

FRIDAY, 17TH OCTOBER, 2014

The Parliament resumed at 10.00 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present, except the honourable Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 16th October, 2014, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. CMD. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	49
Absent	-	1

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

MADAM SPEAKER.- I acknowledge the presence of students of Adi Cakobau School in the public gallery this morning. A very warm welcome.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, in reference to Section 152 of the Constitution, I table before you the Auditor-General's Report for the years 2007-2013, as follows:

Volume 1 – Audit Report on Whole of Government Financial Statements and Annual Appropriation Statement 2013 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 2 of 2014*)

Volume 2 – Audit Report on Government Ministries and Departments – 2013 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 3 of 2014*)

Volume 3 – Audit Report on Government Ministries and Departments – 2013 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 4 of 2014*)

Volume 4 – Audit Report on Government Ministries and Departments – 2013 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 5 of 2014*)

The financial Statements for the whole of Government for the years 2007- 2013 have been prepared in accordance with Section 46 of the Financial Management Act 2004.

Madam Speaker, for clarification - the Auditor-General's Report is not about Government debt or the economy or economic growth rate, it is about Government finances and how respective government ministries spent those monies.

The reports cover audit of the Whole of Government financial statements and the annual appropriation statement for the years 2007- 2013.

The reports also contain the audit of financial statements of ministries and departments, the results of and matters arising from the audit of ministries and departments and lastly, the reports raise matters that in the independent opinion of the Auditor-General warrants consideration by Parliament.

These Reports will now be considered by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Madam Speaker, I move that these reports be referred to the Standing Committee for Public Accounts for further deliberation, and for that Standing Committee to provide its Report to Parliament.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE MOTION TO THANK HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT ON HIS ADDRESS

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Madam Speaker, I also rise to the privilege of thanking His Excellency the President for his most gracious Address and the clear policy guidelines highlighted therein. It is most gratifying at this stage to note that the Government is placing greater importance on improvements in standards of living for all people in this nation.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank and congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker of this august Parliament. It is not just a proud achievement for Fiji as the first woman Speaker, but one which has drawn admiration from our colleagues around the Pacific region, and well wishes abroad.

Additionally, you Madam, has the distinction of a proven track record as the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation in the last government. Along with you, Madam Speaker, is the capable Deputy Speaker, the honourable Rupeni Nadalo, who has vast experience in administration in the public arena. My hearty congratulations to the Deputy Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the presence of students from ACS or *Waimanu Kui* in the public gallery this morning.

Madam Speaker, in keeping with the spirit of this Parliamentary Sitting, I would like to commend the astute work of the parliamentary administrative team, headed by the Secretary-General to Parliament, Mrs. Viniana Namosimalua, and the many workers and volunteers who have contributed to the peaceful transition of our Elections to this hallowed institution. Likewise, I take this opportunity to also mention and thank the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the various agencies for its technical support and contribution to this new Parliament.

Madam Speaker, before I go any further, I would like to acknowledge my elder brother, Mr. Naca Nasalu, who passed away only four days ago. His funeral is at 10.00 this morning in Nausori.

May his soul rest in peace, and I pray that his wife and children will have the patience and strength to deal with their loss.

Madam Speaker, my aim to be a Member of Parliament goes back to 1989, when serving in Egypt (Sinai). I had mentioned to my friends that one day, I would like to join politics. Now I am here in this august Chamber as a Member of Parliament.

I was inspired to join the FijiFirst Party with the Prime Minister and his team for the sterling work they have contributed to nation-building for the past eight years. Fiji has enjoyed an unparalleled stability, peace and has become the envy of many of our neighbours in terms of economic performance. I am honoured to be serving under his leadership, as a former military personnel.

Like some of our honourable colleagues on the other side of Parliament, I am a son of a humble cane farmer from Yavuna in the Tikina of Nawaka, where I was born with nine other siblings. Resources then was scarce while growing up, but I thank God for a persevering mother, Ateca Lewasewa, who supported my family members. May she rest in peace.

I was educated initially at Nawaka District School and later at Nadi Secondary School. Yet, life in rural Fiji for my family at the time, although on the mainland where development of infrastructure was just beginning to get off the ground, was unable to afford me a proper education. I was therefore, encouraged to earn a living with the Police Force at the age of 17 years.

I travelled to the capital to attend the recruitment and I was blessed to be accepted. Since I was too young to be assigned normal police beat or routine, I started in the office of the late Police Commissioner, John Kelland's office at Police Headquarters, Ratu Sukuna House and I sincerely am grateful for the head start because it kept me in good stead for the remaining ten years of policing work.

It was here with the Police Force that I nurtured the desire to play for Fiji in the sport of rugby. I was blessed to be chosen in the Fiji 15 Team World Cup in 1987 that was held in New Zealand where Ratu Josateki Sovau and Mr George Simpkin were the coach, Koli Rakoroi being the captain and the team comprising Mr Livai Kididromo, "super -boot" Severo Koroduadua, Peceli Gale, Sairusi Naituku, Mosese Taga, Peni Volavola, Rusiate Namoro, Epeli Rakai, Salacieli Naivilawasa, John Sanday, Ilaitia Savai, late Joji Cama, Manasa Qoro, Paula Nawalu, Elia Rokoliwailoa, late Sirilo Lovokuro, Kaiava Salusalu, Pauliasi Tabulitu, Tom Mitchell, Tomasi Cama, Epineri Naituku, Kavekini Nalaga, Apisai Nakata, late Aisake Nadolo and Jone Kubu.

Madam Speaker, at the time, sports, particularly rugby was just coming into prominence and I was more than privileged to have been part of a great team which managed to play its way into the quarter finals.

Madam Speaker, as a true rugby follower, former rugby player and coach, I wish to congratulate the Nadroga rugby team for defending the Farebrother seven times.

HON. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- I also wish the *Vanua o Nakuruvakarua* all the best, and to produce some great players who will represent Fiji in years to come. They have proved it and why not have the coach of Nadroga rugby team, Esala Nauga be selected as Coach of the Fiji Rugby Team.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, tomorrow is the last challenge for the Farebrother, which will be held at the dusty Lawaqa Park, where the Nadroga Team will be playing against the Jet set, my team from Navatulevu, Nadi.

I thank you Nadi rugby players for voting me in as your representative in this Parliament. Please play “hard rugby” tomorrow and show the people of Fiji your true colours that you can also defend the Farebrother-Sullivan Trophy next year. Also bear in mind that the team belongs to the chiefs and people of Nadi: the *Werelevu i Navatulevu*, *Werelevu o Nalagi*, *Werelevu i Erenavula*, *Vanua o Vaturu*, *Taukei Naocotabua*, and the *Taukei Naua*. God bless you Nadi, the Jet set team.

