

MONDAY, 11TH MAY, 2015

The Parliament resumed at 9.35 a.m. pursuant to adjournment

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present, except the honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management; the honourable Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management; the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Fisheries; the honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Transport; the honourable Niko Nawaikula; and the honourable Viam Pillay.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH/AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE

The following Members subscribed to the Administration of Oath/Affirmation of Allegiance and took their seats in the Chamber:

1. Hon. Jilila Nalibu Kumar; and
2. Hon. Mikaele Rokosova Leawere.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, I move to suspend Standing Orders, to allow the new honourable Members of Parliament to make their maiden speeches.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put.
Motion agreed to.

MAIDEN SPEECHES – NEW MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

MADAM SPEAKER.- I now wish to inform the new honourable Members that as per the Standing Orders, they will have up to 20 minutes to make their speeches. The warning bell will ring at 15 minutes and the final one at 20 minutes. I now call on the honourable Jilila Nalibu Kumar to make her maiden speech.

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, the honourable Members of Parliament: good morning, *sa yadra*, *as-salamu alaykum*, *sat shri akal*, *ni hao ma* and *namaste*.

It is indeed a great honour and privilege to take my place in this honourable House today as a Fiji First Member of Parliament. I rise as a newly elected Member of Parliament and would like the people of this beloved nation to know that I am ready to serve them in the best way possible, for the betterment of all communities and our nation.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge our God Almighty for His constant love, enduring guidance, shower of blessings and the gift of wisdom during my life journey until to-date.

I would also like to convey my sincere gratitude to the honourable Prime Minister and the honourable and learned Attorney-General for their trust and confidence in me, to stand for Fiji First in the September General Elections 2014.

Madam Speaker, please allow me briefly to voice my sentiments on why I stood for Fiji First in the last General Elections. I chose to stand for this party because of its core values such as integrity, diversity, meritocracy, self-reliance, resilience, equity, fairness, inclusion and compassion. These are the fabrics of any society and I personally believe that these very core values will build up a very healthy and prosperous nation. Thus, it is our humble duty as parents and adults to embrace on these values and in return, to teach these values to our children because they are our leaders of tomorrow. It brings them together and promotes these values in our areas of responsibilities, we will make Fiji the best nation in the world and I can confidently say that Fiji is the way the world should be.

Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge two very important people in my life who I owe them dearly. Firstly, my mother, Mereisi Naivoso of Raiwaqa Village in Nadroga, for her sacrifice, caring, loving and teaching, which has moulded me into the person that I am today.

Secondly, a special tribute to my late father, Amenio Kanahara of Tubairata, Nadroga, for his spiritual teaching and assistance and also his aspiration and dream that I become a Member of Parliament one day. This great achievement is dedicated to him.

I would also thank my family, my husband, Dhirend Kumar, my children; Vanessa, Elizabeth and Damien and both paternal and maternal families, the Kanahara family from Tubairata and the Kunavue family from Raiwaqa, Nadroga, for their words of encouragement and moral support throughout my campaign and also not forgetting my campaign team of Lautoka and Sigatoka.

I would also like to give my sincere appreciation to all those who believed in me during the last elections. I will be forever grateful for your support, not forgetting my voters here and abroad. This includes the province of Nadroga/Navosa and my *tauvus* from the district of Rakiraki in Ra.

A special thank you to my voters from Lautoka, Nadi, Ba and Suva, from the islands of Lomaiviti, Kadavu, Vanua Levu, Taveuni and the Lau group. A very special acknowledgement goes to my family friends in Sydney: Mr. and Mrs. Jayson Narayan, the Vatuinaruku family, Hulme Tim family, Naisali family, Turuva family, Nasovu family, Samuel family, Talatala Samu and family, Asenaca and family, Dr. Mili Kaitani, Radini Talatala Vaulina and the Nakobukobu family, for their assistance during my stay before returning to Fiji. Their timely support is greatly appreciated.

Madam Speaker, as I stand in this august House, I say that Fiji is at a very special time in progress and unity. This has been a vision of FijiFirst through the leadership of the honourable Prime Minister, who has been a beacon of hope for all, regardless of ethnicity, religious beliefs and socio-economic background. He has brought this vision forward for the dignity and honour of all Fijians.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to say a big thank you to the honourable Prime Minister, for standing up for the unfortunate and underprivileged in society, for standing up for children who now have access to education and have a future to look forward to.

