madam Speaker, remittances was acknowledged as being second behind tourism as Fiji's leading contributor to national GDP. The IMF should have also been reminded that the ADB earlier this year revealed that for a term as a distressing report, it stated the following accounts of Fiji's economy, growth in personal remittances as 28.3 percent and together with improved labour and market conditions. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Leader of the National Federation Party or his designate.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Minister touched on a number of issues, including climate change, inequality, poverty and he also talked about his meetings with a number of institutions like the MIGA, IMF and the V20 Group as well.

Madam Speaker, let me start by making a very brief comment on the whole issue of climate change and adaptation. I fully agree with the Honourable Minister that mitigation really is not a big issue for us. We are not the contributors to global emissions. We are a small player and all that, our focus really is on adaptation and I also agree with him that it is getting climate change funding, it is talked about a lot but it is going to be a very very difficult proposition. I would suggest to Government that while we try and leverage as much funding as possible for adaption measures, both medium and long term, we should think of creating a National Climate Change Disaster Fund which can be a fund that can be built on and whenever we have natural disasters, we can look at it. So, that would be a way forward, Madam Speaker.

On the issue of income, inequality and the improvement in the Gini coefficient. When we measure inequality Madam Speaker, it is a long term and the Honourable Minister was right when he talked about the reduction between 1990 and more recently from 0.43 to 0.38. Therefore Government cannot and should not take credit for the trend in the reduction in inequality, short-term fluctuations, indisposable income, impact of tax and transfers like social welfare. So I think we need to look at wealth inequality, health inequality are other indicators.

On the issue of poverty, I agree with my colleague, I am not satisfied with the 28 percent poverty level that the Bureau of Statistics figures show. In fact, I would want more transparency and scrutinise the analysis a bit more, Madam Speaker. For example, how was imputed rent included in the calculation of the Basic Poverty Needs Line (BPNL). Let me just say that the BPNL, which is the basic poverty needs line, Madam Speaker, the line below, someone who will be considered in poverty. The adult equivalent is stated as \$55.12 for the urban areas. Now if you look at the household of four (two adults and two children), that would be an equivalent of three adults, you multiply that \$55.12, it comes to \$165.36, you take away \$13.22 the FNPF contribution if they are wage earners, you are basically left with \$152.14 per week. I think those on the lower income levels need to be seriously considered and that is where I want to make

this comment that the Government's decision to impose 9 percent VAT on basic food items. In fact, I thought what they will do is increase the number of items from 6 to 10 and if you look at the cost of living, the weight and the burden that has been put on low income people Madam Speaker, is very very significant. That is why it is very important for Government not to be carried away by the analysis of the level of poverty because the reality on the ground is something else. In fact, if I may suggest that the impact of *Tropical Cyclone Winston* almost exposed the real condition in the country and I suspect that the real poverty level would be somewhere around between 30 to 35 percent and not 28 percent as we have seen from the analysis. So, what I would urge the Government to do, Madam Speaker, is to look at the some of the transfer payments and tax incentives that they have given. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Sit down!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You are very quick to say sit down, we do not. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, National Disaster Management to deliver his statement.

Declaration on the State of Natural Disaster

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Likewise I would like to convey my very best wishes to all the athletes who are competing for the Coca Cola Games. I am neutral, Madam Speaker, but just a word of caution, the team that won the Deans Trophy last year, Madam Speaker, they are keen to take the Coca-Cola trophy to that part of Tailevu.

Madam Speaker, as I did promise in yesterday's sitting that I will just quickly give a ministerial statement again today, just to give an overview of the operations during the 60 days declaration and just conclude with the finance, particularly on the eight components for the benefit of the Honourable Members of the House and of course to all Fijians and how it was also allocated to the clusters, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, nine weeks ago, the most tragic cyclone in the Southern Hemisphere struck Fiji, leaving behind a trail of death and despair. A total of 44 fatalities were recorded with 21 in the Western Division; 15 in the Eastern Division; 6 in the Central; 2 in the Northern Division and an additional 126 were injured. An estimated 315,000 people, equivalent to about 40 percent of Fiji's population were affected by *TC Winston*. This includes 120,000 children under the age of 18 and more than 3,100 with disabilities.

The hardest-hit areas again, Madam Speaker, are Lau and the Lomaiviti Groups, the Northern Division: Taveuni and coastal Vanua Levu and of course into Viti Levu; Ra, Ba and of course into the Yasawas.

Throughout Fiji, more than 31,000 homes were either completely damaged, destroyed or damaged to some extent and the Western Division, Madam Speaker, accounted for the majority of the damage with about 6,600 homes destroyed and, of course, 12,421 damaged. I will not go into the details of the statistics.

Again, Madam Speaker, this is based on the estimates done on the 19th of April, and of course, it may be subject again to change, depending on the verifications that I made lately.

Madam Speaker, let me say that the successful response during the 60 day State of Natural Disaster is indicative of the effectiveness of Government's disaster management machinery stipulated in the Natural Disaster Management Act of 1998.

As we have heard in this Honourable House during the week, there are some gaps, definitely we are pursuing excellence and we will continue to do so in trying to bring efficiency into the systems and processes. But, I wish to acknowledge all the civil servants and the Non-Government Organisations, Civil Society Organisations for their excellent work done that has enabled us to successfully conduct operations in the last 60 days, Madam Speaker.

As we all know, Madam Speaker, the Act also enables the Permanent Secretary, who is also the National Controller, to assume overall command during the emergency operation and of course, it further provides him with the authority to all Government resources to be at the disposition of the National Controller during the emergency period, and likewise every divisional level and of course at the district levels as well. So, the activation of the National Emergency Operations Centre and also at the Divisional and District levels ensures coordinated effort in the equitable distribution of relief assistance.

Madam Speaker, accordingly, the desire is to see that the integration and coordination come to life. Various Government ministries and agencies, together with these institutions of the Disciplined Forces, provided much needed assets and personnel to the National Disaster Management Office under the leadership of the National Controller.

From Day One, Madam Speaker, it was clear that all-inclusive Government response was necessary. The integrated and collaborative approach adopted by Government had direct implications on the success of the emergency response on the ground. And, of course, the Divisional Commissioners, being empowered with strategic and key resources and personnel, to ensure that immediate relief supplies reached the worst-affected areas at the earlier opportunity.

Madam Speaker, if I may go through some of the key activities chronologically. The Declaration was made on the 20th of February and, of course, *TC Winston* hit Fiji during the same period as well and on to the 21st February as well.

On 21st February, Madam Speaker, we had the arrival of the first *Orian* Aircraft from New Zealand, and this was very useful for us in terms of providing aerial photography and aerial reconnaissance, particularly in the worst affected areas. The team liaised very closely with the staff at the NDMO. Flight plans were drafted and, of course, they went out into the areas and that provided us with some specific information into the areas.

And that, Madam Speaker, with that information collated, that led to the deployment of the Government vessel *Iloilovatu* to Koro to take food and of course Government teams as well to go and do assessment and most importantly, clear the excess in the area.

During the course of the week too, Madam Speaker, most of the assistance particularly that were brought by planes started arriving, particularly from Australia and New Zealand and I will not go into the details, Madam Speaker, but later on, on the second week, particularly after a turnaround time of about three to nine days that saw the arrival of the vessels.

First, was the *Wellington*, which is a hydrographic vessel and then followed by the *Canterbury* and of course the *Canberra* as well, and the subsequent deployment after consultation with the team at the National office, the deployment of the *Canterbury* to Vanua Balavu and look after the neighbouring islands as well apart from Vanua Balavu and of course the *Canberra* to Koro and of course that includes Taveuni and the neighbouring islands within Lomaiviti and of course the coastal Vanua Levu, including Bua as well, Madam Speaker.

A key issue that I wish to raise here, Madam Speaker, particularly, I have spoken about the success of the operations and I again need to mention in this House that we have set a benchmark, particularly within the region, the Asia-Pacific Region specifically, in terms of best practices during post-disaster operations, and I think all Fijians should be proud, and particularly those that were heavily involved because through the close coordination, through good planning and, of course, through the availability of assets and capabilities, we were quite effective in the provision of the relevant assistance in the areas where they were needed.

One area that I wish to highlight, Madam Speaker, in here this is again a key issue and it is a cross-cutting issue when it comes to disaster arrangements, it is the issue on governance, Madam Speaker. Governance in the sense that our partners, and of course, the victims are interested in the structure, the allocation of responsibilities within that structure, the chain of command and the spans of control, and most importantly where decisions are made and the empowerment that is given to those that are responsible.

This, Madam Speaker, is one of the key elements behind the success of operations as such, and of course, as I have stated, Madam Speaker, Governance, the effectiveness of governance; the structures and the systems that we have in place very much contributes towards the success.

Of course, the Disaster Management Act of 1998 has set the structure, but with some minor improvements, Madam Speaker, in order to enhance the delivery of services, the National Office was arranged into a few major components under the National Controller. The National Controller was also directly responsible for financing and the administration, because as the Chief Accounting Officer, he will in the end be answerable as well to Government on the utilisation of funds that are provided.

Of course, we need very efficient and effective planning and for that we are thankful to the RFMF for the planning team made up of a few Colonels from the RFMF led by the Chief of Staff of the Land Force Command, Lt. Col. Moceica, and the team, and of course, they concentrate on the national and military strategic level planning and that was guided by the Minister for obvious reasons, particularly with the involvement of non-State actors and, of course, our bilateral partners as well.

Madam Speaker, the National Co-ordinator has a huge responsibility and apart from manning the current operations and conduit between the planning team and the people on the ground, particularly the four Divisional Commissioners, the National Co-ordinator who is the Director of Disaster Management is also responsible for the logistics and, of course, the efficient conduct of the National Operations Centre daily and of course, the briefing.

Also, at the National Strategic level, Madam Speaker, as I have spoken of, we have Macro-Economic Team and Aid Co-ordination Team. These comprises people, officials from the Ministry of National Planning, and Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Industry and Trade and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It made things easy for the National Control, particularly in terms of the co-ordination, in terms of the analysis, in terms of the arrangement of meetings so that the work can flow efficiently during the conduct of the operations, Madam Speaker.

I have already highlighted that Fiji is a very challenging environment given the vast area over the ocean that we cover and the characteristics geographically of these particular areas, therefore it was important that we had a very efficient planning team to look at the needs, tasks, the characteristics of this environment, capabilities that we have, the timelines and the allocation of resources and of course, the needs in these areas, Madam Speaker.

As I have alluded to, Madam Speaker, the identification of the task, the key priorities in the zones marked red were very very critical and there were three major essential tasks identified and they were the main lines of operations, as we call it, Madam Speaker, during the operations. Firstly, was the provision

of basic needs to all Fijians. As we all are aware, Madam Speaker, that most of our people were homeless, homes were completely destroyed or damaged in part, and most of our people were without shelter initially, Madam Speaker. So one of the major essential tasks and was one of the key lines of operations was the provision of basic needs to all Fijians. Shelter as I have alluded to and then the issue of food and nutrition and security as well.

In the red zones, Madam Speaker, most of their livelihood particularly their food security were about from 80 to 100 percent destroyed and, of course, the need for our people to be provided with food, and not only food but, of course, we are conscious of the nutrition as well. As alluded to by the Honourable Minister for Health this morning, after the health survey, there were a few children in Koro who were malnourished, Madam Speaker, and they were given the necessary food as well, particularly in the form of porridge and biscuits and that really improved their state, Madam Speaker, so food is very very essential.

Accessibility, I have talked about this, Madam Speaker, either by land, air or by sea and of course, because most of them are accessible by land, where we have already fixed the jetties or so but then that was again another challenge but we are thankful to the stakeholders in the provision of this, and of course they have their health and hygiene. We have talked about the WASH, Cluster and how it was co-ordinated between all of them.

The other second essential task, Madam Speaker, and was one of the three major lines of operations was the restoration of essential services. We all know how important communication is. I have talked about Devo Peak, and there was a lot of destruction and of course TFL and the agencies are still working on this, Madam Speaker, but we are thankful for the quick recovery in that aspect.

Electricity, very very important. People need power and particularly in the private sector as well. Work is still continuing, Madam Speaker. FEA gave a timeline of almost two months but that was not acceptable to Government and therefore we sought the assistance of New Zealand and, of course, Australia and India as well and we have machinery and of course additional tradesmen as well to help us with the restoration of electricity.

Roadings, again it is obvious, Madam Speaker, and likewise the other forms of accessibility.

Health and hygiene, again a big issue and has been covered well by the Minister for Health.

Education, this still remains one of Government's top priorities and will continue to be so and, of course, we have seen the plans made by the Honourable Minister for Education in the relocation of some students and, of course, in the reconstruction, the early recovery so that people can get back to school immediately and on that, Madam Speaker, we wish to acknowledge United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) for providing us with the facilities, "Live and Learn" and most of our partners, ACAP and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, Madam Speaker, and the so many other actors that assisted us in the education sector, and I am sure the Honourable Minister can talk more on that.

The last major essential task, Madam Speaker, which is also one of the key lines of operations was just the economic recovery. Although we have a major task in feeding our people and restoring essential services, but we should never neglect our economy. Our economy is important, Madam Speaker.

Firstly, is the tourism sector and we did our best to ensure that this continued, Madam Speaker. So we are thankful for all the work that is done.

Madam Speaker, on aid, let me just highlight that Fiji received a total of about \$143 million pledges from both local business communities and the international partners as well. In terms of aid-in-kind and

technical assistance, there was about \$102 million, but let me specifically state here, particularly for aid-in-kind, most of these involved the cost for the donors themselves. We see the C-17 coming in, we see the *Canberra* and *Canterbury* so most of the aid-in-kind was for the costs borne by our partners themselves. In cash, Madam Speaker, this goes to the Consolidated Fund of Government. There was a pledge of about \$28 million but, Madam Speaker, let me state in this Honourable House that there are six countries that are still to honour their pledge and therefore we have about \$6.7 million less of the \$28 million that I have stated, Madam Speaker.

The Prime Minister's Relief Fund, Madam Speaker, this was in two forms. We have about \$4.7 million in the commercial banks in Fiji; ANZ, BSP, Westpac, Home Finance, Baroda and BRED initiated by the Ministry of Finance. We have no records of whoever pledged into this but the details are in the respective banks, Madam Speaker.

In the Prime Minister's Trust, we have about \$6.1 million, Madam Speaker, and for the Prime Minister's Trust, when donations are made, the receipts are given straight away and of course this money, Madam Speaker, is still intact in the Prime Minister's Relief Trust and of course the Trust headed by the Prime Minister will decide how it is utilised.

Madam Speaker, finally, on the Flash Appeal, I have talked about the 8 Clusters yesterday, US\$14.6 million or an equivalent of FJD\$28.9 million was provided or pledged by the donors, Madam Speaker, and of course that money does not come to Government but it goes to the clusters based on the donors' preference. I need to make that clear to all of the Honourable Members of the House. Thank you honourable Members for your attention and for this opportunity.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's designate to have the floor.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you. Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for the statement that he has made this afternoon. We all agree that a crisis like *TC Winston* has brought a depth of character in all Fijians in our country. They have shown resilience and they have shown extraordinary courage to overcome the situation that *Winston* has placed them in. Many were displaced and we are praying with them that they will recover quickly and get back to a life that they enjoyed before *Winston*.

My reply to the Honourable Minister will be very simple, Madam Speaker. It is just in regards to the gaps and his pursue for excellence in regards to the machinery and structure that is in place, that probably could be improved in delivering service deliverables to our people when they are in situation - a pose disaster, Madam Speaker.

One thing I note, Madam Speaker, while visiting our people around in Vanua Levu and that is the late arrival of rations. It came a week later and the RFMF were deployed to undertake assessments in villages but rations were mostly supplied by NGOs and other private organisations, Madam Speaker, and that can be properly coordinated by the NDMO through the Divisional Commissioners, so that rations arrive quickly to those who are in need.