I now invite honourable members if you can come down to Lawaqa Park tomorrow and watch the crunch between the two titans from the Western side of Fiji.

(Laughter)

My career in the Military services spans my participation with my military colleagues in the work of peace keeping in Lebanon, Sinai and Iraq as a private soldier and later retiring last year at the level of Sergeant. In fact, I may have the honour of being the first army Sergeant to be elected as a parliamentarian.

Military services runs in my life, in my family and credit is due to my father, Ilaitia Vunivalu, who served in the Malayan campaign. I now have a son following in both our footsteps.

As I mentioned Madam Speaker, the other inspiration to be here today unusually began here in this very Parliament, when as a policeman on Parliament duty, I often assisted in the ceremonial proceedings of lifting the Mace and generally observing the debate.

As with most people of my age at the time, Madam Speaker, with scant resources, the Ministry of Defence and the Police Force were the obvious employers for us. University and higher education were simply out of the question. So, it is heartening to know and see that today, young men and women have a choice to be greater academically, thanks to the honourable Prime Minister and his team's encouragement to put every child in school fee-free.

At this juncture, I wish to congratulate the honourable Prime Minister's visionary team, along with the Attorney General for the dedication and far reaching initiatives in the area of education. I know personally, this decision affects all of us in Parliament and the nation, since many of us are now privileged to put our sons, daughters, children and grandchildren through these schools and institutions.

Madam Speaker, despite the negative spin of detractors of the military, it is a historical fact that Fiji has, is, and will continue to be intrinsically linked and tied to the Fiji Military forces. The men and women of the army have persevered in challenging times and have forged ahead with determination to bring about security and stability.

I salute their valour and courage, especially the Military personnel in Fiji, Sinai, Golan Heights and Iraq, and not forgetting the backbone of the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces.

On a personal note, Madam Speaker, my heartfelt thanks goes to all my voters. I would also like to thank a former politician, Mr Bijai Prasad, who has been my advisor and guide during my campaign, and also all the FijiFirst volunteers in Nadi - co-ordinator Mrs Akanisi Koroitamana, and FijiFirst office Nadi team, my family and network of friends who have put their trust in me.

I would also like to thank *Werelevu o Nalagi*, *na Momo na Tui Nawaka*, *Werelevu i Navatulevu*, *na Momo na Tui Nadi*, *Werelevu Erenavula*, *na Momo na Tui Sabeto*, *na i Taukei Yavutu*, *na Vanua o Betovavau*, *Vanua o Vaturu*, *Taukei Nakaria*, *Tabanivono-i-Wai* and the chiefly house of *Sawaieke*, *na Taukei Naua*, *Saunaka* village.

I would also wish to thank the voters from Nakorotubu, Ra for their support, to my manager, Mr Malikieli Namua and his wife Adi Emele Namua of Dratabu village and Ratu Salaceni of Matavolivoli.

I also take this opportunity to thank my branch manager, Mr Taki, the Advisory Councillor of Tovatova, Mr Azad the Advisory Councillor Mulomulo, Anaisi Toga of Saunaka village, Josefa Driu of Navo. Also thank Talei, Akuila Vuakanitoga of Yaqaga village in Lekutu, Bua and all my family in Yaqaga for voting for me.

I would also wish to thank the people and the *Vanua o* Nakovacake and the *Vanua* Eruku na Qaro, *Turaga ni Yavusa* Yavusania, Joe Rokocoko Senior for their support.

I am very proud to be the first student of Nawaka District School and Nadi Sangam School to become the first Member of Parliament.

I would also like to thank my brother, Pauliasi Natabe and the *turaga ni Mataqali*, *Yavusa* Sivo and Isia Saukuru for his assistance during my campaign.

My special thanks to Alipate Naiqisa and Timaleti Naiqisa for supporting me by coming all the way from Auckland, New Zealand during my campaign where they helped me financially.

I take this opportunity to say *vinaka vakalevu* to all taxi drivers of Denarau, Yavusa e tolu for your contribution in terms of allowing my vehicle to be based in Denarau Island Resort.

Lastly, I will never forget the *Vanua* Navo for all their support in voting for me. A special thanks to the *Turaga ni Mataqali* Vunatoto, Miriama Nadibi and my committee, Panapasa Dria, Mataiasi Nabau, Mereani Nabau, Saula Kuroqase, *Turaga ni Yavusa* Koroba, Tikiko Neitoni, Ratu Akuila Momo,, Viliame Mociu, Tevita Dawai, *tai* Manu and all the Yamisas'.

At the outset, I must say the Elections and the subsequent weeks of campaigning prior to the Elections was a memorable experience. However, the valuable lesson learnt is you can fool people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.

This Madam, relates to the campaign of fear, deception and lies spun by some desperate candidates to persuade voters. False information regarding land ownership and loss of identity, misleading tax issues, to name a few. Obviously, the truth has prevailed to the side of this Chamber of FijiFirst testifies today, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I am honoured to be the first Sergeant in history of the Military to enter politics and become a Member of Parliament as we can see. In previous General Elections, only Colonels on both sides of this Chamber, played a major role in previous Government. I thank Almighty God for hearting my prayer and that of my grandchildren every-day.

HON. MEMBERS. – *Vinaka!*

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU. – Madam Speaker, I appeal to Parliament that we have to work as a team and serve the people of this nation. I think we have a good team of Opposition.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS. – Hear! Hear!

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU. – But we should respect each other because we should realise that every debate will end up in the vote.

(Laughter)

So I urge the Opposition not to bring the past, but to move forward and serve the nation.

(Laughter)

As a home-grown Nadi citizen - born bred and educated as well, I joined the disciplined forces. First the police then the army, participating in peacekeeping duties in the Middle East, where I sustained a broken ankle and left knee and by the Grace of God, I underwent surgery twice in Batra Hospital in New Delhi.

I now wish to touch on a few pertinent issues relating to my hometown area in the West and these are the disastrous floods which have wrecked-havoc on Nadi and the Western region. The safety and security of Nadi International Airport and the issue for land usage in the sugarcane belt, if time permits.

As you all may be aware, I believe that when God formed Fiji, He favoured the West...

(Laughter)

That is why all the economy comes from the West.

(Laughter)

In particular, the Denarau Island Resort, where 75 per cent of the economy in one day comes from Denarau.

(Laughter)

And my region bask in His light, the wondrous sun. However, occasionally when we become too comfortable, He allows us fearful floods.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, this is not to take matters lightly. We must always be mitigating these risk and I am glad that the FijiFirst Government will be working towards this end.