Madam Speaker, these are some of the initiatives this FijiFirst Government has taken, to invest and improve on the lives of all ordinary Fijians. Madam Speaker, I would also like to thank the honourable Prime Minister in his stand on an issue I hold very dear to my heart. This is the land issue. We, the *itaukei*, Rotumans and Banabans have the rights of ownership and protection of our land. The protection of ownership and interest in the land and the rights of landowners to fair share of royalties for extraction of minerals; these, Madam Speaker, are embedded in the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, this Government has also taken initiatives to improve on women's' lives around the country through politics, academy and business. This Government has initiated platforms to empower women, to give them more of a stake in our economy, to enrich their lives and those of their families, to enable them to reach their full potential and above all, to provide them with an environment free from intimidation and fear, as well as introducing the first domestic violence laws in Fiji's history. This government has also strengthened the rights of women who live in de-facto relationships. The Government has removed the old rules for the corroboration of rape; no longer does the rape victim's sexual history have any bearing on a case nor a peace offering accepted to let perpetrators of crimes go free. Our criminal laws are modern and gender neutral and the supreme law of our nation, the Fijian Constitution, establishes once and for all that all Fijians are equal, no matter who they are or where they come from.

Madam Speaker, this Government has given a track record of its commitment to deliver the services the people of Fiji need in more isolated cases and to give them the same benefits enjoyed by the Fijians in more populated parts of the country. Whether it is access to free education, better health services, electricity, telecommunications or clean water, the Fiji First Government's determination is to deliver and to serve. And we do so, equally determined that every Fijian should have the same opportunity as anyone else, no matter who they are or where they come from.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government, under the leadership of the honourable Prime Minister, is not interested in telling lies, making false promises or scaring people about threats that do not exist. They get on with the job of serving the nation better through paying children's school fees, rural electrification, building better roads and bridges, telecentres where local communities are just a touch away from the world, and putting on the water supply where none existed before, and making sure that our children and grandchildren have better opportunities and better lives than any Fijian has ever enjoyed before.

Madam Speaker, I come from an educational background. I was a teacher by profession and had spent over 30 years teaching around Fiji. I have seen the hardships students go through with their parents, just to get them through. Sons and daughters of farmers, villages and settlements would continue the cycle of poverty because of financial constraints. They never have the opportunity that is now available to all children, an opportunity given to reach their goals and live their dreams through scholarships for tertiary education.

Madam Speaker, this opportunity given by the Government to assist families all over the country is to enable their children to get an education. Education, Madam Speaker, is the key to breaking out of poverty and through education, Fiji will become a prosperous country and truly, a modern nation.

Madam Speaker, there is a lot of talk on the awarding of scholarships. The young people of today need to change their mindset on how scholarships are awarded. These scholarships were not like the previous, this new one is an alignment with the new Fiji where it is awarded to students for sheer hard work and merit, and not through family names or favours. This, Madam Speaker, gives fairness to all students regardless of ethnicity or socio-economic background.

Madam Speaker, our children and grandchildren are also reaping the benefits of free education and free bus transfer to and from their schools. Fiji is going through an educational revolution where education is now accessible and available to all, where telecentres are available to enable anyone in their communities to be in touch with the world. Madam Speaker, the introduction of the new syllable curricular now in schools so that students today are more in touch with our world and the reality we live in.

Madam Speaker, I would also commend this Government for supporting and stimulating growth within our economy such as the promotion of Fijian made products, the promotion of Fiji through the tourism industry, the building of infrastructure such as roads, bridges and electrification reaching isolated areas and engaging local business communities and individuals, to share in the economic growth of this

nation. Madam Speaker, I would like to quote the honourable Prime Minister's sentiments in the 2015 Budget announcement where he said, and I quote:

“There is still much to be done to catch up as a nation on the lost years. The years we squandered arguing about who deserved more, when we should have been building a better future for everyone; the years in which selfish elites put their own interests above the common good, and ordinary Fijians were deprived of some of the necessities and opportunities of life. This is the time to put those years behind us.”