Madam Speaker, the other problem that we have identified from the crisis, is in regards to the health needs by our people. They need, proper medical treatment and there were obstructions in the way, because fallen trees blocked the roads and all those destructions, they could have been reduced if, the Divisional governing body have proper equipment in order to allow our citizens to have this kind of treatment, Madam Speaker, when they are from injuries sustained by the *cyclone*.

The other thing that we see, Madam Speaker, is that in regards to the supply of rations. The current system that the government is using, currently the piece meal system which is, they drop off at a particular village, probably the Honourable Minister can take into account a supply of ration which can last for a

particular family for three to six months and they have a review of two weeks before the expiry date, so that the families are not left to wonder what will they eat next, because the cultivation has just started, you know very well they supplied the seeds, then *Cyclone Zena* came along, Madam Speaker.

These are some of the improvements, Madam Speaker, that can be done in our evacuations centres. Previously, the RFMF used to be deployed to our evacuation centres and usually cook meals for evacuees and to restore law and order. There was an increase in sexual offences, domestic violence in our evacuation centres, probably just a change of the method on what the Government can take into account that the right way of doing things, in order to uphold law and order in our evacuation centres, Madam Speaker.

The other things like, some of our areas in Taveuni, especially Vuna, the Honourable Minister will know in the Delaivuna Farming Community because they live in farming communities, they are farmers, the late arrival of the government in those areas. Government could have arranged with the New Zealand and Australian governments while they were here, on how they could drop off and be here for another two or three months to use the need for helicopters and ships, in order to attend to those areas that would improve the recovery of our people.

All in all, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister has failed to answer on how he will try to solve these problems. He has identified plenty areas that they have learned from *TC Winston* and we know they are still recovering from *TC Evans* and other *cyclones* that have passed like *Cyclone Thomas* in 2010 but again a massive magnitude like *TC Winston* needs proper planning and I hope the Ministry will put in place proper plans in order for us to be more resilient in our recovery process.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. I now call upon the Honourable Leader of the National Federation Party or his designate.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you. Madam Speaker, I also thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. I also thank him for his leadership of DISMAC and I know the breadth and scope of work and the complexity in the nature of the work was huge.

Madam Speaker, humanitarian aid immediately after *TC Winston* was an important task and once again, I would like to thank all the international partners but more so, in the immediate aftermath of the *cyclone*, it was very, very heartening to see many non-governmental organisations. Indeed, Madam Speaker, families mainly from the Central Division, Sigatoka, Nadi, Lautoka which were not affected so much were all there between Ba and Rakiraki, trying to help people and in fact, if you saw the number of cars and trucks and people trying to help in the immediate relief, it was a show of great unity by the people.

One of the things that I want to say to the Honourable Minister is, I think that when you have a disaster like this, there are always issues and there are still issues with respect to geographical discrimination. There are still calls, representations coming to us from areas, like Tavua. That certain areas did not receive the rations, and so, I am not saying that this happen only this time, I think this sort of allegation, this sort of representations have been made in the past and I would suggest as a way because I ended up in Rakiraki, and I went to the DISMAC officials and asked them about the areas where most people might not have gone

I suggest, Madam Speaker, that DISMAC should be broaden a little bit when you have a natural disaster, not only you have government officials, but also I think they need to be in one room at least for a while, because the information, the communication that was going out from the Weather Office from the police, from the medical team, were somewhat disjointed at times and people actually receive wrong information.

So, the idea to put all these people into one room, so that a very, very coordinated, clear information is passed on to people would be very helpful and one other suggestion I would like to make to the Honourable Minister, is maybe, DISMAC group should be extended to include, volunteers, people who are from those areas which may have been affected were in Suva or are in other parts of Fiji and by

extending DISMAC, I think that group would have a much better handle on a number of different issues and you may not get complaints of discrimination, complaints of geographical neglect, and so forth and so on, Madam Speaker.

So, those are words that I want to pass on to the Honourable Minister and I think for the future, we can improve our communication and the management of information that comes out from different agencies, because I personally experienced information which was very disjointed which was sometimes not correct, and people get confused about where and how they can get assistance. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism to deliver his statement.

Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism – Plans and Progress After Cyclone Winston

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you. Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to present this Ministerial Statement on the Ministry's plans and progress in manufacturing, commerce and tourism after the arrival of *TC Winston*.

Madam Speaker, before I proceed with the statement, I wish to address the proliferation of misinformation by the *Fiji Times* and the National Federation Party, led by the Honourable Biman Prasad.

Madam Speaker, on Tuesday, 26th April, *Fiji Times* reported that I had said that the debate on a matter was wasting Parliament's time. Madam Speaker, a quick glance of the *Hansard* will tell you ...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- (inaudible)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Please relax, you'll get it.

... that I did not make such a comment. In fact, my comment was taken absolutely out of context by the *Fiji Times*. Nevertheless, the *Fiji Times* reported that I had said that the debate on the matter was wasting Parliament's time.

I never made such a comment and this report, Madam Speaker, is a blatant lie. This lie began with the *Fiji Times* and the National Federation Party on its social media site, on its *Tweeter* site, wrongly attributed this quotation to me through incorrect and inflammatory postings on their official *Tweeter* page. Shame on you!

It is unfortunate, Madam Speaker, that the leader of the NFP, the Leader of the NFP speaks so strongly about false and unfair reporting, yet it is he, Madam Speaker and his Party, that are busy spreading outright lies on social media. Shame on you! Shame on you!

Your actions in this matter speak more strongly than your rhetoric. Unlike you, I believe in the process of this Parliament, I believe in constructive debate and I believe, I believe in the truth.

(Honourable Member interjected)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- As the Leader of your Party, it is a disgrace that you have allowed such a deliberate attempt to mischaracterize my comments to be published online. It would have taken a matter of minutes for you my friend, to read Monday's *Hansard* and see exactly what I said in its proper context. Yet, neither you nor your party could be bothered to do so.

Let me tell you something also. SODELPA did not do it. You did it, and now, Madam Speaker, instead of focusing my speaking time entirely on the issues affecting the lives of ordinary Fijians, I have been forced to outline the ways in which your party has again relied on dishonest tactics to distract from the issues at hand for your own political gain.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You are making a big deal out of it.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, big deal out of lying? Big deal out of lying?

(Honourable Members interjected)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- The arrival of probably *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, Madam Speaker, devastated households, farms, businesses, hotels and infrastructure, especially in the Northern and Western Divisions. Prior to this enormous setback, Madam Speaker, international agencies released glowing reports on the Fijian economy and the projected continuation of healthy growth rates.

Madam Speaker, with this strong economic base, we will not have negative growth rates and in fact, we expect that increase public consumption and high capital expenditure by the Fijian Government will spur our growth and keep our economic momentum moving forward and we are not resting on our laurels Madam Speaker. The Ministry is working on strategies to broaden our economic base.

Madam Speaker, our manufacturing sector represents about 13.1 percent of our Gross Domestic Product. The sector employs about 20,122 people, accounting for about 13.6 percent of the total labour force. In line with the Fijian Government's vision under the Trade Policy Framework, Madam Speaker, to grow our manufacturing sector to 20 per cent of our GDP, the Ministry is supporting key industries that employ sustainable practices and demonstrate strong performance.

Our targeted support, Madam Speaker, has taken the form of the National Exports Strategy Grant and a Marketing Grant with the textile clothing and footwear sector. This support has boosted employment and exports and created new market opportunities. Madam Speaker, unfortunately, *Cyclone Winston's* path of destruction cut through some of the manufacturing and agriculture areas. The manufacturing sector experienced disruptions along the supply chain due to the damages to infrastructure and utilities, including our telecommunications, power, warehouses and the supply of raw materials.

Certain manufacturers, Madam Speaker, in the Western region of Viti Levu were out of commission for about two weeks and at the minimum, while others invested heavily in generators to keep the factories running to get their employees back to work.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry has completed the preliminary assessment of the cost of damages and losses incurred and we have a fair idea of what is required to get these companies back on their feet. This assessment was in the form of a survey, whereby a 150 companies were provided specific questionnaires. We received about 70 responses accounting for about 47 per cent of all companies. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the micro and small enterprises which are a crucial part of the Fijian economy, also suffered damages and losses and these are included in our micro and small business grant recipients. Prior to *Cyclone Winston*, Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier on today, a total of about 4,950 micro and small business grants were handed out and they were to start or expand a business.

The results were overwhelmingly positive. We had begun to see economic growth and an improvement in the lives of roughly about 24,000 ordinary Fijians who were directly impacted under the programme. Similar to the manufacturing and commerce sector, we also have completed the preliminary assessment and have a proposal prepared for the rehabilitation of the micro and small grant recipients. This proposal identifies at approximately 1,993 recipients or 40.3 per cent of the recipients are assumed to have

sustained damages from *Cyclone Winston*. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the Ministry is targeting the micro and small businesses that have been affected by the cyclone and therefore, we have and include in the assessment the grant applicants who had qualified, but who had not actually received the grant.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry is also liaising with donor partners to gain financial and technical support for the development of micro, small and medium enterprise sector and through the National Export Strategy will continue to support our exporters. Madam Speaker, in order to maintain the momentum of growth in manufacturing and commerce, the Ministry is spearheading a Committee of all investment approval agencies. The fast track FDI Committee which consists of Investments Fiji, Reserve Bank of Fiji, Department of Immigration, Ministry of Local Government, including the Directors of Town and Country Planning, *iTaukei* Land Trust Board, FRCA and Ministry of Land and is tasked to stimulate increased economic activity by expediting and streamlining foreign investment related approvals from registration to realization.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the work of the Committee includes area of trade facilitation and the reduction of cost of doing business in Fiji. In fact, the Ministry is now ready to submit the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement for necessary endorsement before ratification in June this year.

The Trade Facilitation Agreement will ensure that measures are put in place to improve trade across borders, amongst other things. Madam Speaker, these measures are specifically targeted to expedite the movement, releasing clearance of goods by border agencies such as, Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority, the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, Fiji Ports Terminal and others, and at the same time increase transparency and reliability for traders.

Madam Speaker, we are working on new markets also for our Fijian made products. Some of you may have seen the Fijian rugby jersey in Singapore, had the Fijian made logo on it and contrary to more popular belief, we did not have to pay for it. It was the kind generosity of Fiji Airways and Vodafone.

The introduction, Madam Speaker, of the direct routes from Fiji to Singapore and San Francisco have opened further opportunities. The Ministry, together with the Ministry of Agriculture, took the Fijian made and Fijian grown brand global through the Singapore Sevens tournament.

The Ministry, Madam Speaker, has also strengthened the Consular-General in Australia by focusing primarily on trade and investments. The aim of the Ministry, through its Trade Commissions, is to develop new markets and also attract high quality foreign direct investments. Therefore, Madam Speaker, we are appointing trade commissioners who are highly qualified in the field of trade and investment.

Madam Speaker, on the subject of tourism, tourism is a very important sector for the Fijian economy and the recent natural disasters have not been able to affect the growth of the industry. This was because the large majority of the industry were unaffected by the cyclone. Following on from a very successful 2015, we are expecting another record year in terms of visitor arrivals and earnings. We are very positive that we will still achieve the \$2 billion target before five years. Quarter one of 2016 has shown a strong growth of 10.2 percent or a record of 158,069 visitor arrivals.

Madam Speaker, all this growth despite *Cyclone Winston* shows the strength and resilience of our economy. This also has been the result of aggressive marketing and promotion by Tourism Fiji and key stakeholders, including the Tourism Action Group and in various markets including our neighbours and traditional markets Australia and New Zealand, as well as throughout non-traditional markets in Asia.

Madam Speaker, the direct route to Singapore will open up new high spending source markets in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The industry apart from the mass market appeal based on sun, sand and

sea to niche markets targeting high end visitors. Government and industry stakeholders are strengthening links to develop and establish events that can grow significantly overtime with the necessary infrastructure to boost numbers and yield, particularly during low tourism seasons. As alluded to by the Honourable Attorney-General yesterday, Fiji is becoming the destination for conventions and meetings or the MICE market. We also host international level sports events and adventures sports, to name a few.

Madam Speaker, now onto the Department of National Trade Measurements and Standards. My Ministry's contribution to the Government's vision of building back better is through strengthening compliance with building materials standards. The officers of the Department of National Trade Measurements and Standards have conducted regular inspections to ensure that substandard building materials are not sold in the market. The Ministry will severely punish any importer or manufacturer who does not comply with these standards.

Further to this, Madam Speaker, the Ministry through the Trade Standards Advisory Council has reactivated the Fiji Building Standards Committee. The Committee is comprised of experts from the building sector and is tasked to improve and strengthen building standards in Fiji and makes recommendations in this regard to the Honourable Minister. The Ministry is also working with the Solicitor-General's Office on requirements for the licensing of builders. This will eliminate unqualified persons from becoming builders and compromising building standards.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the following businesses for coming forward and supporting the Ministry in relief distribution. They are Punjas, CJ Patel Limited, Frezco Beverages, Tappoos Limited, Sunergise, Sunbeam Transport, Lift Trans Limited, Mega Store Hardware, Kanvan Papers and United Apparel.

Madam Speaker, it has been through the generous and gracious support from these companies that the Ministry was able to provide relief assistance to the most remote villages in Ra and Ba Provinces. This included a number of evacuation centres and in total the Ministry assisted 1,910 households totally and solely through the generosity of these companies with 22 villages and 18 settlements altogether.

Madam Speaker at this time I also must thank the Honourable Minister for Agriculture and Disaster Management for all his hard work and dedication in all that he has done to-date and all that he is about to do.

Once again, Madam Speaker, I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the designate of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to have the floor.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for Tourism Industry and Trade for that statement. I agree that Fiji is on a very interesting journey after *Tropical Cyclone Winston* and the industry sector has taken huge blows. It is good to hear that the tourism industry has been safe, that is currently one of the industries that we are currently relying on.

Last week the Honourable Prime Minister at New York had mentioned that if another climatic event should strike Fiji, all the economic gains that the nation has gained could be totally wiped off. It is the duty of the Ministry of Trade to see that the industries are performing well and the market in Fiji is more favourable to allow investors to come in and also, Madam Speaker, to allow our exports to go out of the country. However, the problem we have at the moment, Madam Speaker, is a high demand but there is

a lack of supply from our suppliers, especially in the agriculture sector in regards to *yaqona*, *dalo* and the coconut industry.

Most of the coastline villages that were badly affected and islands like Koro, Vanua Balavu and the Ra coastal area depend on copra, Madam Speaker. What alternative plans does the Government have in order to find an alternative product for them as a source of income? What will be done to the coconut trees that are standing there? Can they be cut down and used for other economic advantages to help the indigenous people in coastline areas?

For smaller businesses, the micro-business scheme, Madam Speaker, most of them now operate in tents. What can be done, Madam Speaker, to those people who are recipients? The storage of their products and most of them have completely lost their businesses. After the Ministry does its assessment, what advice could be given to them? What other options can be given to them in order to remain as ventures and to participate in a grant that was created to help them?

Some of the areas too, Madam Speaker, I fail to hear the aquarium industry. The effects of that industry especially on those who rely on those areas, like *dri* and *sucuwalu*. Most of the people in coastline areas have been surviving on those, Madam Speaker. The difficulties that the people face in regards to using compressors, those have affected their lives, most have been injured and most have died because they were not properly equipped. Most of those sales, Madam Speaker, are benefitted by the Chinese agents who become the buyers of the *sucuwalu* and *dri*. What can be done to that too, Madam Speaker?

The other challenge Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my Honourable friend is the restricted business areas which were restricted to Fijians only, but we see a dominant participation by other foreigners in those areas, if that could be monitored and looked into so that those sources of income and industry could gain and benefit by our people. Those are some of the areas which I see that the Ministry of Trade could look into, especially in creating springboards that will allow small businesses to come back and become major contributors in our industries so that our economy is rolling, the models are applicable in the implementation according to our friendship with the Asian markets and other markets where we are trading Fiji and our products.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Leader of NFP or his designate.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am sure you will allow me to respond to Honourable Koya's allegation.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- In fact, Madam Speaker, I do not run the Party's *Tweeter* account but let me tell you the truth. The *Tweeter* basically uplifted a story from the *Fiji Times* which said "Find out which FijiFirst MP said that we are wasting time on this debate on the Petition." Let me quote from page 1284 of Monday, 25th April's *Daily Hansard*. This is the type of lying we have in this Parliament, Madam Speaker. This man has just lied in Parliament.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Completely lied to the Parliament and let me read this, Madam Speaker.