Last but hardly the least, is the issue of land usage in the West, where our cane growing Indo Fijian brothers have toiled fruitfully and I must state on record the sterling work they have contributed to the sugar industry in our nation.

As one humbly raised in a cane farm, I can attest to the amazing contributions of our Indo farming friends and the trail blazing standards they have set for future farmers, especially for the *iTaukei* landowners. It means, Madam Speaker, (and I do not mean to discourage our people) but to rather show how hard work is achieved, and that is to forego some of our comfortable existence.

As we know Madam Speaker, for the *iTaukei* we have 52 Sundays where we do not work. We have 52 Saturdays, where we play rugby. We have 52 Fridays, where we have our *ogas* and nine

holidays in one year and we are not working for 165 days. So 365 minus 165 - we are only left with 200 days.

(Laughter)

HON MEMBERS. – *Vinaka! Vinaka!*

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU. - I urge Fijians from the western side of Fiji to lease out your land to the people from the North, from the South and from the East.

(Laughter)

So that we can receive plenty money, and we are not going *kerekere* from other friends.

HON MEMBER. – *Vinaka! Vinaka!*

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU. – But there is a way out. We should work together, and learn from each other and continue to forge a better, brighter and prosperous Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate the honourable Prime Minister and his team for re-packing and re-branding (if you like) our beloved country. Today, I stand here proud to be a Fijian, an *iTaukei*, a native son of *Nawaka* and I thank Almighty God for Fiji. May He continue to bless us as we continue to encourage unity.

May God bless honourable Members of this Parliament, Madam Speaker and all your ACS old girls today. Thank you very much.

(Laughter)

(Acclamation)

HON. J. USAMATE. – Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to take my place in this Parliament today as a FijiFirst Member and as the Minister for Health and Medical Services, undoubtedly one of the most important portfolios in Government. Thank you for allowing me to break the alphabetical order of these maiden speeches, to make my address this morning, after returning last night from official business overseas.

Let me start by joining other Members of this Parliament, in congratulating you on your appointment as Speaker. As others have noted, it is a wonderful inspiration to the young women of Fiji, some of whom we have in the Chambers today. In particular, as is the election of more women to Parliament than ever before.

Being here in this Chambers, a place where all the great leaders of our past have spoken and led this nation, brings home to me the enormity of the challenge I face, and of the sacred trust that has been placed in all of us who have been called to serve as Parliamentarians.

We have sworn sacred Oaths here to serve the people of this country. And for my own part, I pledge before you all today that I will carry out my duties as Minister for Health diligently and to the best of my ability. Madam Speaker, before I go on, I would like to assure the House, after a question was asked in the Chamber yesterday, that the Fijian Government is being extremely vigilant about the threat posed by the *Ebola* Virus. There is no evidence that it has reached our part of the world. Indeed,

some of the reporting on the issue has been wrong. There was a suspected case in Cairns, North Queensland, but the person involved was eventually cleared of having the disease.

But we are not being complacent. The Government has set up an *Ebola* Task Force across a range of Ministries, including mine (Ministry of Health), to monitor the global and regional situations and to take steps to ensure that Fiji is equipped to deal with any contingency. There is no need for panic. Fiji is not under threat. But, if that situation changes, I can assure the Fijian people that we are not only prepared, but that we will keep them fully informed.

Madam Speaker, we are now at a major cross-roads in the history of our nation. We have finally moved to a democracy that is genuine and sustainable. It is the beginning of a new Fiji. The blueprint for that democracy contained in our Constitution provides for equal opportunity for all Fijians. We have heard much from those on the other side during the Election campaign, and this week the rights of indigenous people are not adequately protected in that Constitution. It is simply not true. As an *iTaukei*, I stand here secure in the knowledge that the things which are genuinely important to my people are secure in the 2013 Constitution.

HON. MEMBERS. – *Vinaka, vinaka!*

HON. J. USAMATE. – Like the honourable Attorney General, I urge everyone to read the Constitution. It is available in the *iTaukei* language for ordinary people to see for themselves that what they are being told by certain politicians is wrong.

Madam Speaker, the Constitution also guarantees the Fijian people a series of social and economic rights, including the right to health. It is my task and the task of my Assistant Minister, the honourable Veena Bhatnagar, to deliver that right to the Fijian people. To provide them with adequate health care and to the standard appropriate for our nation of our size and means.

Madam Speaker, before I refer in detail to the Health portfolio and our plans for this term, I have a number of people to acknowledge and thank. First of all, I want to thank the Almighty God, who has blessed me and given me this enormous responsibility. It is He who has chosen each one of us to be here today.

I give thanks also to the school that I was educated in – Lelean Memorial School, on the banks of the Rewa River, and currently the holders of the Deans Trophy.

(Laughter)

I give thanks to those who are part of the team that worked with me during the General Elections. *Vinaka vakalevu* to Inia Tubui and all the volunteers who worked tirelessly on the campaign trail.

I give thanks to my mother, who raised me as a single woman for the early part of my life. I give thanks for her courage, for keeping me with her as a young woman and not giving me up when others asked to take me away from her. I thank her for her simple faith and for her teaching.

My mother passed away just as the Election campaign started. I wish that she was here today to see her son, the son of a house-girl to expatriates in Domain, who has now become a Member of Parliament and Minister in this Government.

I give thanks to the man she married – Sefanaia Bilivalu, who has been instrumental in bringing me up and they, together have made me the person that I am today.

I thank my maternal uncles – Joji Uluinakauvadra and Jone Usamate Senior and their families; they played a big part in my life.

I give thanks to all my relatives who have been supportive of me – from Nasaqalau and Waciwaci in Lakeba; Dravuwalu, Naceva, Kadavu; Naivaka in Bua; Nabasovi in Koro; Vunivutu and Nasasa in Macuata and from Wakanisila.

To all those who have supported, taught and helped me along the way, in the places that I grew up in - Wakanisila, Kalabu, Naitasiri and also in Kinoya, to all of them, *vinaka vakalevu*.

I give thanks to all the members of my extended family for their support in so many different ways over the years, and finally, to the woman who has been at my side these many years – my advisor, counsellor, friend and wife, Cagi. Also, to our five daughters and five grandchildren, they have been my cheering squad, my support and also my inspiration.

Madam Speaker, even in the developed countries, there is intense pressure on the health system and an almost insatiable demand for services. Advances in modern medicine mean that people are living longer. The cost of health care is expensive and soaring beyond the control of some economies to meet the demand.