Fiji as one nation has never been stronger; our economy is growing stronger and there are great days ahead. God has blessed us and we pray that God will continue to bless us as we work as one nation, one people, to make Fiji even greater. May God bless Fiji. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Acclamation)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Leader of the Opposition and honourable Members of Parliament, it is indeed a privilege to be addressing you here today. I must first and foremost thank the Almighty for the opportunity of being here as the only unique parliamentarian in this Parliament, whose placement is occasioned by Divine providence. My quest to provide representation for my people which was hitherto halted, has been leveraged by only God which authenticates the veracity of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke chapter 18 verse 27, and I quote: “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”

However, Madam Speaker, I was nonetheless encouraged by the enviable contribution of the late honourable Ratu Viliame Tagivetaua who in his lifetime, despite his illness, opted to continue serving the people, especially indigenous Fijians. These contributions of his will be indelible upon the sands of history and the destiny of our people. To this end, even in death, he has my utmost respect and admiration.

Madam Speaker, it is also fitting for me to thank the honourable Leader of Opposition and the SODELPA party for their support in the last General Elections, the *vanua* of Serua, the Fijian Teachers Association, which was my immediate constituent, the public of Fiji who voted for me, my dear wife Adi Miliakere for her encouragement and advice, and my entire family for their unflinching support and encouragement that came in different shades and times during and after the electioneering process.

Madam Speaker, the Unions still cannot understand why the retirement age is pegged at 55. This denies the benefit of their experiences which ultimately would have made room for a robust Civil Service and enhance a quality transition for a new generation empowered and thoroughly mentored. This also has an adverse economic effect on the system by having spent millions of dollars for in-service development of these civil servants and the said system subsequently denied the benefits of their training by retiring them at 55. This is no way a disrespect or disregard for the young as our Unions are fully supportive of them, but as the ultimate decision maker, our decision has to be seen to be the best for our beloved nation.

Madam Speaker, the delinking of the Great Council of Chiefs to the President and subsequently from the Native Land Trust Board, has led to shifting ownership rights to Government, who despite having an indigenous Fijian leadership frontage, is actually a foreign invasion.

The distribution of wealth from TLTB lease money is a mockery as the whole system respects the rights of our chiefs in the *iTaukei* traditional structure, and I urge this Government to recognise their inalienable right to lead our people. Madam Speaker, my province of Serua with 78,787 hectares of land is endowed with indigenous and exotic forest resources, and I urge the Government to introduce income generating projects for their utilisation. This may include training in the art so that our people may be able to utilise their skills and help sustain them financially. On that note, the Government is to seriously consider developing existing roads like the Nabukelevu stretch to assist and open up these developments.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, I would ask the Government to think of improving the Deuba Road due to the heavy traffic that frequents that stretch as well as the students and community who travel through it daily.

Madam Speaker, Waivunu Sawmill was closed by the Interim Government and this closure has trickled down to the families of all those who were employed with concomitant adverse effects on their children's education and the courses of development. These workers from the said sawmill which is now lying in waste now have no employment and, is Government serious in its effort of providing sustainable living to the people of this country? With the introduction of income generating projects, I urge this Government to reopen the Waivunu Sawmill as the area also boasts of the huge mahogany resources planted in that area. Waivunu Sawmill is now lying in waste and workers are now unemployed.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, not only have the rights of trade unions of Fiji been compromised but it has almost become an offence to merely air your views in circumstances that were usually acceptable in our past free democracies. We can thank Government for some adjustments but, Madam Speaker, the fact is that it has been too busy moving forward, thus sacrificing the true quality of service they had promised.

Unions are being compromised for their right to collective bargaining curtailed by Decrees, and we are thankful for the reintroduction of the check off system which has given us much breathing space. I spent the last 4 years serving our members of the Fijian Teachers Association. This is a Union saddled with the responsibility of providing the welfare support in terms of loans and other benefits which should have been the social obligation of the Government. It is our hope that this Government reactivates the check off system this week and hope that it also brings back the Tripartite Forum and activates the Wages Council.

Honourable Prime Minister, honourable Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and honourable Members, I have not come to bury Caesar but to praise him, thus I have come with good intentions to express only the truth so that in the process, if taken positively, can be instruments of change that will help Fiji and Fijians on a positive note.

The freedom of our media is a mockery of our democracy. The Fiji Times decided to withdraw by not printing what SODELPA had raised regarding the flag design for fear of its license being terminated. The fact that the Fiji Times would not publish SODELPA flag material is a clear sign that Parliamentary democracy does not exist in Fiji and that the Government still controls the Press.