"HON. F.S. KOYA.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, once again the idea is that once this Petition is presented, its merits and demerits are put forward. Right now, I think we have gone off on some particular tangent that does not have anything to do with the actual Petition.

(Chorus of Interjections)

Madam Speaker, I think you made a ruling already, we are wasting precious parliamentary time.”

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, what he said was curtailing the debate, saying debating that Petition or debating that issue was a waste of time. He then stands up, Madam Speaker, based on a *Fiji Times* story which the headline had something else, there were a small line. I am sure someone who tweeted the account would not have even noticed this thing because it was a bigger story that the Party's *Tweeter* administrator tweeted. So, that story is not about him. He comes here, jumps upside own...

(Laughter)

...and blames me for misrepresenting him.

(Inaudible Interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Stop lying,

(Laughter)

My friend stop lying.

(Inaudible Interjections)

He has just done that, Madam Speaker...

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, Point of Order, he called me a liar, I am not. Language, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, we would be big enough, if I was going to check, I checked. If it was what we had done, if it was what he said we had done, I would have been big enough to apologise. In fact, he should apologise to me now, Madam Speaker.

You have to make a ruling to him, he should read the *Hansard* Report carefully, he should read the *Fiji Times* carefully, he should learn how to read twitter accounts. He does not know how to read twitter accounts.

Twitters can be very humorous, Madam Speaker. At times, you know, they could be political satire. I mean you will have to grow up Hon. Koya, grow up. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I take offence to that, Madam Speaker. That is rather a personal remark and I ask that you retract that, please Madam Speaker, I ask for a ruling. I take that personally. Do not tell me to grow up.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I now wish to respond.

HON. SPEAKER.- Before you respond, please withdraw the statement.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- What did I say, Madam Speaker. He is saying that one learns how to do something, one grows up to do something.

HON. SPEAKER.- You said so many things.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

(Laughter)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Let me come back to the substantive reply.

HON. SPEAKER.- And that is included in your time.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, it was a bit humorous that the Honourable Minister was still talking about one stop shop and how he talked about fast tracking. He was talking about bringing all the players together to facilitate industry and manufacturing. I thought he has been talking about that for a long time. Where is the one stop shop for investors? Are we still working on it? This is a question that I leave it to him.

I was hoping, Madam Speaker, that he would talk a little bit more about the tourism industry because it is a key to our economy and there has been a major impact.

Do I have more time, Madam Speaker?

HON. SPEAKER.- One minute.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, the industry players are projecting a decline in the tourism numbers by, between 15 to 20 per cent. I think it could be more than that. The publicity that we got about *Cyclone Winston*, Madam Speaker, internationally was a good thing but with it, we also had a lot of negative publicity about the disaster and all that, so naturally, those visiting our shores will be thinking twice.

In fact, the Honourable Minister should go and look at the trip advisor which is a reference point for many travelers, Madam Speaker. Whenever they go and look at countries and one of the things that I found out that there was a reference to the food cost. Maybe, Madam Speaker, as we said at the last budget, the imposition of the environmental levy, the STT, perhaps the Honourable Minister of Finance ought to relook at some of those when he presents the new budget in June this year. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I really hope that we will not continue with these personal attacks and personal wordings, words that are offensive to this House. We really reduce the integrity of this House to a lower level in the last session and I hope that would be the last one.

I did allow it only because it was coming to and fro from both sides.

Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts to deliver his statement.

Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts Virtual Museum Projects

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister and Honourable Members of Parliament, I wish to speak and provide details on one of the two projects of the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, which was launched on Friday 22nd April at Naitasiri High School.

Madam Speaker, this is a historical virtual museum project which is perhaps, one of the most significant steps ...

HON. MEMBERS.- Which school?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Naitasiri High School. Is that clear?

Madam Speaker, it is one of the most significant steps that we have taken in our efforts to educate the public, young and old, and those outside Fiji about our unique heritage.

Madam Speaker, our past gives us our identity, the knowledge of our existence are our connections to our culture and traditional links. Fiji boasts one of the world's richest mix of cultural, traditional heritage past and all Fijians are extremely proud of this.

Madam Speaker, our ancient religion cultural artifacts and god gifted talents have marveled people worldwide and it has been a blessing that through the Fiji Museum services, we have access to our past and its wonders.

Madam Speaker, from its humble beginning in 1904, when the idea to have a museum to display and preserve traditional Fijian culture was first discussed, the Fiji Museum was formerly inaugurated as a government statutory body with a Board of Trustees under the Fiji Museum Ordinance of 1929. After its opening in 1955, the current museum has served as the storehouse for cultural items and as a center for research and studies. A body of knowledge about our past heritage, struggle and humble growth and development is stored there, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, located at the heart of Suva's Thurston Gardens, the Fiji Museum holds a remarkable collection which includes archeological materials dating back 3,700 years and cultural objects representing both Fiji's indigenous inhabitants and the other communities that have settled in the island group for the past 200 years.

Madam Speaker, our fellow Fijian brothers' ancestors of about 100 plus inhabitant islands in Fiji are also interested to know about our culture roots and educate their children likewise. However, they all are not able to reach the museum in Suva. Madam Speaker, we have got 8,144 students in the maritime zone, 36,077 from Vanua Levu which have difficulty in coming to Suva to visit the museum.. Also, Madam Speaker, if they are able to make a trip, it is a very short visit.

Madam Speaker, visitation to the museum is not sight-seeing. It should be an enriching and educational visit. You need to spend a lot of time at each exhibit, read about it, understand about it, and understand its significance.

Now, Madam Speaker, everyone including the children from the interior, rural and maritime areas who have access to IT facilities can visit the Fiji Museum online wherever they are. They can access all the things that are kept in the museum while sitting at home, Madam Speaker, from the bedroom.

Madam Speaker the road to this historic achievement started with an agreement signed last year between the Ministry of Education and a Video and Audio Production team. This project was constructed primarily to target school children and the families who found it difficult to visit the Fiji Museum due to their geographical and financial limitations. Our target was to first find a way to take institutions like the Fiji Museum out to the people, in the rural areas, in the interior, in the maritime zone along with the stock of knowledge, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker this project will give students an opportunity to visit the museum on line to carry out their research by accessing the Fiji Museum site; understand better about our region and understand better about others. That is what it is all about education.

Gone are the days when children only heard about museum, without ever having an opportunity to make a visit. The project will make visualizing the museum architects as easy as it can get, Madam Speaker. This publication is an addition to the Fiji Museum website which the whole public has full access to.

Over the past three months, the team had collated 854 items from display at the Fiji Museum including the virtual museums. The information focuses on key areas of our countries past, such as the ancient past, the history of first Fijians, cession, the indentured system and independence.

Out of this 609 artifacts that were professionally photographed in 23 photography sessions, while the other 246 images were scanned and provided by the Fiji Museum. Madam Speaker, over 1,300 individual photographs are on display in the virtual museum site, with over 35,000 words of description for the virtual museum site, researched and written, with quite a lot of them having voice over as well and incorporated into the Virtual Reality Museum, to provide an enhanced educational experience to our children, to parents in the interior, as well as people outside Fiji without any cost to them.

Madam Speaker, the Virtual Museum scales to screen size so that it can be viewed on PCs, laptops and on handsets as well and as we speak, you can have access to that, Madam Speaker.

Added to this, Madam Speaker, all work was done in Fiji, by our own home grown talent, as Honourable Minister for Trade would say. Madam Speaker, to give a more in-depth description of the Virtual Museum, let me now inform the House that the online site has information on ancient Fijian history. Few of these include:

1. Maritime history: This gallery has artefacts and information on fishing, transport, trade, warfare, to which the people of Fiji, as islanders, have a strong connection, even the people of the interior of the larger islands are dependent upon trade and the coastal communities for salt, *tabua* and other essentials. This further includes information on different types of ancient canoes, Ratu Finau, *na* Tui Nayau, Bilibili, sandalwood trade, traditional fishing methods, Beach de mer, the Whalers, foreign Beach de mers, Western Awareness (1643-1799). Some of the other detailed information given includes the various types of fishing hooks used over time, the first canoes, including the Tongan ones and the material culture

brought in by beachcombers and other Europeans. Information on the arrival and use of the earliest guns, working tools and other European materials to Fiji is outlined with description, Madam Speaker.

2. History: The human history of Fiji spans over 3,000 years, Madam Speaker, and this gallery explores the evidence of human habitation through the artefacts people left behind. There is information from the first arrival of pottery used by people and the persisting evidence of their settlements across the development of complex Pacific societies over the thousands of years, through the recent past of the mid-1990s.

Madam Speaker, our ancient religion which worked on the concepts of praying to various Gods at special places are also captured in the Virtual Museum, Madam Speaker. Information on the prayer places, wood carvings, used as Gods, areas of sacrifice, role of priests, belief in restricted habits and role of decision making can be also seen in this project.

Madam Speaker, the arrival of the first Missionaries also marked a significant step in Fiji's history. There is information on their movements, early preaching, association with chiefs and the effect on the common people. The missionaries not only spread Christianity, Madam Speaker, but also brought English language and taught early the *iTaukei* reading and writing. All this information is provided at the Virtual Museum site.

3. *Masi* : This gallery provides information on Masi which was once a commonplace product and yet it also had a significance about it, similar to that of *Yaqona* and *Tabua* as we know lately.
4. Girit history: This gallery tells us some of the stories of the first ship from India, the *Leonidas*, which arrived with 463 labourers on board on 15th May, 1879, between 1879 and 1916 more than 60,000 Indians of Indian origin landed in Fiji, Madam Speaker. So this gallery has got information about the Giritiyas.
5. Natural History: This gallery includes amazing variety of plants and animals from both the island and seas, many of which have cultural significance and are the totems of different clans across Fiji. Some of these species are endemic, which is why they are found nowhere else in the world.

Madam Speaker, as well as being a powerful educational tool, the Virtual Museum is also an influential marketing tool for the Fiji Museum and Fiji. It gives them a strong international presence, it gives Fiji a strong international presence which will raise our profile globally, Madam Speaker, as well as here in Fiji. The Virtual Museum is content driven and has been designed to be easy to navigate, visually stunning and educationally focussed.

Madam Speaker, the Bainimarama-led Government will not leave any stones unturned in its quest to provide quality education to all Fijians, no matter where they are and we have begun with the process and gradually move towards equalising the landscape of education throughout Fiji. The Government of the day has set an education dream, Madam Speaker, and the Virtual Museum project is part of our broader education dream.

Madam Speaker, our loving children are tomorrow's future and they need to be fully blended into the teachings of our history. They need to understand our own fellow Fijians and our own origin. With onslaught of internet, movies, et cetera, is making it difficult for our children to understand our origin, our heritage, Madam Speaker. It is in this light that we have decided that we need to go to them, take the

information to them and not let distance or financial limitation be a burden on them to prior education that will make them a fully Fijian and a secure future Fiji, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we meaningfully took the launching to Naitasiri, particularly because wanted those people in the interior rural areas to understand that this initiative had been done with them in mind. The projects that we take in Education Ministry, we have people outside the urban periphery in our mind, Madam Speaker and therefore we have taken this out there and we are able to show them that “look, they are not forgotten.”

Madam Speaker, information on the history of Fiji is one of the key outlooks for the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Art and it is part of the Department of Heritage. With a publication such as this one, we intend to achieve part of that dream, Madam Speaker. In future, we will look at other aspects of our history as such as our heritage sites. The next project is to do a similar launching of all the heritage sites we have in Fiji. Our people are very eager to go for holidays outside Fiji, Madam Speaker, we need to first get them to understand Fiji and its heritage.

Madam Speaker, I certainly believe that all Fijians will make the very best use of this latest initiatives by the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts and continue to appreciate our own colourful history, what makes us all as Fijians. Thank you.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Leader of Oppositions designate to have the floor.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for the statement that he has made. I thought he was going to talk about the pledge and the 220,000 copies but unfortunately he did not. So, I will just concentrate on his statement on the new Fiji Museum Virtual Project.

Madam Speaker, new technologies provide new possibilities and impose new restrictions and despite the significant advantages, the Virtual Museum as such also present some drawbacks and I would like to align a few.

Virtual reality by way of definition is an artificial environment which is experienced through sensory stimuli and it is only provided by a computer. It partially determines what happens in the environment, in short, Madam Speaker, Virtual Museum is not real. Objects exist in potential form and not in reality. The problem with this project is that advance graphic systems, the use for computer reconstruction adopted by Virtual Museum may sometimes be realistic. They are based on partial evidence. Sometimes advance graphic systems present the images as true within the sense of misleading accuracy.

The Virtual Museum project, Madam Speaker, especially the visitor in our schools, they will have difficulty in retrieving information for the simple reason that they must have access to a computer, they must also have access to the internet, and of course the constant power supply and supplying CDs if that is another way out of it. There are some disadvantages like cartage transport and other logistical arrangements.

This means that the computer illiterate, automatically are excluded and a lot of visitors encounter difficulties and understanding the use of plug ins, especially in our schools and for our primary students as well, so this comes at a cost, Madam Speaker.

In addition to this, the Honourable Minister is coming up with all sorts of changes which are neither tested, nor do we have evidence that they are beneficial to the nation, especially to our education sector. These changes have been carried out without the input of key stakeholders and more importantly, consultation with the people.

Toppers Scholarship is a clear example, no consultation. His figures in this House on the recipients were bloated. In his response to my question, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister said that in 2013, under the old scheme, 5434 scholarship recipients were assisted and in 2014, only 345 recipients and in 2015, 489. If we add them together, the number is well below the 213 recipient of 5,434. This means that the majority of our people had to loan to go for further studies. A lot of changes has been brought by the Honourable Minister has no proper planning. Schools are still in tents, teachers without roofs and here we see another project doomed to fail. The pledges, what has happened to it? What has happened to taxpayers' money that was used by printing 220,000 copies?

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, the Virtual Museum Project will be another failed project if people are not thoroughly prepared for it, especially in our schools. To make matters worse, there is an issue of consistency and funding, if this is to be successful as we need awareness programmes to go out to the people. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- *Io.*

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Leader of NFP or his designate.

HON. PROF. B. C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement on the Virtual Museum Programme. I agree with him that our history is very important. To move forward, we have to learn from our past and, we have to preserve our past, Madam Speaker. It is very important that our children, our future generation has the opportunity and the benefit of the history in many forms in terms of books and new technologies.

In fact, Madam Speaker, sometimes we think that new technology or the technological revolution will have disastrous impact on our culture, tradition and on our history. Sometimes it can be useful. I think, using technology to preserve our heritage and our history can be very, very important.

So, from that point of view, Madam Speaker, I hear my colleague as well about other things. But one thing that I want to say to the Honourable Minister for Education while he his continuing with his reform, we did say to him many times that education reforms are very fundamental. These are long term things and you do not bring in piecemeal reform. We still maintain that an Education Commission to look at what the Honourable Minister has done so far and what he wants to do going forward, might still be a good idea. And also, Madam Speaker, in relation to history, I think we are not teaching enough of our history in schools.

I did History up to Form Four, Madam Speaker, we did a little bit of Fiji's history, but then we wandered into New Zealand history, Australian history and others which was very useful. Similarly, with geography as well. So I think that while we have all these technological resources available, we are talking about our heritage, we are talking about our history and we are talking the past. I think we need to teach our history in schools, it is very, very important.