Here in Fiji, we cannot expect to have the same standard of advanced care as some of our bigger neighbours, but the Fijian people are entitled to expect a level of adequate care and especially, basic facilities. Just as importantly, they are entitled to expect a proper level of service from adequately trained medical personnel and an attitude of care and concern at what is sometimes, one of the most stressful periods in their lives.

For the past eight years, this Government has steadily tackled the neglect and lack of investment in the health system by previous Governments. We have hired hundreds of extra doctors, nurses and ancillary workers; we have opened new hospitals and renovated existing ones; and we have fanned out into our rural areas with a series of clinics and nursing stations that are bringing basic health services to many thousands of Fijians close to where they live.

We intend to continue this rollout, but it will also be accompanied by a renewed effort by me, my Assistant Minister and those around us, to improve the experience of patients and their families when accessing health care. There is, no doubt, that we can do a lot more to instruct our bureaucrats – doctors, nurses and other workers, to make the interaction with patients and families less stressful and more enjoyable. We intend to put the “care” back into health care.

There are some wonderfully dedicated people in our system. There are doctors and nurses, who go out of their way to provide a service that is sympathetic, empathetic and caring. However, there are still too many instances in which patients and families are treated unsympathetically. We will not tolerate workers in the health system who are rude, abusive or dismissive of the genuine concerns of our people. I ask everyone in the system to put a renewed effort into treating patients and their families professionally, politely and with genuine care and concern.

Madam Speaker, building a better Fiji also means building a better health system, and I intend in these first weeks in the portfolio to work with my Assistant Minister to identify areas in the system that need priority attention and begin the task of rectifying any shortcomings.

We intend to work strategically and with a view to the long term. We will identify areas of need and set about addressing them. Fiji is blessed to have development partners ready and willing to assist us in the health care area.

We are also blessed with a range of specialists from overseas who are prepared to give their time free of charge to assist us, especially in those areas where we lack the necessary expertise. I want to place on record in this Parliament the deep gratitude of every Fijian for the commitment of our people that these specialists have shown. It is a sign of the genuine affection between us that these individuals and groups are willing to help, and we are very thankful.

Madam Speaker, we are very fortunate that Fiji has such a buoyant economic outlook, a growth rate of more than four per cent and a sustained period of economic growth. All this is giving the Government, through increased tax revenue, the ability to increase investment in health, and a range of new initiatives will be outlined in the 2015 Budget next month. They include the following:

- 1) Government will provide all medical prescribed by a doctor and currently under price control for all Fijians who earn less than \$20,000 a year. This includes medicine for Non-Communicable Diseases.
- 2) Government will ensure all essential drugs will remain under price control, and that there is a regular supply of all essential medicines through the public health system.
- 3) Government will provide land and funding to the Fiji National University (FNU), to establish a world class Tertiary Hospital in Lautoka, to be run in collaboration with the University's Medical College. Once this hospital is operational, Fijian citizens earning a household income of less than \$20,000 will receive medical procedures free of charge. For retirees, irrespective of whether they are on pension or not, the cost of all procedures will be borne by Government.

Madam Speaker, for all its challenges, the health sector in Fiji is in far better state than other countries in the Pacific. Our people, however, have a right to demand more.

We, in this country, have suffered greatly because of the *coup* culture and the loss of confidence in Fiji. We have lost many of our brightest and best professional workers. Doctors, nurses and other allied health workers have moved to other countries and we have paid an enormous price in terms of the loss of skills.

I want to pay tribute today to those who have remained behind to carry the burden, who have stayed true to the cause of delivering health services in this country. They have borne the brunt of the loss of skills and manpower, and have shouldered much of the burden. I thank them for their dedication and service.

As I mentioned, previous Governments also neglected the health system, especially our medical infrastructure. The Bainimarama Government has been gradually addressing this neglect since 2006, but there is still much to be done.

Even in the short time since assuming responsibility for this portfolio, I have received a string of complaints from ordinary Fijians. They complain about long queues and about not getting the medicines they need. They complain about the way they are spoken to. They complain about not being able to access the surgery they need. We intend to address these complaints.

We must have the right staff and enough staff to ensure service delivery. In spite of a huge investment in the past eight years, we still lack the number of nurses, doctors and other allied staff that we need to deliver a proper level of service.

I have spoken to many doctors who see upto 90 patients a day, this is well over what should be expected but they need to see everyone who turns up to be served. I have met and talked to doctors who have worked very long hours, upto 24 hours because there was no one else available to do the job. This is not a rare occurrence, it is a common occurrence.

I have met dentists and nurses who work extremely long hours and who do far more work than what is expected of one person. I have heard that staff fall asleep the minute they get on the transport that takes them home. I understand the pressure they are under and sympathise with them.

Obviously, if workers are overwhelmed by the demand for their services and their time, it must have an effect on service delivery. We must have enough staff, and I am pleased to inform this Parliament that the Government will address this issue. We have already done so to a large extent, but during the next four years, that investment will continue and we intend to redouble our effort to meet the demand.

We will train, recruit and retain more doctors to progress towards achieving an internationally accepted standard of doctor-to-patient ratio by the end of 2020. The doctor-to-patient ratio recommended by the world Health Organisation (WHO) is one doctor to 1,000 people. Fiji intends to join the ranks of the 45 per cent of countries in the world that meet this standard. Next year, we will employ an additional 150 doctors and 200 nurses, as well as 149 allied and other staff.

In the interim, we will look at innovative ways of making available medical personnel to see patients where and when they are needed, to call upon others outside of the Government sector to come forth and assist in seeing to the needs of Fijians who come to our hospitals and health centres seeking assistance.

Of course, we intend to improve the patient experience. We will identify ways and means of improving such attitudes through training, counselling, recognition systems and rewards, and other means. We must have workers who are compassionate and who care for our people.

Service delivery is also a function of having the necessary infrastructure, having the necessary equipment. Over the past five years or so, there has been significant investment into this. We have seen the opening of the Navua Hospital, Sigatoka Hospital upgrades and as we speak, work is continuing for Ba, Nausori and other projects.

Government has earmarked funds for developing facilities and equipment across Fiji. The third area that we will focus on to improve service delivery is to improve the processes and the systems that are used within the health sector. The people who work within the health sector are limited in how they perform by the processes they are required to operate in. We will need a major review of all key processes within the sector to remove practices that are no longer necessary and to ensure that the health sector delivers on our vision and expected service levels. We will then improve all these processes to drive service delivery up.

We will also continue to strengthen and continue the process of decentralising health care so that primary health care is brought as close as possible to people. We will strengthen mobile health care, where care is taken to people within the financial constraints that we face.