(Laughter)

An essential element in a parliamentary democracy is a responsible free press. This is just another piece of evidence of the continuation of authoritarian government acting behind an image of parliamentary democracy. Double standards in media licences, new inclusions of the cross carriage section in the Media Decree without consultations, targeted to empower some media companies to the detriment of others, cannot be accepted as an authentic and credible move.

Fiji has opened its doors to new untested partners and in the process, weakened connections with trusted allies who have withstood the transformation of time. This is also a valid case for concern. I plead for cautiousness with great deal of respect for India and China, so we can leverage on a win-win situation, bearing in mind the big craters that have sprung up in Bua recently.

The changing of curriculum which took over eight years to build up, from a child-centred system back to a teacher-centred exam oriented system, reverses our education integrity in terms of international standing. This is because over the years, we had been aligning our standards to international best practices,

for example, scaling, and now without justification, new modifications have been introduced and yet to be tested.

The coverage of the syllabus in two terms without taking into consideration its impact on the students in terms of learning, is ill-conceived and should have been studied thoroughly and discussed widely before implementation. Syllabus are prepared on a 12 monthly basis and into weeks and days, and to cover these in two terms, is quite a big task for our teachers. Teachers will need all the help they can get in order to be successful with their students.

The issue of zoning (PART 2 - Section 3 of the Education Act) is quite specific. People should be educated according to the wishes of their parents. The choice of schools is at their discretion and since this is a free country, why confine them to institutions not according to their wishes? Therefore, if they wish to send their children to QVS, RKS or ACS, then so be it, and after all, it is their choice which is of paramount importance and there is no point in saying “unreasonable expenditure on Government”, as these parents are willing to pay. The Teachers Appeal Board Section 22(3) of the Education Act, specifies how this is done and I urge the honourable Minister to seriously consider this issue.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, teachers’ salaries and likewise, other civil servants, have not been adjusted since 2006, to match with the realities of contemporary increases in inflation and cost of living, and we hope that the honourable Minister for Education will consider including this in his next budget preparation. The Ministry of Education is applying pressure and demanding excellence, and not appreciating the huge contributions in the education of the students of this country, and I urge the Government and especially the Ministry, to bring up the salaries of teachers by way of a pay rise.

Madam Speaker, it is also worth noting that my province is, at the moment, inadequately served as far as health issues are concerned. The whole of the province can only boast of two health centres. The Galoa Nursing Station, has one nurse serving five villages and 10 settlements with a population of 3,048, which is indeed, a very huge task to carry out. Therefore, I call for more access to health facilities within these communities by either the provision of new centres or the expansion of the Galoa Station to a four-bed hospital with a doctor which will make health services easily available and cheaper in terms of costs. Taxi fare from Navua to Galoa is \$23 one way and to go as far as Naimelimeli where the hospital is located, is costly to the taxpayers of this country.

Madam Speaker, my main issue today is that the rules of the game has been set. Indigenous Fijians need resources and assistance in as far as education is concerned. Scholarships which were available through FAB and Multi-Ethnic for our fellow Fijians, should be brought back and its structure reviewed in terms of awarding them. Every student comes from differing backgrounds and their ability to achieve is very much dependent on the results of their examinations and, therefore, FAB to be brought back. Toppers Scholarship and merit should also come under the microscope in terms of awarding them to students.

The people who sell their produce in Navua, Madam Speaker, deserve better facilities, and have raised their concerns in meetings but no one wants to hear about it. May I ask the Government to provide the necessary shelter for people to sell their produce. In conclusion, Madam Speaker, similarly now an announcement has been made for the changing of the national flag, even before an actual debate in Parliament ensued. Recently, we have equally turned our backs on the ratification of UNCAT, and there are still many more, but I do not have the time and space.

For the people of Fiji and my SODELPA Party, I say that I am here to fight for the truth, freedom, justice and democracy.

May God Bless Fiji.

(Acclamation)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I, again, warmly welcome our two new Parliamentarians into Parliament, and also welcome their families who are here this morning.

MINUTES

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, before I move to confirm the Minutes of the last sitting, let me congratulate our Fiji Team for the win and bringing the name and fame to our beloved nation.

(Applause)

At the local scene, Madam Speaker, let me also congratulate Labasa for winning the Fiji FACT.