In fact, not only our past history but our contemporary history, Madam Speaker, would be very, very important because otherwise having resources such as a Virtual Museum Project is not going to be useful if our kids do not understand our history. They do not understand our past, where we have come from or where they have come from. These things would just become one of those little things on the internet that children usually like to go to.

I did not hear from the Honourable Minister how extensively this is going to be taken to the children and promoted to the kids because I think if it is successful, it could be a very useful mechanism and useful strategy to bring back our history, our past and, make it alive with our children, Madam Speaker. So, I want to live with those suggestions to the Hon. Minister, thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will move on to 6 (a) on the Order Paper. I now call upon the Hon. Attorney-General to have the floor.

REFORM OF THE SUGAR CANE INDUSTRY BILL 2016

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85 (1), I move:

That the Reform of the Sugar Cane Industry Bill 2016, be now read a second time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. LT. COL. I. B. SERUIRATU. – Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call upon the mover of the motion, I remind Members that pursuant to the Standing Order 85(1), the debate is on the principles and the merits of the Bill. Further, the only amendment permitted is an amendment moved pursuant to Standing Order 85(2). I trust this is clear. I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to speak on his motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the sugarcane industry has an excess of over 100,00 Fijians who depend on it either directly or indirectly, and as we have seen there was a number of restructure measures that were implemented from 2009. The first stage of the restructure was the winding up of the Sugar Marketing Company, the dissolution of the Sugar Commission of Fiji which was established under the Sugar Industry Act, Cap. 206, and of course, the termination of the 38 council of Sugar Cane Growers Council. In addition to this, Madam Speaker, the Sugar Taskforce was established in May 2010, as Government's point of contact for Deloitte Consultants.

The primary role of the Sugar Taskforce included the development of the terms of reference for Deloitte, providing guidance to it in terms of collation of reports, et cetera. After the *Deloitte's Report* was endorsed by the Cabinet in September 2007, Madam Speaker, the Sugar Taskforce was charged with the additional responsibility to oversee the implementation of the *Deloitte Report* reform agenda which successfully concluded by 31st December, 2012. In June 2011, a new and dedicated Ministry of Sugar was created to continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the industry. The Sugar Taskforce was disbanded in February 2013 after Cabinet endorsed the Sugar Cane Industry Strategic Action Plan 2013 – 2017. It also included ways in which we could integrate mainstream agriculture with the sugarcane industry.

The Reform of the Sugar Cane Industry Bill 2016, which is before us, Madam Speaker, as you know was tabled in the first reading on 25th of April. It has been drafted to provide the next stage of the industry reform to further drive out cost in the industry, provide efficiency and make it a lot easier for farmers in terms of streamlining the processes. Madam Speaker, a number of consultations have been held including with the stakeholders in the sugarcane industry, including farmers and various other stakeholders. Madam Speaker, the existing Sugar Industry Act was enacted way back in 1984 which provides for the regulation and administration of sugar industry even to the present day.

Madam Speaker, just very briefly through the actual Bill before us which is to be referred to the Standing Committee:

- 1) Part 1 of the Bill provides the preliminary provisions of the Bill.
- 2) Part 2 establishes the Sugar Industry Tribunal, the Tribunal is a person to be appointed by the Chief Justice. The Tribunal must be a person who is qualified to be appointed as High Court Judge or has extensive experience in economics and industrial relations. Part 2 of the Bill, Madam Speaker, refers to the Sugar Industry Tribunal and those who will be employed by that and of course the transfer in the respective Ministry. This merges functions and dissolves historical institutions of industry that created bureaucratic processes and problems.
- 3) Part 3 of the Bill establishes the Council of Sugar Cane Growers. The composition of the Council from the former Sugar Industry Act is retained under the Bill.
- 4) Part 4 of the Bill establishes the 4 Mill Committees, these Committees for Labasa, Lautoka, Penang and Rarawai Mill areas.
- 5) Part 5 of the Bill deals with the Sugar Industry Master Award. The Master Award was made by the Sugar Industry Tribunal which is established under the former Sugar Industry Act, and is continuing under the Bill.
- 6) Madam Speaker, Part 6 of the Bill deals with the registration of growers. Under the former Sugar Industry Act, the registration of growers was the responsibility of the Registrar of the Tribunal. Under this part, the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) must keep and maintain the Registrar of Growers register which must contain, of course, various details of the individuals and which is enunciated in the Bill itself without going into those details.
- 7) Madam Speaker, Part 7 of the Bill deals with Industrial Actions.
- 8) Part 8 of the Bill deals with procedures relating disputes.
- 9) Part 9 of the Bill deals with Awards.
- 10) Part 10 of the Bill deals with the transfer and conversion of shares, in FSC and South Pacific Fertilizer Limited as well as the transfer of assets and liabilities. The total number of shares held by the shareholders in FSC, except for the shares held by the Government will be transferred to the Government at the value derived from the most recent independent evaluation of FSC before the commencement of the new Act.

Madam Speaker, those people who know about the shareholding of FSC, will know that apart from Government, there are institutions like FNPF, Fijian Holdings and also major shareholder like Mr Y.P.

Reddy and other small ones that actually are the shareholders of FSC when it was listed. Of course, it is no longer listed, Madam Speaker, but the reality has always been in all these years, despite having these shareholders, none of them have actually contributed to FSC in the manner in which the Fijian Government has contributed indeed making various advances to FSC and none of them actually did so, and of course, when the initial evaluation of FSC was done a few years ago, the share value was below zero and now it has increased and it is above zero, and it is increasing.

Madam Speaker, all loans and associated accrued interest to the Government advance to FSC will be converted into shares at the value derive from the most recent independent evaluation FSC and such shares will be held by the Fijian Government. Any monetary loan that the Government advanced to SPFL will be converted to equivalent shares into SPFL and such shares will be held by the Government.

Part 11 of the Bill empowers the tribunal to make rules relating to the functions of the tribunal. The rules are to be made following the approval of the Honourable Chief Justice. Part 11 of the Bill also empowers the Minister to make regulations, to give effect to the provisions of the new Act.

Madam Speaker, also the former Sugar Industry Act and the Sugar Research Institute of Fiji Act 2005 will be repealed under the new Act through this Bill, if it is passed. The Sugar Research Institute of Fiji will be merged with FSC and staffs and assets will be transferred to FSC. With the merger, the Sugar Cane Growers contribution of some \$0.9 million will no longer be required.

Madam Speaker, these are the salient features of the reform of the Sugar Cane Industry Bill and I recommend it for second reading, thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, the Bill is now open for debate, Hon. Dr. Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. When I saw this Bill for the first time, I had a number of questions in my mind and I would like to raise some of those now, so that, when this Bill goes to the Standing Committee, there will be some very, very detailed consultation and discussion with respect to the changes that might come through. Fortunately, as the Honourable Attorney-General explained, there will be no change in the Sugar Industry Master Award, as given in this Bill. But I remember and the Honourable Attorney-General might want to shed some lights on this in his right of reply.

We had a Consultant, Professor Steven Ratuva, who was tasked to look at the Sugar Industry Master Award and I think he did some consultations already and I was wondering whether that report is already available. I hope that will be made available to the Committee.

Madam Speaker, the other issue, I think it is important when we abolished the Sugar Cane Growers Council, we have a new structure. We have talked about it being unrepresentative of the growers and that the voice of the growers was taken away. So from that point of view, we feel that once the Bill goes to the Standing Committee that there would be a lot more consultation with the wider group of farmers in terms of some of the issues that they have.

On loans and guarantees to FSC, particularly loans, I am sure that the Committee will look at the actual details of what they are, in terms of the proposed conversion of the minority shareholders to Government. So, those are some of the issues that I think would need thorough scrutiny within the Standing Committee. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Hon. Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Attorney General for moving the amendment of the Sugar Industry Bill. I believe that the two reports that formed the basis of this amendment, one of them is the *Ratuva Report*. I urge the mover of this Bill to at least make them public, because they have not been made public until now. This is a major amendment, Government will apply a 100 per cent shares in FSC and the industry as a whole. So, basically it will be a Government company and these reports with various recommendations will come in handy.

The only thing I have to say and appeal to the cane farmers of this country, Madam Speaker, through this is that, they have an opportunity now to make submissions on this Bill when it goes to the Committee and they should not miss this opportunity because this Bill has many salient features which would require some expert advice and I urge them to take appropriate stand and do not miss this boat, thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. There have been no other input, I now invite the Honourable Minister to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the fact that the Government is bringing this Bill and the next Bill on the agenda which is the Sugar Cane Growers Fund Amendment Bill, Madam Speaker, demonstrates Government willingness to ensure that we do reform the Sugar Cane Industry. As I have said in the introduction that it is no longer called the Sugar Industry. It is called the Sugar Cane Industry, because of course, the use from sugar cane is not only for sugar, there are other uses derived from the sugar cane plant. I think we need to take an expensive view of this particular industry. This is a wonderful opportunity when it goes to the Committee that we look at the Sugar Cane Industry in a purely commercial basis on the basis of ensuring that this is a sustainable crop for us and sustainable for the farmers.

There are many challenges faced by the Sugar Cane Industry, as highlighted by the Honourable Prime Minister this morning, a lot of leases were not renewed, the sugar cane production is almost halved in Vanua Levu because of the non-renewal of leases. We have a lot of young people who are children of cane farmers, they are the fourth generation who no longer want to stay in the cane farm, they want to work in the tourism industry, a lot of people do not want to cut cane anymore, wearing long sleeve shirts, cutting cane in the middle of the day. These are the kind of challenges the Sugar Cane Industry faces. The rest of the world, as far as the sugar cane farmers is concerned, has been mechanised.

We have obviously, a specific condition in Fiji, not all areas in Fiji, wherever sugar cane is planted, is flat land, so the ability to mechanise is limited in those areas. There is number of issues that we need to look at. We look at the mode of transportation, carting the cane to the mill. We have a railway network and we also have trucks at the same time. A number of these issues need to be brought to the floor and I completely agree with the Hon. Prasad and Hon. Singh that people need to come forward and give their views. But we need to give these views in a non-political manner. Madam Speaker, we need to give these views in a non-political manner. The farmers need not to be politicised, they need to come and tell us about their very issues and we need to take this approach. This is a wonderful opportunity, Madam Speaker.

I think we like to also acknowledge the focus attention by the Hon. Prime Minister in the sugar cane industry in the past few years. We have taken steps that no other government took steps because we viewed the sugar cane industry in a non-political, apolitical manner. That is why a number of these reforms were taken.

If we were to, for example, that number of grants that the Fijian Government and the amount of money that the Fijian Government has given to FSC, as a listed company and even as a delisted company and if you were to then convert those grants into equity, the shareholding of those shareholders that they are talking about would become point zero, zero or whatever it would be. Because they absolutely had no equity input apart from the initial purchase of those shares.

So, these are the hard core realities that we have to realise, that just because one is a shareholder in a company, you cannot expect only one of the shareholders to continue to put money into the company without it being converted to equity nor has there been any specific agreements of it being as a loan specific to the company. So we have free riders and the free riders need to understand that they no longer can free ride; the taxpayers of Fiji are actually giving private individuals and private companies a free ride and that needs to stop. But of course that is only one aspect of it and Madam Speaker, we look forward to a number of people contributing to the Committee, and we look forward to the committee also dealing with this matter in a more non-political manner.

Madam Speaker, I recommend that this Bill now be read for the second time. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Parliament will now vote and the question is, that the Reform of Sugar Cane Industry Bill 2016 be now read a second time. Does any member oppose the motion?

Since there are no opposition, the motion is agreed to unanimously. Secretary-General

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- The Bill for an act to provide for the Reform for Motion and Regulation of the Sugar Cane Industry (Bill No. 19 of 2016)

HON. SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 85(4) the Bill has been read for the second time pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a). The Bill will now be referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

I now call upon the Hon. Attorney General to have the floor.

SUGAR CANE GROWERS FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016

HON. A.SAYED-.KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), I move:

That the Sugar Cane Growers Fund (Amendment) Bill 2016, be now read a second time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. LT. COL. I.B.SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you and before I call out upon the move or motion I remind the members that pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), the debate on the principles and the merits of the Bill. Further the only amendment permitted is an amendment moved pursuant to Standing Order 85(2). I now call upon the Honourable Attorney General to speak on his motion.

HON. A.SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Sugar Cane Growers Fund (Amendment) Bill was tabled in Parliament on the 25th of April, to amend the sugarcane growers existing Sugarcane Growers Fund Act, to align the provision of the Sugar Cane Growers Fund Act to the change proposed by the reform on the Sugar Cane Industry Bill. These two laws actually go

hand in hand, it is more of a consequential amendment because of the new Sugar Cane Industry Bill that has been tabled.

Madam Speaker, just by a way of background, the Sugar Cane Growers Fund Act, 2007 was enacted way back in 1984 and Madam Speaker, has not substantially changed since then. It established a fund that was known as the Sugar Cane Growers Fund. The Fund, Madam Speaker, for the information of this House or Parliament, provides loans to sugarcane growers for any of the following purposes:

1. Purposes for which in the opinion of Board management of the fund will increase the production of sugarcane.
2. Purposes of which in the opinion of the Board will improve the efficiency in planting, growing, harvesting and transportation of sugarcane.
3. The carrying out of work which the Board considers necessary or desirable to rehabilitate the farms, buildings or other installations damaged destroyed or affected by floods, cyclones or also other natural disasters.
4. The carrying out of work which the Board considers necessary or desirable to solve the sugarcane farms into construct buildings or other installations on these farms.
5. The carrying out of work which the Board considers necessary or desirable for crop diversification, this is where other crops come into play, the making of provisions to such an extent as the Board considers necessary for the personal family needs, of growers during the periods of financial distress or hardship.
6. and lastly, to enable canegrowers to participate in commercial ventures which in the opinion of the Board are intended to benefit the cane growing industry Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker Clause 1 of the Bill which is obviously the normal introduction.

Clause 3 of the Bill, Madam Speaker, amends Section 5 of the Act, to allow the Board to invest money standing to its credit on such terms as it as may determine otherwise directed by the Minister.

Clause 4 of the Bill amends Section 8 of the Act to remove the reference to the Higher Service Commission, which obviously no longer exists;

Clause 5 of the Bill amends Section 14 of the Act to ensure the Board acts in accordance with Policy Instructions, issued by the Minister in writing.

Clause 6 of the Bill amends Section 73(c) of the Act by extending the limitation of the application for Section 17(1) of the Substantive Provision in the Act.

Clause 7 of the Bill amends all references to the Sugarcane Growers Council to Council of Sugarcane Growers.

Clause 8 of the Bill amends all references to the Sugarcane Industry Act to the reform of Sugarcane Industry Act 2016.

With those introductory remarks, Madam Speaker, I now recommend this Bill be read the second time.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, the Bill is now brought for debate; Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. This Bill is to amend the Sugar Cane Growers Fund (Cap. 207). In fact, we did have an amendment last year in July where the re composition of the Board came about. Whilst we are moving away from politicisation, I did bring in some politics because it was all government appointed members on the board.

However, Madam Speaker, going back to this Bill as rightly pointed out by the mover of the Bill, this Act came into force with the Sugar Industry Act in 1984. In those days prior to that, we had the Sugar Stabilisation Fund and some \$90 million that stood to the credit of farmers was used to form the Sugar Cane Growers Fund and that put an end to the Stabilisation Fund and this Fund did a lot of good to the farmers in terms of land preparation, cultivation, planting, harvesting, which it continues to do today. However, Madam Speaker, Fund authority a couple years of back lent extensively to fertilise a company of Fiji to the tune of something like \$15 million and the whole idea of this to turn that into an equity.

Madam Speaker., I can only urge people, farmers because farmers used to earn 100 per cent of this but after the changes in the Board and the shareholding, the structure of it will chance so therefore I urge the farmers and all those concerned who had an interest in sugar industry to come in large numbers and make their views known because this will be the last time they would be able to do it.