We will address the duration of waiting times and making necessary drugs available.

Madam Speaker, we also need to place much more attention on how we can prevent people from having to come to hospitals in the first place.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are now a major problem with the world over, and they are a massive problem right here in the Pacific. The World Health Organisation has pointed out that the four major NCDs (cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease) account for more than 80 per cent of all deaths. Diabetes rates in the Pacific are amongst the highest in the world, which is not the record of which we are proud. We intend to escalate the response to NCDs to escalate, NCD prevention and control and to strengthen primary health care. This problem cannot be solved by the health sector alone, it will require assistance from all sectors, it will require a whole of government approach. NCDs are on the rise because of many things, the high use of saturated fats, trans fats, sugars and salt, low consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and the sedentary lifestyles of many of our people. These are things we need to focus our attention on, and make the necessary interventions through policy and legislation so we can slow down the onset of NCDs and reduce the burden on our hospitals in to the future.

Madam Speaker, as signalled by the honourable and learned Attorney-General yesterday, the Government is planning a major reform of the Civil Service in the coming term, starting with an international team of consultants evaluating existing work practices. The changes that are coming are designed to produce a culture of excellence and a Civil Service that is more efficient and more productive. We will also be focussing on improving excellence and productivity of the health sector.

I urge every civil servant to see the coming reforms, not as a threat, but an opportunity for improvement that Government intends to work with the Civil Service, not against it, just as I and my Assistant Minister intend to work with the health sector to produce a better outcome for all Fijians. *Vinaka vakalevu*, thank you.

(Acclamation)

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, first, allow me to congratulate you on your appointment as the Speaker of this Parliament. I have no doubt that you will lead this Parliament well in the coming years, and equally, I know that all Fijians are proud of you as Fiji's first female Speaker.

I also acknowledge the presence of Adi Cakobau School students and teachers in the public gallery today. Madam Speaker, if this is a sign of the keen interest that Fijian students today take in the business of this Parliament and in the running of the nation, then we are heading in the right direction.

Madam Speaker, I wish to begin my maiden speech by saying that I am deeply humbled and honoured to be part of the FijiFirst political movement, which has received the strong support of the Fijian people to represent their interests and aspirations in this august body. I give thanks to our heavenly Father for His enduring guidance, love and wisdom during my journey here.

I would also like to convey my gratitude to the honourable Prime Minister for his trust and confidence in appointing me as the first female Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources. I know that this Ministry is very dear to him because it provides important services to all Fijians. Sir, I am deeply honoured with this appointment and I pledge that I will look after this portfolio to the best of my ability and I will continue with the reforms you began. I make the same pledge to the Fijian people.

Madam Speaker, FijiFirst's core values of fairness, justice, integrity, diversity, meritocracy, self-reliance, resilience, inclusion, equity and compassion are also my values. They are the values my parents taught me. They are the values that matter a great deal to me as an individual. They are values that I strive every day to instil in our two children and they are values that will guide the discharge of my duties, both as a parliamentarian and as a Minister.

Indeed, I firmly believe that these are values we all must aspire to, so that together we are able to weave them into the very fabric that makes up our beloved Fiji.

Madam Speaker, for the benefit of the Members of this august Chamber, please allow me to provide an overview of the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources. The Ministry consists of two departments – the Department of Lands and the Department of Mineral Resources.

The Department of Lands manages State land, foreshore and the land bank. Its roles and responsibilities are diverse and wide-ranging. To put it very simply, it surveys, values and maps land in Fiji for a variety of users, including other Government ministries, investors and the public at large. It is also responsible for leasing State land and land deposited with the land bank.

The Ministry compiles the data used for Fijian geospatial information management and global positioning systems, which together have a broad range of applications and potential, such as enhanced resource planning in the case of the former and for aviation and marine navigation in the case of the latter.

The Ministry's work on the National Land Register and the Land Use Master Plan will ensure, that for the first time, Fiji will have a national land index that incorporates the complete details of land tenure in the country. I am sure my colleagues in this Chamber will understand how valuable a resource this will be, across a very broad front.

Madam Speaker, the Department of Mineral Resources administers, regulates, monitors and promotes mineral and groundwater development in Fiji. The Department conducts surveys and assessments of potential mineral and groundwater sites to be able to advise potential investors, as well as to help realise all Fijians' right to clean and safe water, as provided by the Fijian Constitution.

The Department also plays a critical role in disaster risk management. Fiji is located along the Pacific Rim of Fire, a well-known active zone of seismic activity. Our officers observe, monitor and analyse the location and magnitude of earthquakes to predict the likelihood of tsunamis. We then issue warnings to the nation through the National Disaster Management Office, if need be.

Madam Speaker, much has been accomplished by Government in the last seven years in relation to the organisational restructure of the Ministry of Lands. The internal reforms led by the honourable Prime Minister have laid a solid foundation that I intend to build on over the next four years.

I am entering this role with a strong will to work with my team to improve service delivery for our customers, ordinary people and investors alike. My goal is to transform this Ministry into one of the most efficient, compassionate, professional and transparent in Government. To do this, we must first acknowledge that there is much work to be done and certain issues that need immediate attention, including rectifying past mistakes caused by corrupt practices and lack of respect for human dignity, equality, basic fairness and good governance. To kick-start this initiative, we will be holding the first of five public consultations this Saturday to hear the issues which our customers face in their

interactions with the Ministry. This, in our view will assist us in further strengthening our reform agenda for better and efficient service delivery.

One of our first tasks will be to review the existing legislative framework to see where we can improve the laws, regulations and policies that govern the management of State land, foreshores and land in the Land Bank; the regulation of professional valuers; the regulation of professional surveyors; and the management and development of mineral resources and groundwater.

The overall purpose of this review will be to ensure that Fiji has modern laws that promote business and investment on the one hand and which look after the best interests and rights of all Fijians, including landowners, on the other. For example, we will begin work on a Valuation Act that will, for the first time, set international standards for the land valuations done in Fiji to ensure consistency and fairness for landowners and lease-holders alike.

Madam Speaker, we will also commit to strengthening our relationships with other Government ministries and departments, as well as with regulatory authorities and non-Government actors. We need to work together, to improve the ease of doing business by untangling the often times complex web of bureaucracy that dampens investment and slows development. It is up to us to take charge and ensure that our respective policies and processes are aligned to one another so that our customers enjoy an experience that is altogether more pleasant. This requires all of us to commit to a policy of persistent cooperation and coordination.