(Applause)

Madam Speaker, I beg to move:

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Friday, 20th March, 2015, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

New Zealand Parliamentary Delegation

MADAM SPEAKER.- I welcome you all to today's sitting. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the delegation from the New Zealand Parliament, who will be with us today and tomorrow. In particular, I welcome the Speaker of the New Zealand Parliament, the Right Honourable David Carter, who has joined me up here. I am reciprocating the same honour he bid to me when I visited his Parliament. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to have you here in our Parliament.

In accompanying the honourable Speaker, we have the:

- 1) Honourable Phil Goff, who is a Member of Parliament;
- 2) Honourable Mark Mitchell, a Member of Parliament;
- 3) Ms. Mary Harris, Clerk to Parliament; and
- 4) Mr. Daniel Tasker, Parliament Relations and Policy Officer.

(Acclamation)

This reciprocal visit by the New Zealand Parliament follows a visit to Wellington earlier this year by a delegation from the Fiji Parliament. These visits are a visible sign of the growing link and friendship between our respective Parliaments.

I also extend a welcome to all of you joining us in the public gallery and those watching proceedings on television and the internet, as well as listening on the radio. We are grateful for your interest in today's proceedings.

I also wish to inform Members that the reports on the study visits to the Australian Parliaments and the New Zealand Parliament are available for your information in the Library and on the website.

Now, on the population message; reports show that every day, nearly 8,000 newborns and 800 mothers die of causes related to pregnancy, child birth and complications during the first month of life. In addition, more than 7,300 babies are stillborn every day, a death just when a parent expects to welcome a new life.

In Fiji, there is a current ratio of one midwife to 2,500 women. The target of reducing this to four midwives to 2,500 women in the next five years as announced by the Ministry of Health, is indeed encouraging. We also need stronger health systems to ensure health care is accessible to all, especially those living in rural communities and more than anything, winning greater political will and commitment to ensure that the health of mothers and children is a top priority for our Government.

I thank you.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

MPI – Department of Agriculture – Annual Report 2011 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 15 of 2015*)

Agriculture – Annual Report 2012 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 16 of 2015*)

Ministry of Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation – Annual Report 2013
(*Parliamentary Paper No. 18 of 2015*)

Ministry of Industry and Trade Annual Report, 2013 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 20 of 2015*)

Fijian Electoral Commission Annual Report, 2014 (*Parliamentary Paper No. of 2015*).

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS

Report of the Public Accounts Committee

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you. Madam Speaker, honourable Prime Minister, honourable Leader of the Opposition, I rise to table the first Public Accounts Committee Report of the new Fiji Parliament. Madam Speaker, before I do that, allow me to congratulate our Fiji Team and thank them for a fine performance against New Zealand. They have done us immensely proud and have qualified for the Rio Summer Olympics. Not only that, Madam Speaker, the team described as ‘innovators of Sevens’ by rugby commentators convincingly won the Glasgow Sevens early this morning, hosted in Scotland which is known as the ‘Inventors of Sevens’. I am hopeful that when we gather here next Monday, Madam Speaker, we will celebrate the crowning of Fiji as the World Sevens Series Champions after the completion of the London Sevens.

Madam Speaker, the tabling of the Report is the start of clearing a backlog of over 20 outstanding reports from the Independent Auditor-General’s Office since 2007. All these Reports, including this one, Madam Speaker, will test our new systems of accountability. As hard as going over the past corruption and past financial mismanagement is, we should not forget that this is the actual point of parliamentary democracy. There is no easy way around this track other than making sure that we comprehensively deal with all the issues raised by the Auditor-General over the past decade in the most transparent where

possible. And, that is exactly what the Public Accounts Committee has attempted to do in this first Report, released for public viewing today.

At this point, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my Deputy Chair, honourable Balmindar Singh, Government Whip, honourable Semi Koroilavesau, Government Member, honourable Sanjeet Patel, and my own fellow Opposition Member, honourable Aseri Radrodro. This bipartisanship has been important and the House should take confidence that the 33 Recommendations in this first Report, Madam Speaker were unanimous.

I also want to thank the Auditor-General's Office, the Ministry of Finance officials, and many other representatives of different agencies that were called before the Committee to answer public questions, in all its hearing from last year until January this year. In most cases, Madam Speaker, I can say that this was done very diligently and answers were given as best as they could, and this was very much appreciated by the Committee.

I also want to thank the Committee Secretariat for their efficient servicing of the Committee, and that is both acknowledged and appreciated.