In 2017, the 1st of October, we will have the preferential entry into EU gone, we have 18 months to prepare and I think let us join hands with the Government and come up with something which will least get us new markets because we cannot rely on the European Union, the preferential markets will go under the WTO Rules and this gives the people an opportunity to express their views and assist the Committee in making recommendations to Parliament for a national debate.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you Madam Speaker. I just want to make a brief comment. I think what the farmers and stakeholders, particularly farmers have to understand is that after the CSR days, the SPSM, farmers took control of the industry. What we have seen over the last ten years, Madam Speaker is the industry taken over by Government and we can talk about the politicisation of the industry, different kinds of politics but one thing that is very clear from all these Bills that have come through, they have informed the industry that the sugar industry will no longer be in the hands of the farmers, it will be in the hands of the Government and I think we are making this legislation it is our responsibility to talk about this today and also to make sure that farmers and other stakeholders understand where they will be in the future in terms of their participation and input. The only thing they will do is to remain as growers, the ultimate decision on the milling, marketing and now on the Sugar Cane Growers Fund, Sugar Cane Growers Council in terms of the link between different sectors, Madam Speaker will not necessarily be there.

One of the advantages of the previous structure, Madam Speaker, was that the farmers in many ways were managing their affairs. So, when you had elected councillors, farmers had an avenue to show their power, show their demand with respect to people who were involved in those. They will no longer have that in the sense that they used to have in the past and one of the things that I worry is the cohesion that, that structure brought amongst the farmers and sharing of knowledge between them because they were part of unions, they were part of the growers council, there was a lot of activity in terms of what they wanted to do for the industry.

So, I want to put this on record, Madam Speaker, that that would chain with the laws that have been passed already with respect to the structure of the Sugar Cane Growers Council, the Sugar Cane Growers

Fund and indeed with these two Bills. So I think it is an appropriate time for farmers and all stakeholders to take the opportunity to understand the changes that are taking place.

The change, Madam Speaker, apart from the legislation, the change within the industry is remarkable. Many of the countries which are still relevant in the sense that they can still have access to markets are those that reform the industry 10 or 12 years ago. We missed that opportunity and we are now struggling to deal with that reform and we will have the impending erosion or the removal of preferential prices in 2017 and we would be in a very very difficult situation.

When this Bill is being considered, Madam Speaker, and I have called in this Parliament before and I call for that again that we should have a Joint Parliamentary Committee on Sugar because it is reaching a very critical stage. A very good bi-partisan approach in looking at all the different issues and how we can all collectively entice those that may be thinking of leaving the farms. In fact, Madam Speaker, 60 percent of the farmers are very small farmers; out of that 60 percent maybe another 20 percent are just producing sugarcane 40, 50, 60 tonnes because the opportunity cost of them moving out of that area, that farm is very high. So basically it is used as a place where they can do other things, but to keep the lease, they need to produce some cane and many of them are in that category.

We need a very collective effort in bringing back that confidence, in also taking forward this whole issue of land leases because whatever we might say, since 99 and even in the last eight or nine years, we have not had too many leases renewed in the cane belt areas so that issue remains. I think all these issues will have to be put together when we are looking at these two Bills in the Standing Committees, and I am sure when we have the debate after that in Parliament, we could, but before that Madam Speaker, I do hope that we will collectively put our hats into the industry's problems and see how we can take that industry forward. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I invite the Honourable Minister for Agriculture.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just my small contribution to the Bill. This is based on my experience as a former Divisional Commissioner, it is about the policies probably by the Board on the new growers. It is unfortunate that the new growers do not qualify for loan from the fund, Madam Speaker.

Government wants a lot of cane and it is good for the industry, it is good for Fiji and of course it is good for the farmers as well, but unfortunately the criteria for funds, new growers they do not qualify. This is one of the problems in Fiji, Madam Speaker. They do not have the capital and with farming, you need a lot of capital to start off particularly. If that can be taken into consideration by the Standing Committee when they are reviewing this. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I now give the floor to the Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a small contribution, I would agree with the Honourable Minister for Rural and Maritime Development. That is a problem for new growers. If you want to increase production in cane, it is very hard, Madam Speaker, to at least get a lease title. Most of the situations new farmers get into is they go to the Sugar Cane Growers Fund, try to get money from there to pay an offer letter then there they think that the Sugar Cane Growers Fund, they are waiting for the offer letter to give the cane contract. These are some of the issues, Madam Speaker, that we really need to solve and a way forward has been proposed by the Honourable Leader for NFP, by petition committee in regards to this or we can find out a way forward.

Another way Madam Speaker, is to go for share farming, another concept that has been introduced by FSC. That could be also looked at and the other option, Madam Speaker, is to diversify to other products related to sugarcane like bio-fuel, et cetera.

However, on the other hand, from a landowner's perspective, there is an initiative under the Ministry of Rural Development which is called Committee of Better Utilisation of Land (CBUL). They were allocated about \$7 million last year, Madam Speaker. This initiative was put in place in order to make landowners renew lease and make land available for economic development. That could be also another issue that could be looked into in the review of the CBUL formula and what are the benefits landowners can be given in order to consent in freeing up land for this particular industry. But I urge the landowners around the cane belt areas in Vanua Levu and the Western Division to at least attend and make submissions into the Committee that will be coming around for consultation in regards to this Bill to give their opinion in whatever they think that could revive this industry. With the vision that we have now, in order to increase production, Madam Speaker, and also a fair return to the landowners and especially on how new farmers could be helped to be stakeholders too in this particular industry. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I now give the floor to the Honourable Minister to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think, Madam Speaker, the contributions by the Honourable Members does show an appetite for everyone to contribute positively to the amendments that have been tabled by the Government in respect to this industry which is very, very important to us. Sometimes many industries that have been with us for a while has a very emotional attachment too, so there is also a need to recognise that you need to also evolve with the time, you need to evolve with the realities and how do we encompass and adopt these realities whilst also maintaining a industry that is relevant for many, many and tens of thousands of Fijians in today's Fiji. So, with those few words, Madam Speaker, I would like to recommend the Bill be now read a second time. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Parliament will now vote.

The question is that the Sugar Cane Growers Fund (Amendment) Bill 2016, be now read the second time.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBER.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to. Secretary-General.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to Amend the Sugar Cane Growers Fund Act (Cap. 207) (Bill No. 20 of 2016).

HON. SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 85 (4), the Bill has now been read for the second time. Pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a) the Bill will now be referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, please allow me to move under Standing Order 6 and so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to complete the items of Government business on today's Order Paper.

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

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote.

The question is that so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to complete the items of Government Business on today's Order Paper.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, thank you. Motion is agreed to.

I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to have the floor.

ADOPTION BILL 2016

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), I move:

That the Adoption Bill of 2016, be now read a second time.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the mover of the motion. I remind Honourable Members that pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), the debate is on the principles and the merits of the Bill. Further, the only amendment permitted is an amendment moved pursuant to Standing Order 85(2).

I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General to speak on the motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, this is a very important Bill. This relates to the adoption of children, and this was read for the first time on 25th of April, and it is now for the Second Reading.

Madam Speaker, this Bill is for a review of the existing Adoption of Infants Act Cap 58 which actually goes back to about 72 years. This is how old the existing law is, that we are using, Madam Speaker. The review is the result of the work carried out by the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation, with the assistance of the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund commonly known as UNICEF.

Madam Speaker, consultations were held with the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, the Department of Social Welfare, including a National Coordination Committee on Children which, apart from Government representatives also consider representatives from Fiji Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination Commission, Save the Children Fund, the Fiji Law Society and various other stakeholders that have inputs and those who were interested.

Madam Speaker, consultations were also held with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Solicitor-General's Office.

As highlighted, Madam Speaker, this Act, the genesis of it came into being in 1944, and regulates all matters pertaining to adoption including its procedures and processes.

Madam Speaker, of course, such an old law will not cater for the changing nature of adoption, with the change in demographics and, of course, the Inter-Country Adoption issues, because was not a big issue then.

The Act focusses primarily on the court processors for approving an adoption application, and does not address the adoption processes as a whole, such as screening of prospective adoptive parents and the matching and replacement of adopted children.

Therefore, in line with the common trends and in other common law countries, Madam Speaker, the Bill includes a much more detail about the pre-court aspects of the adoption process, and ultimately, repeals and replaces the outdated Act. So, these are all the features of the Act that seeks to be replaced.

The Bill, Madam Speaker, is an essential step towards ensuring that Fiji adoption laws are up to date, relevant and stringent enough to ensure:

- (i) That the child, involved in the process of adoption will not be exposed in any form of abuse later on;
- (ii) Deter against the illegal sale and trafficking of children under the pretext of adoption, as we have seen in some other countries;
- (iii) Ensure that each and every adoption facilitated by the State is in the best interest of the child involved.

Additionally, Madam Speaker, an important feature of this Bill is that it domesticates the Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-Country Adoption, which has been ratified by Fiji, and is attached to the Bill itself, Madam Speaker.

The Convention, Madam Speaker, provides a guideline and how the Inter-Country Adoption process should be managed and includes checks and balances designed to reduce abuses and illegal practices which children may become vulnerable to in the process, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Bill specifically caters for:

- (a) Disallowing private adoption arrangements which cater for the removal of a child for the purpose of adoption outside of Fiji.
- (b) Madam Speaker, prohibits faith-based organisations, children's homes, hospitals and other like organisations from facilitating adoption without the approval of the Department of Social Welfare.
- (c) Madam Speaker, it sets penalties for any persons paying or accepting payment for adoption, making false statements, presenting false consent documents, and exerting undue influence in the process of trying to secure an adoption.

It ensures that the Department maintain an Approved Adoptive Parents Register of people who applied to be foster parents, and be screened and approved as potential for foster parents.

Madam Speaker, the Bill also establishes the National Adoption Panel to overlook the adoption process and to match the potential foster parents a child and facilitates the adoption process from thereon. It requires that a child live with the prospective adoptive parents for at least three months before an application can be made to the court for an Adoption Order. It specifies how the best interest of the child is to be determined in every adoption case.

It allows the court to grant an adoption request or make an interim order of up to six months to allow for further monitoring by the Welfare Officer.

It allows a child turning 18 years to have access to his or her original birth certificate in order to find out the identity of their birth parents.

It allows the birth parents to access information about their child after the child has turned 18 years of age.

Madam Speaker, it also allows the birth parents or the relevant child to place a Disclosure Veto on their file preventing the disclosure of their identity.

With regard to Inter-Country Adoption, Madam Speaker, the Bill also seeks the following:

- (a) The applicants have to apply to the central agency of adoption in the country;
- (b) They reside in for screening and approval before the application for adoption is referred to Fiji. They need to do that in their home country before they come to Fiji.
- (c) They must be a resident of Fiji for at least three consecutive months;
- (d) They must be of 25 years of age or more, in case of a couple must have been married for at least two consecutive years;
- (e) They must be of good character and fit and proper to be entrusted with full parental responsibilities;
- (f) They must be willing and be able to undertake exercise and maintain this responsibility, and if there is a step-parent involved, has to be living with the child and the birth parent for at least three consecutive months.

Madam Speaker, there is some additional requirements that have been put in place, Madam Speaker, and that is, that we need the consent of the child if the child is 12 years old or more in age. Both child and birth parents must be given counselling before they consent to be sure they understand the consequences of the decisions they are making, which is the adoption. It says, the consent given with regard to the adoption of a new born baby will not be valid until the child is 30 days old. The birth parents will also be allowed to revoke their consent within 30 days of signing the consent. It requires the court to request and consider report from a Welfare Officer before approving an adoption; and requires that any decision on adoption matters should always be based on the best interest of the child in question, not, of course, the people who want to adopt.

Madam Speaker, we have seen replete examples throughout the world of how some countries, because of the laxity of the laws or no laws being placed where children actually have been in many cases abused, they have been exploited whether for sexual purposes, whether for other monetary gains and, in fact, children have also now been sold from third-world countries, they have traded children from third-world countries to the first-world countries. So, Fiji obviously, is now, in terms of moving its legal

framework, changing a law that is over 70 years old, and we will refer this to the Standing Committee, and we would like to have as much input from members of the public for this, notwithstanding the fact that we have already had a lot of consultations, and we recommend that this Bill now be read a second time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Bill is now open for debate.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I commend what is before us in this Bill, and I am sure the consultation process will come back with a lot of useful things.

Madam Speaker, I just wish to urge the Honourable Attorney-General that all of these powers given to the Director, and responsibilities, one thing that we noticed in practice, well, a long time ago in this area, the Director of Social Welfare, his or her agents virtually had no resources, and it used to be the case that persons who were interested, some would have to pay the taxi fare for the civil servant to be able to go and do their job because there were no resources.

So, I would just urge the Honourable Attorney-General in making these new laws that appropriate resources are given to these very important offices. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also rise in support of this Adoption Bill (Bill No. 21 of 2016).

Madam Speaker, as the Minister responsible for looking after the interests of the children, especially in terms of the issues that is being discussed in this august House, we fully support the Adoption Bill because as everyone is aware of the rights of the children and how the rights of these children need to be protected, especially those children who are in our residential homes, looked after and cared for by the State, and I totally agree that it comes under the directions of the Director of Social Welfare.

Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House and the Honourable Members, at the moment, the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation has a Special Child Services Unit which is equipped with Welfare Officers, and I would not agree that the Ministry is not resourced in terms of looking after this.

On that note, Madam Speaker, I think all of us would agree that the interest of our children should be paramount, whether it is in the Homes or whether we are giving children up for adoption. This legislation in the Adoption Bill will ensure that we are in line with all conventions related to children being adopted within the country and inter-country adoptions and I offer my support for the Bill.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you. Madam Speaker, very briefly this Bill is obviously very important, we need to set the rules. We already are in practice, for example adhering to the Hague Convention. We have a number of applications recently, we had last year some issues pertaining to parents in dispute in Australia for example, having one of the parents bring the child into Fiji and we facilitate those rules, we work in collaboration with our counterparts in Australia and various other parts of the world, and this is indeed our responsibility as a country that adheres to the Hague Convention.

So, this Bill obviously, Madam Speaker, will help modernise our laws, it will also help, and give a particular level of confidence to those who are outside Fiji, but also give a lot of confidence to people who actually will want to adopt sometime very genuine, in our society too in Fiji, we have a lot of inter-family adoption. We sometimes have the brother giving his son or daughter to his, you know, other brother's family. These are the kinds of things that we need to ensure that, it does take place properly, and it is well administered and also of course inter- country adoption. So, I recommend this Bill for second reading, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote. The question is, that the Adoption Bill 2016 be now read a second time. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, the motion is therefore agreed to.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to Provide for Local and Inter-country Adoption of Children and Access of Information Regarding Adoption (Bill No. 21 of 2016).

HON. SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 85(4), the Bill has now been read for the second time. Pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a), the Bill will now be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights.

I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to have the floor.

CODE OF CONDUCT BILL 2016

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), I move:

That the Code of Conduct Bill 2016 be now read the second time.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I call upon the mover of the motion. I remind Honourable Members that pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), the debate is on the principles and the merits of the Bill. Further, the only amendment permitted is an amendment moved pursuant to Standing Order 85(2). I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General to speak on his motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this Bill was tabled for the first reading on Tuesday of this week and we are recommending it now for second reading. Madam Speaker, this Bill concerns every single person including your Honourable self, Madam Speaker, and Secretary-General to Parliament and her Deputy, and every other Member in this House personally, it affects all of you and so, it is a very important Bill.

Madam Speaker, this is a requirement under our Constitution under Section 149 that says 'that there must be written law to establish the Code of Conduct and I quote: 'which shall be applicable to the President, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Prime Minister, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Holders of Offices established by or continued in existence under this Constitution or under any written law, Members of Commissions, Permanent Secretaries, Ambassadors and Other Principal representatives of the State, and persons who hold Statutory Appointments or Governing or Executive positions in

Statutory Authorities, and to such other offices (including public offices) as may be prescribed by written law, Madam Speaker.