For mining and mineral resource development, one of our key tasks in the coming term is to develop a mineral resource policy that ensures this sector is poised for long-term growth and sustainability. In doing so, we appreciate the value of consultation and the need to engage with all stakeholders. I can tell you now that the policy will be in line with the values of FijiFirst and will be the result of open and public dialogue so that there is collective ownership of this very important part of Fiji's future.

Of course, this work will be guided by the Fijian Constitution, which provides for a fair share of royalties for landowners as well as calling on Government to responsibly protect and preserve our natural surrounding for present and future generations.

Madam Speaker, we will also need to finalise and adopt our Mangrove Management Plan so that foreshore development in Fiji is carried out in such a fashion that respects the value of this natural resources to our people and our nation.

Madam Speaker, I applaud His Excellency the President for articulating Government's legislative programme for this session of Parliament in his Opening Address.

In particular, I appreciated his mention of the importance of formalising squatter settlements on State land and, with the indulgence of Parliament, I would like to take a few moments to discuss this important issue.

The Ministry of Lands is fully committed to working in partnership with other ministries and agencies to help formalise squatter settlements on State land. Most of the people who live in these settlements have done so for generations. And so we are continuing a work programme to regularise this state of affairs and empower ordinary Fijians. First, we will help develop these areas by providing infrastructure that most of us living in towns and cities take for granted – things like piped-water, proper sewerage systems and electricity. Then, we will give the inhabitants of these settlements security of tenure by issuing 99-year leases, giving them the ability to build proper homes and to gain

access to funds for this purpose. With this programme in place, we believe that these Fijians will take advantage of this opportunity to build something that their families can be proud of.

This is an ambitious plan. But by pooling Government resources and teaming up with the private sector and NGOs, we will be able to make steady and impressive progress on this initiative. We will not be able to regularise all 64 squatter settlements on State land at once, but we will start work straight away and plan to make significant progress by the end of this term.

Those who have fallen victim to illegal developers – people who develop State land and then illegally sub-lease it to Fijian families – will receive security of tenure directly with the State.

Madam Speaker, there is another very important issue that I feel compelled to address: the misinformation that is still being spread about the security and protection of *iTaukei* land. During the campaign, I was shocked to discover the extent and magnitude of the outright lies being told to the Fijian people. I am even more shocked to hear these lies being repeated on the floor of this Parliament. The people have rejected these lies; they have no place in the new Fiji or in this Chamber.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- *Vinaka!*

One lie, in particular, which relates to my portfolio, is that which claims an alleged plan to alienate *iTaukei* land through the Land Bank. I only need to reiterate Section 28 of the Constitution which mandates that the ownership of all *iTaukei*, Rotuman and Banaban land shall remain with its customary owners and shall not be permanently alienated, except to the State for a public purpose.

In these past few days, I have heard it said that *iTaukei* land, or native land as it used to be called, is for the first time subject to the State powers of compulsory acquisition. That is incorrect. The State Acquisition of Lands Act has, since 1970, always bestowed on Government the power of compulsory acquisition of *iTaukei* land or any land in Fiji for that matter. Section 3 of the Act gave the State such a power. A power which exists to this day. And yet, I have not heard this explanation being proffered from across the floor. I ask - why is that?

The Fijian Constitution has, for the first time in 2013, introduced a requirement that all such land must be returned to its owners when it is no longer needed for the purpose it was acquired for. This requirement did not exist before, where compulsory acquired land would be alienated to the State, even if the State no longer required it for the public purpose it was acquired for. And yet, I did not hear a single critic of land policies from across the floor explain this in their statement. Again I ask, why?

As the Minister for Lands, let me be very clear and leave no room for doubt: the sole purpose of the Land Bank is to help landowners receive financial benefits from land that is currently lying idle, which in turn boosts the overall wellbeing of this economy – our economy.

The bauxite mine at Nawailevu in Bua is designated land under the Land Use Decree. The lease is for a period of 20 years only and not 99 years – an example of the flexibility of this leasing system to meet the needs and expectations of both, the investors and also the landowners. It is because of its agility that this new leasing system has gained credence since its inception in 2011. We now have 79 parcels of land voluntarily deposited in the Land Bank. We have issued 26 leases and are about to issue another three in the next few weeks. Investments on deposited land include mining, mineral water extraction and tourism development, to name a few.

Participation with the Land Bank is completely voluntary. No Landowning Owing Unit can be forced to deposit their land in the Land Bank. In fact, land cannot be deposited into the Land Bank without the consent of at least 60 per cent of the Land Owing Unit. This pre-requisite is laid out in the law. It is set out very clearly in Regulation 4 of the Land Use Regulations, and yet not a single critic of the Land Bank has explained this in their statements. I ask - why?

When land is used productively, everyone wins. The Land Owing Unit benefits from improved financial returns, and Fiji as a whole benefits from economic development and job creation.

The Land Bank is a relatively new initiative and yet, for something so new, it already boasts a number of success stories:

- (i) It gives the flexibility of the State and *iTaukei* landowners to lease their land for up to 99 years;
- (ii) It has raked in almost three quarters of a billion dollars in direct and indirect investment as of June 19th this year;
- (iii) It has paid almost \$5 million in premiums alone to the owners of land which has been leased out so far; and
- (iv) It has given a new lease of life to a tourism project on Yaukuve Island in Kadavu, which will not only open up a new chapter for tourism in Fiji, but has also become a source of pride and sustenance for the landowners.

In this term, we will continue to uphold and promote the core objective of the Land Use Decree, which is to encourage the utilisation of idle land in a national bid to stimulate economic growth and create wealth for landowners. It may well be that we need to strengthen the overall management, practices and procedures of this new initiative, but any review will revolve around the core objective I have stated.

To this end, I invite honourable Members of Parliament to work with us, to continue to strengthen this initiative for the benefit of landowners rather than use it as a tool to score political points.

Madam Speaker, it would be remiss of me to end my speech without acknowledging some very special people without whose tireless and strong commitment and support, I would not be standing here today:

- To my husband, Nemani: Thank you for your unwavering love and support and encouragement;
- To our two daughters, Vasiti and Adi Tui: Thank you for enduring my long absences from home during the campaign without complaint. I love you.
- To Bu: Thank you for being the stabilising factor in my angels' lives during my absences.
- To my campaign team, Jone Bureta, Ropate Rakuita, Irami Waqa and Laite Manasa: I will forever be grateful to you and will never forget your hard work and support.

- To my extended family from Nasolo: Thank you for your generosity and for making my time away from home less painful.
- To my extended family from Natewa: Thank you for the strong foundation of support.
- To my dear siblings, Wai, Ba, Ka and Wi: Thank you for carrying on the legacy of Tu and Nau, to whom I owe all my achievements. Thank you for making the values they taught us part and parcel of my every day.
- To the untiring and committed volunteers of FijiFirst: I thank you for everything. We share this victory with you.
- For those who voted for me: I hope that my effort in the years ahead will reflect the faith you have in me.