Madam Speaker, I invite all parliamentary colleagues and interested Fijians to take time and read this 36-page Report and to reflect upon it. Its two primary recommendations are to the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption, to get on with the job of investigating and resolving all past corruption allegations made by the Auditor-General from 2007 to 2009, and to the Ministry of Finance to work much harder in addressing 29 systematic failures within the wider public service.

Madam Speaker, as the country makes a welcome return to Parliamentary democracy, this Report shines a poor light on past practice, past corruption and past system failures.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- In 2015, this should provide further evidence....

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Please, table the Report. We will have further debate on this Report at a later Sitting.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, let me just conclude...

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- ... that the Committee looks forward to the current Government response, with the Standing Order requirements of 60 days, and we do hope that the response is delivered with the same good faith with which this first Public Accounts Report was written.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move a motion:

That a debate on the contents of the report is initiated at a future sitting.

HON. B. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, I rise to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I reckon the Fiji Sevens achievement this morning will continue to reverberate in this Parliament, and on behalf of Fiji, honourable Speaker and Members of the New Zealand delegation, we offer our commiserations. But, thank you for bringing the good luck to Fiji when you arrived yesterday.

QUESTIONS & REPLIES

Oral Questions

Conduct of Municipal Elections (Question No. 68/2015)

HON. M.D. BULITAVU asked the Government, upon notice:

Would the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources inform Parliament as to:

- (i) What was the approved quantity of bauxite ore which Aurum Exploration (Fiji) Ltd was allowed to extract;
- (ii) its total anticipated dollar value; and
- (iii) the progress of payments to landowners for its extraction,

as in accordance with the agreement between the Aurum Exploration (Fiji) Ltd, the landowning the *mataqali* and the Fiji Government?

HON. M. VUNIWAQA (Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources).- Madam Speaker, I rise to answer the question that has been asked.

The first part of the question refers to an approved quantity and the amount that the Company is allowed to extract. There might be some misunderstanding there, Madam Speaker. There is no quota on the amount of ore that can be extracted by that Company or any mining company for that matter. Mining leases, when they are given, do not impose a quota and I do not know of any other jurisdiction that imposes a quota on the extraction of ore. The total anticipated dollar value of the bauxite, I can say for certain that the cost per tonne of bauxite extracted is on the dollar value of \$US80.00 per tonne. The total anticipated value, there was a pre-mining estimate that was carried out prior to the start of mining. The Ministry and the Company are currently working together to reach the amount as close as possible of the real amount of extraction of bauxite that was done. So, at this date, there is no firm conclusion to that study. Once that study has been carried out properly, the company and Government will be looking at tally records that was done throughout the extraction to determine this amount. It is only then that we can state for certain what the value was.

The third part of the question is on the progress of payments to landowners for the extraction. For the Nawailevu South Mine, the extraction has finished in that mine and the mine is currently going through rehabilitation programme. The premium and the rent payable to-date for the surface lease has been paid. The access to the mining site and the camp site lease and premium have been paid. The quarry and stockpile site lease and premium have been paid. Fishing rights compensation for the jetty has been paid. Rock royalty to the Mataqali Nalutu has been paid.

For the Nawailevu North Mine which is currently undergoing operations, premium and rent payable to date have been paid and the access lease premium and rent payable to date have been paid. Payments yet to be accessed by the landowners would be the future generation fund and royalties in relation to the extraction.

There are certain issues in relation to the setting up of trust funds in the relevant *mataqalis*, relevant trustee issues which we are currently working through with the trustees to sort that out before the *maqatali* will be able to access those funds.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, supplementary question - the honourable Mosese Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you Madam Speaker. It is quite surprising that there is no provision for the allowable quota to extract minerals as stated by the honourable Minister this morning but according to the Memorandum of Lease 18 (262) of 2011 ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM- Question!

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I'm coming there.

... the maximum volume of soil and rocks that is supposed to be shipped out of Fiji is one million tonnes. After a third party confirmation from Customs 1,287,843.7 tonnes was shipped out of Fiji. How did this happen? From the tallyman in Nawailevu right to the wharf...

HON. J. USAMATE.- Question!

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I am coming to that. Listen I am coming to that.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Can you come to the question.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, given that it obviously exceeds the volume of the agreed soil and rocks extracted from Nawailevu, how can the honourable Minister be sure that the same practice is not repeated in other places where mining will take place? This company is now moving to Dreketi, Madam Speaker and ...