It goes on to then talk about the Accountability and Transparency Commission and, Madam Speaker, it says there must be a law in place. It also talks about without going into the full details of it, it calls for the making a provision for the investigation of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct. Enforcement of Code of Conduct, it also quite specifically provides for the protection of whistle blowers, being persons who in good faith make disclosure that an officer mentioned in paragraph (a) (the ones that I have just read out), has contravened any written law or has breached the code of conduct who has engaged in fraudulent or corrupt practices.

It also, Madam Speaker, as most of us have done, some of us do more than others because we officers in various political parties, we have to provide for annual declaration of the offices mentioned in paragraph (a) and you will find that in the back of the Bill itself, Madam Speaker, which lists about 63 individuals who hold these various offices and who must make annual declarations.

This includes right from His Excellency the President, the Prime Minister to District Officers, Divisional Commissioners, Chief Pharmacist, Deputy Chief Pharmacists, Registrar of Companies, Official Receiver, Directors of the Human Rights Anti-Discrimination Commission, the Head of the Disciplined Forces, the CEOs of various statutory companies and of course it includes various other members of public office holders that is required to deal in of course government finances and they hold public office where there is a lot of people contact and where in specifically they make decisions which may give rights for example, this is licenses and various other privileges from the State. It also of course includes Special Administrators from any towns, city councils, the CEO of any town or city councils.

Madam Speaker, it is very interesting to note that under the 1997 Constitution, there was also requirement to have a code of conduct under Section 156, but neither the SVT Government nor the SDL Government saw it fit, we cannot I suppose blame the Labour Party they were only there for one year, saw it fit to actually enact legislation to implement this particular very important provision of the Constitution which is the Code of Conduct. If they had done so we would not be discussing this Bill today.

Madam Speaker, also it is very interesting that the 1997 Constitution, although the provision of code of conduct was not as extensive as what we have in the 2013 Constitution. It also had a requirement for freedom of information, but none of those Governments actually put in place, as we have already mentioned to this House that we are putting in place the Freedom of Information Bill, hopefully in the next Session once we sort out our matters with the UN.

Madam Speaker, the clause of the Bill, I will go straight into that, provides for the preliminary provisions such as the short title interpretation provisions. Part 2 of the Bill provides for the Functions and Powers of the Accountability Transparency Commission. Part 3 prescribes the Codes of Conduct which is set out in the schedule. So, if you look at the back of the Bill, Madam Speaker, you will see that there are about 5 schedules and in these schedules you will see different kinds of Code of Conduct that is required for different Office Holders.

So, schedule 1 is code of conduct for the President, Prime Minister and Ministers, then you have schedule 2 which is Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament, Speaker and Deputy Speaker, then you have code of conduct for Judicial Officers, now these provision Judicial Officers you will see it varies, it also borrows primarily from almost verbatim from the Bangalore Principles, for those people who are aware of the Bangalore principles and I have got copies of that if you wish that, I am sure the Committee will look at that. It incorporates the substance of the Bangalore Principles under schedule 3.

Schedule 4, Madam Speaker, is the Code of Conduct for members of Commissions and Statutory Authorities, where you may have members of the private sector that are appointed to these bodies and then of course last but not least the code of conduct for public officials, this includes anyone that is considered to be a public officials other than what I have just mentioned in the previous schedules.

And, Madam Speaker, then of course schedule 6 as I highlighted is the list of public officials who need to make annual declarations on the income, I think it also re-includes the Directors, Director for Lands and Directors of all the other ministries also.

Madam Speaker, the Part 4 of the Bill provides for the monitoring, compliance and enforcement of the Code of Conduct. This part of the Bill is enumerated by clause 9 to 19. Clause 9, Madam Speaker, is very important because it gives the Commission the power to monitor compliance with the code of conduct by investigating any complaint made to the Commission under the Act concerning an alleged or suspected non-compliance with the code of conduct by any person to whom the code of conduct applies.

Clause 10 of the Bill provides for complaints made to the Commission. These complaints, Madam Speaker, must be in writing and the Commission must neither accept nor investigate complaints made anonymously. It has to be real persons and not someone who is trying to pull a fast one on the Commission and also it is a must for the Commission that if someone does lodge a complaint in writing with the name, it is the Commission's responsibility to ensure that, that person actually exists to make sure that the complaint is actually valid. Of course, that person if they want protection will be given protection under this law as far as the whistle-blowers component of the Bill is concerned. Of course, Madam Speaker, Clause 10 also allows people to make complaints against the Commission itself and if they do make a complaint against the Commission itself, the complaint goes to the Honourable Chief Justice.

The Clause 11 of the Bill, once the Commission receives the complaint, the Commission must notify the complainant in writing and the receipt of the complaint. In the event, the Commission needs further information, the Commission may require the complainant to provide such further information as deemed appropriate by the Commission.

Under clause 12 of the Bill, Madam Speaker, the Commission must investigate any complaints received by the Commission unless the Commission is of the opinion that the complaint amongst other things is frivolous, trivial, vexatious, lacking in substance, malicious or politically motivated. One cannot be allowed to simply just go and lodge a complaint against a public official just because they may have a political grievance with them so there are various protections that are being built against it for the purpose of discrediting, defaming and causing reputational damage.

Madam Speaker, the Clause 13 of the Bill provides protection against malicious complaints, as I said. If you do make a malicious complaint you are actual liable for conviction or a fine. It is important to know that the Commission itself is not the prosecuting authority rather it is FICAC that is the prosecuting agency. However, if there is a complaint made against the Commissioner or the Deputy Commissioner of FICAC then obviously FICAC cannot do the investigation, it goes to the DPP. So we have covered it both ways and this Bill, Madam Speaker, essentially says that any public official is open to scrutiny. No one is actually given some form of protection, but protection is built in if the complaints are actually frivolous and vexatious or done maliciously.

Madam Speaker, Part 5 of the Bill provides protection for complainants. This is a whistle-blower protection. It ensures that a person who makes a complaint to the Commission is given immunity and that person's identity is protected if they want it protected. There are various ways of doing that.

Part 6 of the Bill, as I mentioned, Madam Speaker, provides for the making of mandatory statement of income, assets and other interests, liabilities by persons. It actually sets out in the Act itself or the Bill I

should say, Madam Speaker, and you will see that it states what specifically you need to declare. We have, for example, Madam Speaker, of course set out the various declarations they need to make but it excludes, so, for example, if you look at Clause 26 (1) says within three months after the coming into operation of this Act, everybody in this House including all the people listed in Schedule 6 must declare their assets and liabilities and within three months after being appointed to a position prescribed in Schedule 6 and thereafter, Madam Speaker, every year on or before the 31st January but the statement must include the information right as of the 31st December of the previous year.

It also includes, Madam Speaker, total assets whether in Fiji or abroad including money and other property but excluding any FNPF or Superannuation Fund whether in Fiji or abroad. Because most people when they make their declaration, they do not actually give their FNPF but that is something that has been ring-fenced but all the other assets must be put together. The total income whether in Fiji or abroad and a source of such income received by each one of them during the period in which the statement relates. So, for example, if your bank balance in one year at January the 1st, maybe \$10,000 and by the time you come to 31st December, it may be \$5,000 but in between you have received \$1 million and spent it all, you must also declared that, the monies, the additional money that you have received because people obviously can receive a bribe in the beginning of the year and spend it off and then come 31st December, they can say, "I still have got the same balance". So it does try and also capture that because it must check the transactions within your own account. And, Madam Speaker, of course directorships of any other office that the person may hold.

Madam Speaker, it also, for example, if you are talking about liabilities, you need to have your liabilities also but we exclude the things like outstanding credit card balance and all those sorts of things. These are very, very hard to monitor as long as you make those declarations in the declarations itself.

Madam Speaker, of course then the clause talks about the various failures and the offences that may come about and it gives the power for the Honourable Minister to make regulations. So with that, Madam Speaker, I am sure this will attract a lot of submissions perhaps by Members of this House themselves to the Committee. They may want variations. I am sure the Judiciary may also want to come and make submissions as you see in other countries where the Judiciary has come and made submissions to the Committee, if so they wish to choose to do so. But we can assure the Judiciary that we follow the Bangalore Principle as far as the Code of Conduct application is for them.

So, Madam Speaker, with those introductory remarks I would like to recommend this Bill now for second reading. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Bill is now open for debate. I give the floor to the Honourable Netani Rika.

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to make a short contribution on the Code of Conduct Bill 2016 (Bill No. 22 of 2016).

Madam Speaker, for the benefit of everyone, let me begin with one of the definition of the Code of Conduct. It may differ from other definitions but it should have the same principle and meaning of the word.

The definition is taken from the *International Good Practice of Guidance* defining an effective Code of Conduct for organisations. It reads, "Code of Conduct is principles, values, standards, or rules of behaviour that guides the decisions, procedures and system of an organisation in a way that contribute to the welfare of each key stakeholder and respects the right of all constituent affected by its operations."

Madam Speaker, Code of Conduct is now widely used in various parts of society. I would like to share some comments made by a few world leaders of how they view the Code of Conduct. The President from Liberia, and I quote:

“Code of Conduct are seen as providing a moral compass that can guide the day to day work of Public Servants and make sure it is characterised by integrity.”

From the Prime Minister of Canada, and I quote:

“Objective of the Code of Conduct is to enhance public confidence in integrity of public office holders and the decision-making process of Government.”

The Leader from Brazil, and I quote:

“The Code of Conduct, it became the ethical conscience of public organ.”

The Honourable Member of Parliament from the United Kingdom (UK) and this view of the Code of Conduct is specifically for this august House, and I quote:

“The Code of Conduct is extremely useful in dealing with constituents and local parties by providing a formal standard of charge. The action of the elected politician and according to some experts the MPs are more cautious of their behaviour because they are subject to stricter scrutiny inside and outside of the House.”

Madam Speaker, a Code of Conduct plays out organisation’s expectation and guiding principle for appropriate workplace behaviour. The Code of Conduct Bill 2016 is a very important document.

Part 2 of the Bill constitutes the Accountability and Transparency Commission. Clause 3 is the Functions and Powers of the Commission. Clause 4 the Guidelines and Direction. Clause 5 the Commission to maintain confidentiality. Clause 6 the Annual Report.

Madam Speaker, the Accountability and Transparency Commission will have an enormous task in monitoring compliance and the enforcement of the Code of Conduct which is specifically covered in Part 4 of the Bill.

Madam Speaker, the Code of Conduct can be an important step in establishing an inclusive culture but it is not a comprehensive solution on its own. An ethical culture is created by the organisation leader who manifest their ethics, attitude and behaviours. To have a well-designed code of conduct, will lead the organisation into more ethical behaviours or whether the code has been designed to provide a set of sanction for poor behaviours, however without an effective development of implementation strategies, which is integrated and engages with the hard issue of concern to the organisation.

Madam Speaker, proof of the code of conduct effectiveness, is when the employees feel comfortable enough to voice concerns and believe that the organisation will respond with appropriate action.

Madam Speaker, the Code of Conduct Bill 2016, (Bill No. 22 of 2016), has been introduced as part of the reform programme, introduced by the Government in order to improve the service of public servants towards the people of Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I fully support the Code of Conduct Bill 2016 and I commend the Bill to the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Ashneel Sudhakar.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you. Madam Speaker, at the outset, I would like to state that the Code of Conduct Bill, is a necessary Bill, not only for Fiji but for many other countries in the world.

I will be very short, Madam Speaker, because of time constrains. Just to state, Madam Speaker, it is a hard job being a politician and it is even a harder job being a civil servant. There is so much power concentrated in your hands and there are so many opportunities to go off track and get involved into practice of bribery and corruption. This is a Bill that ensures, you do not go off track and you do not involve into those practices. In fact, I was reading a comic strip a few weeks back, where this mask man points a gun at a person and says, 'give me your money,' and the pedestrian says, I am a politician, and then the robber says, 'okay, give me my money then.'

(Laughter)

Because this stigma that we carry, in fact, when I go out to the public, sometimes it is easier to say that I am a lawyer instead of saying that I am a politician because it does carry a bit of a stigma. We have heard about half built bridges or some community projects that have started but some politicians or some public servant came in, took a bribe and these things never got completed. There are also a lot of stories of tenders being awarded by some high level civil servants to their own friends or being preferred because someone gave them a bigger bag of money than the other.

These are some of the things that has plagued the society. It has made a lot of civil servants and a lot of politicians, look like criminals. Jokes are being made out of the conduct of politicians and civil servants. So, in the Bill, there is a special provision, there are specific regimes of how this kind of conduct, which we all have heard about, which we all know about, we have seen half made projects, we have all seen evidence of corruption around the place but we have not been able to report those because we did not know where to go.

Now, this is a Bill that provides that regime, that structure where we can go and lodge a complaint to the Accountability and Transparency Commission and have it investigated. In fact, this is a Bill that provides the mechanism of catching those vampires that we hear about but we never see. We hear about corrupt people but they only come out in the night, like vampires. Now, this is a Bill, Madam Speaker, that allows and gives us that mechanism to put them behind bars, get the public money back and in fact, restore the pride, restore the character that us politicians, Members of Parliament, Ministers, even yourself, Madam Speaker, and civil servants deserve to be seen in a brighter light and this is the Bill that will provide the mechanism.

With that, Madam Speaker, I once again commend this Bill and in fact, I praise the FijiFirst Government, the Bainimarama Government and our side of the Government for bringing such a Bill at such a crucial time to this nation where other Governments have failed. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for that time.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Veena Bhatnagar.

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to contribute to the Code of Conduct Bill. A Bill which puts to light that the Government of the day, the Bainimarama led FijiFirst Government believes in accountability and transparency. The FijiFirst Government believes in the democratic principles of accountability, transparency and good governance, Madam Speaker, whether one is an ordinary Fijian, a civil servant, a Minister or a Member of the Parliament, accountability and transparency is paramount.

More so, Madam Speaker, for public servants holding public offices, right from the President to Members of the Parliament, Ambassadors to the Permanent Secretaries, to other principle representatives of the State. This Code of Conduct Bill, Madam Speaker, will provide for a written notice, establish a code of conduct which shall be applicable to all such persons, as I have mentioned before.

Madam Speaker, never before a Bill of this nature has been introduced. I must applaud the FijiFirst Government for the Bill. The genuine efforts towards addressing and fighting corruption and abuse of office and promoting high standards of ethical behaviour.

Madam Speaker, this Bill sends out a very strong message to every individual name in this Bill. The general principles of lawfulness, diligence, efficiency and thrift, transparency, confidentiality, responsibility, fair dealing, honesty, integrity and professionalism. Be it our performance, I say our, Madam Speaker, because this Bill is applicable to us as well. So, be it our performance of our public duties or be it use of our office. It spells out, Madam Speaker, the standards of conduct expected of a public servant.

Madam Speaker, it also tells the members of the public, what to expect of public servants in conduct, behaviours and attitude. This Bill, Madam Speaker, registers the guiding principles of conduct which the Government expects of its members and the values for which it stands. I commend the Bill to the Committee. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Now I give the floor to the Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Attorney-General for this substantive piece of legislation which we have just....

(Laughter)

On a lighter side, Madam Speaker, I think if we have to approve this Bill, Honourable Prime Minister should start looking for his candidates in the next elections.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, there is a very thin line between all what have been written here and our cultures and everything. So, one thing good because the Government side will be accountable, how they spend Government money because giving freebees and all these things, people will have to think again because what is the motive of giving all these things. These are the things that will be contested in this thing and you know this Bill is subject to a lot of debate which.....

(Laughter)

But, Madam Speaker, I think the best code of conduct is the 10 Commandments.

(Laughter)

Very short, simple and everyone can understand. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Do not be scared.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- I am not scared.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Balmindar Singh.

HON. B. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to make my short contribution to Bill 22 of 2016, before this august House.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Attorney-General has spoken at length on the core objectives and the intention of this Bill. It is a timely Bill which provides guidance and support to individuals in authority to make sound decisions and carry out their work in ways that are reasonable and compatible with institutional governance values.

Madam Speaker, the Code of Conduct Bill is a necessary tool in order for ethical conduct to be prevalent throughout these institutions.