To all Fijians, I am here to serve all of you and I will aim to ensure that you find me a hardworking, diligent Member, who will carry out her roles adhering to the core values of FijiFirst – values which we all understand and respect as human beings.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Acclamation)

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, it is my duty this morning as Leader of the Government in Parliament to give its right of reply to the addresses made by the Opposition in this opening session. It is also my honour to make my maiden speech as a FijiFirst member and as a Minister for Infrastructure and Transport.

Before I do, allow me to join the other speakers in congratulating you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment. We can all agree that this opening session has been memorable, not least for having a woman in the Chair for the first time in the history of parliamentary rule in Fiji.

We can also agree that the opening address by His Excellency the President was one of the most eloquent and important ever delivered in this Parliament. In vivid terms, the President brought to life the history of this Chamber. He reminded us of the momentous events that have taken place here over the years and invoked the spirit of men and women who laid the foundation for our nation. Above all, he sets the tone for our new democracy by reminding us that we are all here to serve the Fijian people and that history will not judge us kindly if we let them down.

I think many of us can also agree that in his own maiden speech, the honourable Prime Minister rose to the occasion by reiterating the main themes of His Excellency the President's speech - that we must try to work together constructively to improve the lives of all Fijians and especially our young people.

On the Government side, we look forward to a similarly inspirational speech from the honourable Leader of the Opposition. But unfortunately the honourable Leader sank to the occasion with a speech that was notably short of new ideas about how to take our nation forward. Instead, she chose to fight the General Elections all over again, resurrecting some of the main themes of her campaign. These include her claim that the *iTaukei* are somehow disadvantaged in the new Fiji when the opposite is true and they have never been stronger.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (Ret) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- *Vinaka!*

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, it is very discouraging for anyone who believes in genuine democracy to see the Opposition still trying to argue the merit of policies that were overwhelmingly rejected by the Fijian people. We know that they are having trouble coming to terms with an election defeat. But they desperately need some fresh ideas if they are to remain at all relevant to our national debate over the next four years.

Before the election, the honourable Prime Minister rightly called this “a battle of ideas” for the hearts and minds of the Fijian people. FijiFirst won this battle in a manner that the international community has described as ‘credible, free and fair.’

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (Ret) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- *Vinaka.*

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- But, the honourable Leader of the Opposition or the front bench still cannot seem to accept that it is the will of the people. They fight on with their arms and legs cut off, but still refusing to concede defeat.

Madam Speaker, those of us on the Government side came here this week eager to meet a worthy opponent that aspires to be the alternative government. But they have failed the test with a series of speeches that offered the Fijian people nothing new. The Opposition must come to terms with the fact that it was their politics of division that cost them the election.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- They need to get with the times and come up with fresh ideas that are relevant to the lives of every Fijian. And they need to tell the truth in this Parliament, the truth they did not tell during the elections campaign.

Madam Speaker, please permit me to elaborate.

- It is not true to say that the *iTaukei* have been weakened when we have guaranteed ownership of our land than ever before - more than 90 per cent - and more opportunities than ever before.
- It is not true to say that our identity has been stolen when an English name that only came with the English is used to describe every other citizen. We are all citizens of our beloved Fiji and as such we are all Fijians...

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (Ret) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- *Vinaka.*

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- ... and the Opposition need to learn to accept that.

- It is not true that the right of us Christians to worship our Lord Jesus Christ or Catholics to honour Mary and all the Saints publicly or privately is threatened by the provision of a secular state in our Constitution. It is guaranteed, along with other freedoms, yet the Christian fundamentalists sitting opposite me still try to stir up division.
- It is not true to say that our strength as a people has weakened just because some of our institutions have been reformed. On the contrary, the strength of our identity and capability as the *iTaukei* derives from us as a people.

- It is not true to say that there will be another *coup* unless the Constitution is changed. And it is an outrageous abuse of the privilege accorded by this Chamber for the opposition member opposite to have made such a threat. The Constitution will not be changed, except by the Constitutional provisions and any insurrection will be addressed decisively.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (Ret) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- *Vinaka.*

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.-

- By the same token, it is hypocritical of the honourable Whip of the Opposition to comment on the provisions of the immunity in the 2013 Constitution when he himself was a beneficiary of similar provisions in the 1990 and 1997 Constitutions for the events of 1987.
- It is not true that expatriates have taken the jobs of qualified Fijians in our economy, in which we need the best people to take Fiji forward. We will not force the pace of localisation if it means degrading our capability as a nation.
- And it is not true that Fijians have never been more divided, as yet another Opposition Member claimed in his maiden speech.

Every Fijian knows for a fact that we have never been more united than we are now.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (Ret) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- *Vinaka.*

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Nor does our nation have a sense of purpose or so much promise.

As the honourable Members in this Chamber have risen in alphabetical order this week to lay out their vision for our nation, the contrast between the Government and the Opposition could not be stark.

While we offer a vision for Fiji of inclusiveness and hope, of us finally achieving our promise as a nation, they lay out an agenda of division and restoring the powers of the elites. While we have our sights set on the future, and especially for our young people, they want to keep fighting old battles that have already been lost. That hat the Fijian people rejected on the 17th.

We hope on this side of the Chamber - for the sake of our nation - that they will soon see the error of their ways. Because if they do not, it is going to be a long and frustrating four years. The only comfort is that when we gather here again after the 2018 Elections, there will be fewer of them. Because they had mis-judged the *iTaukei*. What they say about the *iTaukei* does not resonate with me or any of the *iTaukei* I know.

This week, the watching public saw a Government with a solid record of service delivery bringing with new ideas about how to take our beloved nation forward. A Government committed to national unity and the rights and opportunities of every Fijian. And across the Chamber, Opposition members parroting the same old negative chant - of the *iTaukei* people threatened when they are not, Christianity threatened when it is not. An opposition bereft of positive ideas with no concept on how to take us forward as one people, one nation and one Fiji.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (Ret) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Hear, hear!

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, and so I turn to my maiden speech as a proud *iTaukei* who is a living example of why the Opposition is so fundamentally wrong. I certainly started out as disadvantaged like tens of thousands of Fijians of all backgrounds. But with hard work and determination - and not the accident of birth - I fought my way up and earned the privilege of serving my country at the highest levels of Government.