Madam Speaker, the primary purpose of the Code of Conduct is to provide everyone with a clear benchmark for ethical behaviour. It sets our values and behaviours, alongside which a mechanism may be established for reporting variance from expected standards.

The introduction of a Code of Conduct helps build up value-driven institutions and tactfully deals with institutional underlying values, commitment to employees, standards for doing business and its relationship with wider society.

Madam Speaker, therefore, Code of Conduct are means of creating resilience institution. A good Code of Conduct would attract the right employees, encourage the right behaviour and enhance institutional reputation. Therefore, I commend this Bill to Parliament. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General to speak in reply.

HON.A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Members for their contribution. The Hon. Dulakiverata, one of the Ten Commandments is not here: "Thou should not commit adultery." Obviously, I am sure many people may actually get disqualified automatically if that were to be input into this particular Bill, Madam Speaker.

(Laughter)

Honourable Dulakiverata mentioned that the Honourable Prime Minister needs to look for candidates in the next election. I am sure once this Bill is implemented, many of the other seats will become vacant almost immediately.

(Laughter)

Perhaps, they are worried about, for example, Code of Conduct for Parliamentarians about lobbying, lobbyist susceptibility to be influenced by others, but, Madam Speaker, the point is this. This Bill, on a more serious note, does actually relate to personal integrity of individual members, not collectively but personal integrity of every single one of us in this House, outside this House, to whoever this Bill applies to.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that, as I highlighted earlier on, the 1997 Constitution did have this provision for the Government of the day to make these laws, but they never did because there was no political will. Generally, it is always very easy to talk about accountability and transparency of others, but it is always very difficult when you set very emphatic rules about your own self.

So, this Bill demonstrates a true commitment and loyalty by the Government to these very principles that have been enshrined in our Constitution and that is having truly accountable, not just a Government per say, but the individuals who function in the Government. That Madam Speaker, is very, very critical.

The Honourable Minister for Natural Disaster Management reminded me of a story about one of the former ministers, to end on lighter note. When he was in his office, together with one of his officials, someone from the private sector came with a bag full of money. I have been told many stories, my father used to be a civil servant. In the 1970s and 1980s and he used to tell me some wonderful stories about some of the Ministers. Anyway, this particular gentleman walked into the office with a bag full of money but he was rather startled because he thought the Minister would be there on his own, but the official was there but the Minister's was unperturbed. He said, "Come in, come in, put the money here, and he said "okay don't worry, it will get done" and the businessman walked away rather sheepishly. The Minister then turns around and says to the official, he said, "you see this is not money under the table, its money on top of the table."

(Chorus of laughter)

I am sure some of you may know this characters, but, Madam Speaker, whether the money is under the table or on top of the table, this Bill seeks to address this very personal matter of personal integrity by every single person, not just in this House and not just about us but it is about those people who are also listed, Madam Speaker, in Schedule 6.

Many of these people perform very important functions in our society. They make decisions on a daily basis that affects our lives and we want them to adhere to a particular standards. It is not about simply declaration of assets, it is also about the manner in which you conduct yourself and that is obviously pertaining to the Code of Conduct.

Madam Speaker, with those introductory remarks, Madam Speaker, I now recommend this Bill be referred to the Standing Committee first after the second reading. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, Parliament will now vote. The question is, that the Code of Conduct Bill 2016 be now read a second time. Does any Honourable Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, it is agreed to.

A Bill for an Act to establish a Code of Conduct and for other matters as prescribed under Section 149 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji (Bill No.22 of 2016).

MADAM SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 85(4) the Bill has now been read for the second time. Pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a) the Bill will now be referred to the Standing Committees on Justice, Law and Human Rights.

I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

PUBLIC ORDER (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1) I move the Public Order Amendment Bill 2016 be now read the second time.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Before I call upon the mover of the motion, I remind Honourable Members that pursuant to Standing Order 85(1) the debate be on the principles and the Merits of the Bill. Further, the only amendment permitted is an amendment moved, pursuant to Standing Order 85(2).

I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to speak on his motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Public Order Amendment Bill, 2016 was tabled in Parliament on 27th April for the first reading. Madam Speaker, it seeks to amend various sections of the Public Order Amendment Act Cap.20.

Madam Speaker, at the outset, the substantial part of the Bill amends the Public Order Act with regards to terrorism offences. Madam Speaker, in view of the increasing global threat of terrorist activities, there is a need for domestic relevant laws to be revised to address terrorism threats.

Fiji, of course as a member of the United Nations, is obliged and required to incorporate the requirements from the relevant counter terrorism conventions and resolutions into our domestic laws.

Fiji has been flagged, Madam Speaker, for not having a comprehensive legal framework that complies with international requirements in relation to targeted financial transactions which allow relevant authorities to freeze assets that are found to be directly or indirectly involved with terrorism. For that reason, Madam Speaker, this Bill you will note has a substantial portion of it talking about the amendment to the Public Order Act to comply with international requirements regarding financing of terrorism activity.

Madam Speaker, a wide number of consultations were held with the various stakeholders, and in fact it was also held with other non-governmental stakeholders including UN's office on drugs and crime, the Australian Attorney General Department, International Legal Assistance Pacific Crime Policing Section, which assisted with the Review of the Bill by providing comments on the Bill and we have been working very closely with Australian Attorney General's Office in respect to this. Of course we have had input from our own security agencies, including the Ministry of Defence, the various other agencies that implement Law and Order in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, money laundering and financing terrorism are global issues, but it also, Madam Speaker, whilst we have been categorised as a very low risk area or jurisdiction for terrorism financing, the Fijian Government has to ensure that we have the right infrastructure and the people in the financial systems to continue to protect our position. A legal framework must be in place to ensure there is Public Order in all situations arising from internal as well as external factors.

Any terrorist attack in Fiji, Madam Speaker, could seriously undermine our position as a tourism hub as a place where there is no outside terrorism activities and in particular, of course it could be undermine our economic base. All you need is one terrorist activity to completely wipe out your tourism industry.

Madam Speaker, Fiji has been a global and committed partner for decades, when it comes to our contribution and maintaining global peace and security, obviously the forefront has been the RFMF in its peacekeeping duties and whilst many people have a go at RFMF, they have actually positioned us internationally very well and we hope that they continue to do that Madam Speaker. However, Madam Speaker, it is equally important to maintain a right legal balance to deal with the domestic threat of terrorism and also global terrorism because in many countries also, there is internal threats of terrorism and there is also global terrorism.

Under Fiji's current laws, the financing of terrorism was first criminalised in the Proceeds of Crime back in 1997 and preventative measures for the financial institutions were incorporated in the Financial Transactions Reporting Act. The Public Order Act was amended in 2012 to provide for additional measures against terrorism. However, Madam Speaker, the financing of an individual terrorist requires a link to a specific terrorist act. This behaviour which is laid out in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 is not criminalised under the laws of Fiji, as we speak. So, Madam Speaker, we need to criminalise these offences and send a warning to everyone that Fiji is not the place to carry out such an activity.

Madam Speaker, the following terrorism offences are now incorporated in the Bill. The kidnapping or detaining of internationally protected persons, the taking of hostages, the possession and transportation of nuclear materials and radioactive material without a license or written approval from the Minister, the intention to use the nuclear material to cause death or serious injury, the use of nuclear material on board ships and fixed platforms, the possession, manufacturing and transportation of unmarked plastic explosives, knowing that the plastic explosives are unmarked, the detonation of explosives or terrorist bombings, the involvement in the recruitment facilitation and the planning of a terrorist activity and the failure to disclose information or intentionally disclosing false information relating to a terrorist property and terrorists groups.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, the Bill provide for the declaration of specified entities in Fiji. Specified entities, Madam Speaker, are those that are directly or indirectly involved in the commission of a Terrorists Act. Under the Public Order Act, there is a requirement that the specified entities are to be declared by the Court. The Court must deal with the application of *ex parte* applications since giving prior notice to the proposed specified entities carries a significant risk of tipping off the entity to the associated risk of asset flight..

On the other hand, the listed entities of the United Nation Security Council are automatically listed as specified entities in Fiji and the list will be published in the website of the relevant government agency. Declared specified entity can apply for the declaration to be revoked.

The Public Order Act, Madam Speaker, further provides that it is an offence if an entity incorporated in Fiji is intentionally involved whether directly or indirectly with a specified entity. Since the current legislation, Madam Speaker, does not fully comply with international requirements on the combat against terrorism, implementing this Bill will provide a more comprehensive legal framework against terrorism offences and terrorism financing in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, this Bill will also be a benefit to Fiji in meeting the Global Anti-Money Laundering and combating the financing of terrorism standards established by the financial action task force on money laundering. The current review of Fiji's compliance with these standards by the Asia

Pacific Group (APG) on money laundering, the APG and we have recently had meetings with the APG and we need to be able to address many of the shortfalls that we do have in order to ensure and tell the rest of the world that there is no scope for such activities and we do not want them here and if they do come here, they will be facing the full brunt of the law and we need those laws in place very quickly Madam Speaker. I would recommend this Bill be now read for the second time, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Bill is now open for debate. Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I support the Bill to go to the Standing Committee and as explained by the Honourable Attorney-General, the purpose of the Bill makes a lot of sense and he has quite rightly highlighted the possible threats at how to deal with it through the amendment of the Public Order Act that was there before. It is now going to be amended.

Madam Speaker, as I have said before in this Parliament, we are now under a new Constitution, we have a new Parliament, not so new now, but in the Constitution we have Section 173 which preserves all the Decrees, some we have made amendments. Those Decrees, Madam Speaker, were made during the period which perhaps saw the need for some of those, from the point of view of the Government at that time. But now, Madam Speaker, I think some of those Decrees make no sense in a democratic framework and indeed if I can say, in fact, the Public Order (Amendment) Decree (POAD) may contradict the provisions in the Constitution. The recent Fiji 2015 Human Rights Report by the State Department of the United States of America, Madam Speaker, does point out the POAD and how it may contravene the provisions in the Constitution. For example the Constitution and the Crimes Decree prohibit torture, forced medical treatment and degrading treatment or punishment whereas the POAD gives very wide powers. There are other references, Madam Speaker, in the report that was produced by the US *State Department - 2015 Fiji 2015 Human Rights Report*.

There are other references to freedom of association, freedom of press but perhaps, Madam Speaker, this is very good time when this Bill is in front of us and I hope that the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights will look at these issues and consider the possibility of incorporating appropriate amendments so that we deal with those issues and those that have been highlighted within the *State Department - 2015 Fiji Human Rights Report*. We would be able to use this opportunity to address some of those fundamental issues because there are fundamental issues as being pointed in the report. So, I will leave it there, Madam Speaker, and hope that people will also have the opportunity to contribute and bring some of those issues that are in the report and how this opportunity could be used to address those issues. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. There being no other input, I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to encourage the Committee, when the Bill comes to it, for them to specifically look at this Bill. This is not a time to go into the areas that the Honourable Prasad is talking about. There is an urgency to address the issue of the terrorism laws where we have deficiencies, we need to implement that very quickly. I do not want to argue with him about the report that has come up, there are some time issues regarding that, but, Madam Speaker, the point is that this amendment to the Public Order Act as far as terrorism, financing and as far as terrorism activities are concerned is very critical and I urge the Committee to call for public consultations very quickly so we can look at the various provisions and have them incorporated into our laws. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote. The question is, that the Public Order (Amendment) Bill 2016 be now read a second time.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to Amend the Public Order Act (Cap. 20) (Bill No. 23 of 2016).

HON. SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 85(4), the Bill has now been read for the second time. Pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a), the Bill will now be referred to the Standing Order Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights.

I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to have the floor.

KAVA BILL 2016

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), I move:

That the Kava Bill 2016 be now read a second time.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call upon the Mover of the Motion, I remind Honourable Members that pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), the debate is on the principles and the merits of the Bill. Further, the only amendment permitted is an amendment moved pursuant to Standing Order 85(2).

I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General to have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Kava Bill 2016 was tabled in Parliament on 27th April for its first reading, and it provides for the establishment of the Fiji Kava Council for the purpose of the regulation and the management of the Kava Industry and other related matters.

Madam Speaker, Kava or the Kava Industry, one may call it, is one of the major contributors to the Fijian national economy as far as agriculture is concerned, next in line to *dalo* and ginger in the agriculture business, apart from sugar, of course, Madam Speaker.

The demand for kava, Madam Speaker has increased in the local and overseas markets. There is, of course, a need to provide a legal framework to protect and avoid the false representation of the Fijian brand of kava that is exported for commercial purposes.

Some of us may recall that a few years ago, there was a huge boom in the Kava Industry when some of the European pharmaceutical companies started buying kava from us for extraction to make

tablets, et cetera. I remember, as a student, working in one of the pharmacies in Australia, they had the Kava pill, they called it for relaxation.

Then, of course, this industry hit a sort of a wall because there were some people, without the control of quality in fact, who compromised our position in the market, and that led to a number of scientific outcries saying that it was detrimental to our health, et cetera, and then it stopped that export of kava.

Again, now, there is certain legal framework. The Minister for Agriculture, of course, has been working very hard behind the scenes, to establish those standards to ensure that Fiji will adhere to those standards. But, of course, his assurances to the international market will actually come to zero if he does not have a legal framework on which he can rely upon, and that the foreigners can also say that this is the legal framework that they adhered to, as far as standards are concerned, Madam Speaker.

So, in order to open up the markets in Europe, and viable markets in the USA to meet the kava demand, and we must get into the value-adding side of kava, as you know that we have one very fantastic business in Lomaiviti and Ovalau, the '*Taki Mai*', but a lot of the processing is actually being done offshore. The idea would be that, if we are able to get the laws in place to get the value-adding being done in Fiji. But, it is a fantastic brand, Madam Speaker, and we need to have the legal framework in place.

A number of consultation, of course, were held including with the respective Ministries, but also with the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, kava farmers growers, exporters, processors, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Horticultural and Agricultural Market Access Programme or PHAMA, the University of the South Pacific, FAO and the Fiji Crop and Livestock Council.

Madam Speaker, the implementation of the Bill will ensure that a legitimate platform as I said, is provided for the stakeholders, not just to voice their opinions, but to have various standards being imposed.

Additionally, the Bill will ensure the trading of kava at domestic and international levels will be done according to the appropriate standards and procedures. Madam Speaker, as the Honourable Minister for Agriculture will tell you, and so the Honourable Minister for Industry and Trade will you, in our bid to open up export markets for ourselves, everyone looks at two critical things; one is consistency of supply, and the other is the maintenance of the quality. If you lack in any one of them, you do not become a player and no one actually takes you seriously.

Whilst we may say that we have fantastic pineapples, we have fantastic kava, we have to ensure that the quality that is exported is at that one particular level and it does not derogate from that level, and also similarly, that we must be able to supply when we say that we will supply, and there must be consistency in the level of supply.

So, Madam Speaker, of course, by having this law in place and having the Council in place, we will be able to explore various opportunities and protect kava, cultivated and processed in Fiji, and we also will be able to differentiate ourselves from other countries in the South Pacific Region.

Madam Speaker, very quickly, Part 2 of the Bill provides for the Establishment of the Council. It provides for the various administrative provisions, and also the objectives of the Council, and whilst there is a lot of provisions in the Bill regarding the Council, it does give the Minister the opportunity to make regulations because as you know, once the Council is established, he will then be able to use the input of the Council, and will carry out more consultations, and will give the meat to this particular Bill that we have in place.

With those few introductory remarks, Madam Speaker, I recommend that this Bill now be read a second time. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Bill is now opened for debate.

There being no input, I will now give the floor back to the Honourable Attorney-General, if he wants to make concluding remarks.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I recommend this Bill now be read a second time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

The question is, that the Kava Bill 2016 now be read a second time.

Does any Honourable Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

There being no opposition, the Motion is agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to establish the Fiji Kava Council for the propose of the regulation and the management of the Kava Industry and for related matters, Bill No. 24 of 2016.

HON. SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 85(4), the Bill has now been read for the second time. Pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a), the Bill will now be referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

As I had indicated in my Communications this morning, the Honourable Attorney-General advised had advised the Business Committee of the amendment of the Financial Management Act 2004, which has now been enacted. Before assent and commencement of that Act, it is prudent that we now also amend the relevant provisions in the Standing Orders which was also brought to the attention of the Business Committee.

I now therefore, call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move his suspension motion to allow the Honourable Attorney-General to move his substantive motion without notice.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, I beg to move that so much of Standing Orders 46 is suspended, to allow the Honourable Attorney-General to move his motion without notice.

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Parliament will now vote. The question is, that so much of Standing Order 46 is suspended to allow the Attorney-General to move his motion without notice.

Does any Honourable Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition., the motion is agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to have the floor.

AMENDMENT OF STANDING ORDERS

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 47, I move:

That the amended Standing Orders adopted by Parliament on 11th February, 2016, be amended in Standing Order 99(1) by:

- (i) Deleting the words; “In November or December of each year...” and substituting it with the words, “Prior to the beginning of each financial year...” and
- (ii) Deleting the word, “calendar” and substituting the word, “financial”.

Madam Speaker, I also move:

That the Parliament vote and adopt the amendment to Standing Order 99(1) this afternoon. Also, further to the ruling by yourself this morning, I also move that the following proposed amendments to Standing Order 37(5) be referred to the Standing Orders Committee, being the insertion of the following words at the end of Standing Order 37(5), which is, “The Member moving the Motion may make a statement on the reasons for referring the petition to the Standing Committee. The time limit for the statement is 20 minutes. There is no debate on the statement, but:

- (a) If the motion is moved by a member of the Opposition, the Leader of Government in Parliament or his designate; or
- (b) If the motion is moved by a member of Government, the Leader of Opposition or his or her designate may comment on the statement for no more than five minutes.”

Madam Speaker, I also move that the Standing Committee reports back to Parliament with its recommendations in the next sitting, at which time the Parliament will vote on the recommendations of the Standing Orders Committee.

And thirdly, that until the Standing Orders Committee reports back to Parliament with recommendations in the next Sitting, which should be in the first week, and we are proposing to be the end of May, no petitions shall be presented in or considered by Parliament.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Do we have a seconder?

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Finance to have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, suffice to say, as we have approved the amendment to the Financial Management Act, the amendment to Standing Order 99, if anything is consequential, sorry I should say, and that allows for the change and catering of the change in the new financial year, we have agreed and voted that the Financial Management Act will now have the fiscal year or financial year of Government start from 1st August to 31st July, and accordingly we need to amend the existing Standing Order 99(1), Madam Speaker, and that is what this is for.

In respect of, Madam Speaker, the Standing Order 37, there is obviously some disagreements in respect of the manner in which Standing Order 37(5) needs to be interpreted. We have talked about the intention of the amendment, but what we have said and we have agreed that the amendment that we are proposing be referred to the Standing Orders Committee, and that Committee go through the particular proposed amendment (Standing Order 37) and that until such time as it deliberates, and we are hoping that they will come back to Parliament in the next sitting which we are also looking at the Honourable Leader of Government Business to change the calendar dates because now, the approval of the Budget timing that at the next sitting, we will then debate and be able to then deal with Standing Order 37, Madam Speaker.

So, it is a compromised position that we have said, let us send it to the Standing Orders Committee but regarding Standing Orders 99, we would like that to be amended now so we can then implement, of course, the work that will be done in respect of the new financial year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Parliament is now open for debate on the motion.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, for the motion that is before the House, I think the issue on Standing Orders 37, you have already made a ruling this morning and I think we do not have any issue on that but to go to the Standing Orders Committee, just to clear that Honourable Attorney-General.

The problem I see with that, Madam Speaker, given the strict timeline that the Honourable Attorney-General has asked for as the mover of the Bill, and the time in which the Committee has to come back to the House, knowing fully well, Madam Speaker, the history of our Standing Orders Committee - sometimes they disagree, sometimes they do not want to come meetings, all those really needs to be considered. I hope, Madam Speaker, that Members of the Standing Committee for Standing Orders will be able to sort that issue out and I do not see any reason why a timeline should be given to them. Let them ventilate and discuss the issues, and see whether the changes proposed for Standing Orders 37(5) is beneficial to our Parliament..

Standing Order 35(5) will limit the Opposition for any petitions to be heard during the week, given that Monday to Thursday is Government day and by 4.30 p.m. once the Honourable Leader Government Business decides to end business, those Petitions will not be heard. That is one issue, Madam Speaker.

In regards to the calendar of the year that is there, we do not have any issues with the words, but if you see the calendar, once you remove the week from December the Budget week back to June, and Parliament is dissolved from December, there will be no sitting from the months of August, November, December. Those are some of the issues but if you could also confirm that given the duties of the Opposition, in order to keep the Government in check that there are sufficient sittings in those months because Budget has been announced and we have a duty in order to ask Government on the progress of their programmes and implementations.

Those are just some of the views, Madam Speaker, that I would like to share in regards to the motion that is before the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Aseri Radrodoro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, on the proposed amendments in the Standing Order 99, I would like to clarify whether the amendments will also synchronise with Standing Orders 103 which relates to the Auditor General's Report. It states that 'the Minister responsible for Finance must lay the Auditor General's Report before Parliament in accordance with Section 152(14) of the Constitution. Section 152 says that at least once in every year, the Auditor-General shall inspect, audit and report to Parliament on:

- (a) the public accounts of the State;
- (b) the control of public money and public property of the State; and
- (c) all transactions with or concerning the public money or public property of the State.

Now, that the fiscal year has now changed, will the Auditor General's Report for the first six months of this year which completes the financial year before the new year starts, be tabled also in this House?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Draunidalo.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, we just want it noted that only the amendment to Standing Order 99, we thought was going to proceed at this time, and not Standing Order 37 because you had ruled on it, Madam Speaker, you are quite clear in your ruling that it will go back to the Standing Orders Committee, and without the limitations that the Attorney-General has placed on it. So, these limitations that are placed on it takes us right back to where we were when we first saw the proposed amendment, and that is the basis of our objection to it, Madam Speaker.

I understand that the Government has its business and its wants to get through its business in the House, I just wish the Government would understand that the Opposition is here for a reason. We also represent voters, 40 percent according to the polling, Madam Speaker, and we also want to bring things to this House for those whom we represent. By cutting out the time that we have and changing the rules all the time with regards to petitions, motions, et cetera, it denies the Government the benefit of hearing that 40 percent.

It might be an irritation to one or two of them to listen to us here, but it denies them the benefit of hearing the views of that 40 percent, and I would really urge the Government to rethink that issue, in terms of curtailing the time that the Opposition has to bring its issues here as well, and this is one of those, the petition aspect, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A number of issues have been raised, Madam Speaker. I think the Honourable Radrodro, if I could also refer him to Section 144 of the Constitution that talks about the respect of the annual Budget. It says, and I quote: "...each year ending on 31 December or on such other day as Parliament prescribes".

Now, the Financial Management Act has been changed and in the amendments that we also approved, it does say that the financial year for 2016 will be deemed to be January up to 31st July, so there needs to be an audited account for that period also. And then that financial year, so that has been taken care of, and the particular section, Honourable Member, that you read out does not in any way limit the Auditor General from doing what I have just said that they can do. That takes care of that.

The other issue, Madam Speaker, is what Honourable Bultavu raised about in November we would not be able to sit, that is not true because, the calendar for the year is decided before the prorogation of Parliament. So, the Business Committee sits. So in fact, our year for Parliament actually begins in September after His Excellency sits. So, we always set the calendar before that, so that can be decided separately. Our year is not the calendar year, so I think that is not really an issue.

Madam Speaker, the issue regarding the limitations, the reason why we proposed the amendments regarding Standing Order 37, is because there is obviously a dispute regarding it. So, what we have said is that let us refer it to the Standing Orders Committee, and they can decide. There is no limitation per se. I would have thought, that given the fact you have a dispute, the Standing Orders Committee will only come back quickly.

Because I mean from now, there is tomorrow only and then after that, we meet again as proposed now in the calendar on the 30th of May and the first week of June. So, the Committee has approximately about a month to come back and so give their findings to Parliament and we can vote upon that. So that was reason why we proposed, Madam Speaker. The reality, Madam Speaker, is that the Government actually does have Government business to deal with and we have to deal with that. We are in fact, we are more representative, I have to say this. The Honourable Draunidalo talks about 40 percent, if you take away the labour and the other people percentages it becomes less, but the point is, the only reason why NFP is here today is because of Proportional Representation. They have not been in Parliament since 1999, Madam Speaker, if they were actually in Britain, they still have First Past the Post. First Past the Post, many people would argue is very, very undemocratic because you can in fact be a Member of Parliament by getting only 30 percent of the votes in your constituency, because everyone may have about 7 other candidates and they have got small percentages and you got 30 percent of the votes and you become a Member of Parliament.

So it does not necessarily mean by us being here, we represent the full 40 percent. The reality, Madam Speaker, is that there is obviously systems in place. Yes, there may be a genesis of Parliamentary democracy coming from UK and we have taken some bits of that, many other parts of the world have taken bits from them, but it is not cast in stone nor is it the only way and many Brits will tell you that they have huge problems in the manner in which the system operates there also.

So, Madam Speaker, what we are proposing is actually a compromise position. We are saying, 99 obviously needs to go through, let us get 37, refer to the Standing Orders Committee because there is a dispute around it, let us not hear any petitions in such time, but it is only tomorrow and if the Committee can come back in the months' time and tell us, we will make sure that all the Honourable Members of our

Standing Orders Committee will attend all the meetings, please make sure that your Honourable Members attend too they can actually deal with it and actually help, Madam Speaker, to deal with the matter and see how we can proceed.

So that is the basis, the response, Madam Speaker, and I urge all Honourable Members to take a unanimous decision and support the motion that is on the floor. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Parliament will now vote. The question is:

- (A) That the amended Standing Orders adopted by Parliament on 11 February 2016 be amended in Standing Order 99 clause (1) by-
- (i) deleting the words *“In November or December of each year,”* and substituting the words *“Prior to the beginning of each financial year,”*; and
 - (ii) deleting the word *“calendar”* and substituting the word *“financial”*;
- (B) That Parliament vote and adopt the amendment to Standing Order 99 clause (1) today;
- (C) Further to the ruling by the Speaker this morning—
- (i) that the following proposed amendment to Standing Order 37 clause (5) be referred to the Standing Orders Committee, being the insertion of the following words at the end of Standing Order 37 clause (5)—

“The member moving the motion may make a statement on the reasons for referring the petition to the standing committee, and the time limit for the statement is 20 minutes. There is no debate on the statement, but —

 - (a) *if the motion is moved by a member of the Opposition, the Leader of the Government in Parliament, or his or her designate; or*
 - (b) *if the motion is moved by a member of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, or his or her designate,*

may comment on the statement, for no more than 5 minutes.”;
 - (ii) that the Standing Orders Committee reports back to Parliament with recommendations in the next sitting, at which time Parliament will vote on the recommendations of the Standing Orders Committee; and
 - (iii) that until the Standing Orders Committee reports back to Parliament with recommendations in the next sitting, no petition shall be presented in, or considered by, Parliament.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- Chorus of “Yes” and “Noes”.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion. Open the vote.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, just to clarify, you gave a ruling this morning in regards to Standing Order 37 to refer that to the Standing Orders Committee but you did not give a timeline in your ruling. But according to this motion there is a timeline. Does that supersede your ruling, Madam Speaker? Which one stands, your ruling that without timeline that was given in the morning or the result of the vote when the Standing Committee have to come back to the House? Will that affect your ruling, Madam Speaker, or not?

HON. SPEAKER.- When any such Bill is referred to the Select Committee then 30 days is given for them to sit and make recommendations and this is why the 30 days has been presented.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	32
Noes	:	12
Not voted	:	6

HON. SPEAKER.- The motion is agreed to.

Honourable Members will recall that on Monday, 25th April 2016 a motion by the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament was deferred. I now call the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament to move his motion.

PARLIAMENT SITTING CALENDAR – ADOPTION OF

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

That Parliament adopts the previously circulated amended sitting calendar for the period 30th May, 2016 to 12th September, 2016.

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament to have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, again this is consequential. Yesterday Bill No. 25 of 2016 was to amend the Financial Management Act of 2004 and has been enacted as well by this very same Honourable House, Madam Speaker.

As I have stated and of course alluded to earlier by the Honourable Attorney-General, this is just to facilitate the sittings from now till September. September is the Prorogation and then we will then decide the sittings after the Prorogation, Madam Speaker. Because of the final change in financial year dates, this is to just to facilitate the preparation of the 2017 Budget and it is really straight-forward, Madam Speaker

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The motion is now open for debate. There being no input to the debate, the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament, you may speak in reply.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just put this before the House if we can agree to it.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote. The question is that Parliament adopts the previously circulated amended sitting calendar for the period 30th May, 2016 to 12th December, 2016. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- Chorus of “Yes” and “Noes”.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote. Open the vote.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	32
Noes	:	9
Not Voted	:	9

The motion is agreed to.

I call on the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament to have the floor.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I beg to move that so much of Standing Order 46(2) is suspended to allow the Honourable Chair of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights to move his motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Do we have a seconder?

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Parliament will now vote. The question is that so much of Standing Order 46 (2) is suspended to allow the Honourable Chair of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights to move his motion. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition. He will move his motion after the vote, if you want to hear it, please vote.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Just a point of order, Madam Speaker, we would like to know what the motion is.

(Inaudible interjections from the Govt. Members)

Before we support, we must have some information on what he is moving, that it will be contingent upon our support to this one.

HON. SPEAKER.- He has a motion to table, if you want to hear it, please, vote “yes” or “no”. Parliament will now vote on the motion.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	33
Noes	:	10
Not Voted	:	7

Motion agreed to.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Hon. Ashneel Sudhakar to have the floor.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I beg to move that Parliament allows the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights to table its report on the Fiji Interchange Network Payments Bill, 2016, that is Bill No. 15 of 2016 on a later sitting.

HON. SPEAKER.- Do we have a seconder.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- That is the motion.

(Laughter)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion but we want the Opposition to keep guessing all the time.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Hon. Ashneel Sudhakar to have the floor.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, that was the motion.

Madam Speaker, as the august House would recall that in the February Sitting of this Parliament, the Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights was given the task of scrutinising and presenting a report on the Fiji Interchange Network Payments Bill, 2016, and that report on the Bill was supposed to be presented in this session. However, Madam Speaker, as the whole of the nation knows that immediately after the Bill was referred and we did commence scrutiny of the Bill and worked on the Bill when *Cyclone Winston* struck Fiji and thereafter, there was disruption, the Committee did not sit for a week and thereafter, we had intermittent sitting where we could not hear all the submissions.

In fact we did call in a few Submitters who came up with their request and their submissions. The Committee continued to hear the submissions and the Committee did continue its work but it was not able to finish within the short time that was left after the cyclone.

Also, as myself and all the Honourable Members sitting here on this side of the House, are now involved in rehabilitation works, we were around the place in the West and the North providing assistance during the cyclone, so the Members of the Committee were down on the ground providing relief and that actually took substantial amount of time out of our schedule. We did attempt to finish the report on the last day before the Parliament commenced. Unfortunately, we were not able to and therefore, as the Chair of

the Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, I request this Parliament to grant us more time until the next session to finalise, make the amendments and present our report, thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- The motion is now open for debate.

There being no debate, Hon. Sudhakar, would you like to make concluding remarks?

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Yes, Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to thank the Opposition for agreeing for once, thank you very much.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote. The question is that Parliament allows the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights to table its report on the Fiji Interchange Network Payments Bill, 2016, Bill No. 15 of 2016 to a later sitting. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Honourable Members, that brings to the end the Government business for today and Parliament is therefore, adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 6.10 p.m.