My own experience has taught me that we *iTaukei* do not need more advantages than other Fijians. We already have them by having the most important asset in Fiji - our people and our land. Some people opposite us argue that *iTaukei* land is sacred. I agree with that premise because I share their view that land is a creation of God. But God's intentions tells us that it is only sacred if it is used for the purpose of benefitting humankind and its purpose. Not to sit idle but be utilised, as in the Parable of the Talents. It is what we do with the land that really matters.

Madam Speaker, as the honourable Prime Minister has said, we do not need handouts. We need leg-ups. And my own life is the perfect example of where leg ups can transform an ordinary person's life.

I come from the most humble of origins, born in considerable hardship to a single mother, who is still alive in the village of Navunisoile in Korovou, Northland, Tailevu. Her name is Senoveva Ranadi and I want to pay tribute to her before the nation today for her love and support. *Vinaka Na!*

I also want to pay tribute to my grandfather and mentor, Mr. Moises Rodokana, who toiled on Tailevu Dairy farm in Korovou until he was 75 years old to enable me to go to school at the Natovi Primary and Secondary Schools. It was a sacrifice for which I will ever be grateful. My grandfather taught me the value of prayer and hard work. He always said that despite our struggles as a family, we could all live lives of satisfaction and he was right.

My grandfather also taught me, Madam Speaker, that my cultural values and traditions are only worthwhile if they do not contradict the values of my Christian faith. They mean nothing if they do not go hand in hand with the love of God and the love of men.

What made the difference for me was my Catholic upbringing, which educated and taught me the values of love and inclusiveness that is so far from that of the fundamentalists on the opposite benches, has to be unrecognisable.

Our Lord Jesus Christ - were he to appear among us today - would be shocked to hear people who profess to be His followers making very un-Christian principled statements.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (Ret) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- *Vinaka!*

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- I want to acknowledge the Vincentian Fathers, the Congregation of the Mission, especially for Father Alan Finn, who taught me the values of compassion, love and care for the poor embodied by Saint Vincent De Paul himself. Father Finn is a Vincentian priest from Australia. He came to Fiji in 1959 and is still alive at the age of 82 and living in Wailoku. He has been one of the major influences of my life.

For Forms 5 and 6, I went to Saint John's College in Levuka, where I was educated by the Marist Fathers. It is a notable fact that the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Attorney-General and I were all educated in the Marian tradition, the honourable Prime Minister and the honourable Attorney-General at Marist Brother's High School in Suva, and me at Saint John's College. The honourable Attorney-General, of course, is a Muslim but he still subscribes to the Marian values - that

was instilled in him by the Marist brothers. That no matter what your background or religion, we are all equal in the eyes of God. In contrast to the Christian fundamentalists opposite us, our belief of Christianity is an inclusive one.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (Ret) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- *Vinaka.*

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- The central teachings of Christ - love, tolerance, compassion, equality. And they are the values at the heart of this Government, Madam Speaker.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (Ret) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you!

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- We are all on a pilgrimage in this life. One day we will all die. And I believe that the only thing we will be asked at the end is "how much have we loved?" The fundamentalists say that God gave Fiji to the *iTaukei*. The true Christian belief is that the world always belongs to God, never to a human on pilgrimage earth. As in the words of the Psalmists, in Psalms 24:1: "*The earth and everything on it belongs to the Lord. The world and its people belong to Him*". God gave this world for everyone to share.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear! Hear!

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- As with many of you, my greatest joy is my home life and I want to pay a special tribute today to my wife, Sereana, my son Mosese -who is named after my beloved grandfather - and my daughter, Sarafina. They are my pillars of strength and I thank them for their love and support.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- *Vinaka.*

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- I also want to thank the Sisters of our Lady of Nazareth (*Bubu*), who mothered me in my 12 years of boarding schooling at Natovi and Saint John's College. Some of them live at the Order's Retirement Home in Wailoku and I send them my love and thanks. And I also remember today a very great man - the late Archbishop of Suva, Emeritus Petero Mataca, who had a great impact on both my life and that of the nation and who is dearly missed, Madam Speaker.

I want to thank those who assisted me in my elections campaign, especially my campaign team - the FijiFirst officers in Suva and Nausori. And I want to thank my relatives and friends, the people of Northland, Tailevu who voted for me in such numbers, second only to the honourable Prime Minister ...

(Laughter)

... who helped me where I am today. I was also touched to find that people voted for me from across our nation and overseas. Although I will never know who you are, I want to thank you too.

Madam Speaker, as a kid, all I ever wanted was to be a truck driver, but by some stroke of fate, I wound up being a Colonel in the Republic of Fiji Military Forces. I served the then Commander and current Prime Minister as his first Personal Staff Officer or ADC during the tumultuous years between 1999 and 2002. I eventually moved into Government at his side as Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister for the past six years. I shared his vision then, and I share his vision now, and it is the sole reason that I am in Parliament today.

As Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, we have already begun to outline objectives, some of which will be contained in the 2015 Budget next month.

We will continue the task of improving the nation's road, and will create more opportunities for local contractors to learn skills from the overseas companies that are here so they can eventually assume the role themselves to the same standards. We are also continuing our programme to provide access water to more Fijians, especially those living outside those areas not covered by the Water Authority of Fiji. For those who live in the Delainavesi and Veisari corridor who have been having difficulties, I want to tell you today that in six months, the water woes that you have been experiencing now will be over. I have directed the Authority to purchase four booster pumps that will guarantee that the corridor between Delainavesi and Veisari can get clean, constant water supply. Unfortunately, it will take six months for the equipment to arrive, but after that, you should have water 24/7.

Madam Speaker, we will continue our Rural Electrification Programme, and those communities that have contributed their 10 per cent will receive their supply either by grid or solar power. And we will also again boost transport links with maritime communities with the arrival of the fourth new vessel by the middle of next year.

Madam Speaker, I come here to this Chamber with the sum total of all the values that I have been fortunate to accumulate in my life. As an iTaukei, as a Catholic, from my years in the RFMF and from the vision of our honourable Prime Minister of a better nation for us all, if we can stay united.

I want to assure you my fellow iTaukei that our aspirations as a people has never been well secured as they are under this Government.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- *Vinaka!*

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- This Government is here for you just as it is for anyone else who is Fijian. There is nothing to fear and everything to look forward to in the new Fiji.

God bless our people and God bless Fiji. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

(Acclamation)

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	44
Noes	-	5
Not voted	-	1

Motion agreed to.

ADOURNMENT

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

That this Parliament do now adjourn.

HON. CMD. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	49
Not voted	-	1

Motion agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I now adjourn Parliament to 10.00 a.m. on Friday 21st November, 2014.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.24 a.m.