MADAM SPEAKER.- Is that a question?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- ... the State has been robbed and even the landowners are robbed.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Point of order.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- What measures are in place?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the supplementary question is precisely that, as it suggests - a supplementary question. We have already had two questions in a whole raft of statements being made.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, supplementary question?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you can I ask the honourable Minister to respond to the first supplementary question?

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- I reiterate Madam Speaker, the amounts that are in the lease are anticipated amounts. They are estimates that were made prior to the starting of the lease.

Just to rationalise the question, Madam Speaker, how can we tell how much ore is in the ground?

(Chorus of interjections – Opposition Members)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Please continue honourable Member.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- The lease was signed prior to the mining and an anticipated estimate is in that Agreement. Government and the company, with the landowners who are part of the tally team, are working together now to establish as closely as possible the exact amount that was extracted, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question from the honourable Lalabalavu.

HON. RATU N. T. LALABALAVU.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Minister for her reply regarding parts two and three of the question, and also the explanation given by the Madam Minister that the first mining site has already been done with and completed, and they are working on rehabilitation. But in view of parts two and three of the question, Madam Speaker, can the honourable Minister explain the royalty payment that is supposed to be part of the total income that should accrue to the landowners? Because the honourable Prime Minister and the honourable and learned Attorney General often boast about the Constitution having this royalty issue inbuilt into the Constitution, but here we are; we have reached the rehabilitation stage and no royalty has been paid. No royalty formula has been presented to this House.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- I thank the honourable Member for the question. Just to clarify there are three royalties that are payable to landowners.

One, is the rock royalty which I said has already been paid.

Two, is soil royalty. Soil royalty like the bauxite itself - there was an estimate prior to the start of mining. Yes, the mining has finished for the first mine, but I invite the honourable Members to visit. Most of it is still being stockpiled at the jetty area. I have already stated the Ministry and the Company, with the inclusion of landowners and the tally team, are currently working together to establish as closely as possible the amount of bauxite, out of which that calculation will also throw out the amount of soil that is with the bauxite. Once that is determined the soil royalty can then be calculated. For the rock royalty and soil royalty, the rates that are payable to the landowners are included in the Laws of Fiji. The *iTaukei* Land Trust (Gravel Regulations) already set out in the law how much those royalties will be per cubic meter.

Three, royalty is the ore royalty. This is a new inclusion in Section 30 of the Constitution.

Under Section 30 Government is now mandated to give a fair share of that royalty to landowners and Government will do that.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear! Hear!

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- At the moment those royalties payable are being held in trust by the Department of Mineral Resources. The landowners will be consulted together with all Fijians; public consultations will be carried out before we reach a formula on what a fair share is.

Section 30 already sets out specific factors that need to be taken into account when calculating fair share. Again, Section 30 mandates that a written law be written in relation to what a fair share is. Until that is done only then can distribution of this royalty be done by the Ministry.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the honourable Ruveni Nadalo.

HON. R.N. NADALO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the honourable Minister explain if all these royalties have been paid to landowners, if not why not?

MADAM SPEAKER.- The honourable Minister.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, I believe I have just answered that question.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you and the last supplementary question. I invite the honourable Aseri Radrodro to have the floor.

HON.A. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to ask a supplementary question.

According to the Memorandum of Agreement the payment of land royalty was supposed to be paid in advance from the date it started. It is surprising to note that the fair share of royalty is yet to be paid. According to the

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- They don't have a formula

HON. A. RADRODRO.- No, they are still looking for a formula.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Could I have your question, please?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The question that I would like to ask is, when will this fair share be paid out to the landowners, especially when the agreement says that is has to be paid without demand for a period of three years from the commencement of the mining start date?

HON. J. USAMATE.- There are two questions.

MADAM SPEAKER.- You are limited to just one question.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The question is; when is the payment going to be done?

MADAM SPEAKER.- I will ask the honourable Minister to respond to that question.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, I am starting to feel that there is an invisible sound proof wall right here, because I have just explained the reasons why the royalties have yet to be paid. It is being held in trust by Government until Section 30 factors are taken into account.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Landowners have been informed, you should.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Please continue, honourable Minister.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- I invite honourable Members, Madam Speaker, to please read Section 30 of the Constitution and what amendments there are.

MADAM SPEAKER.- In my view, the question has been adequately answered.

Employment of officers with previous criminal convictions in the Public Service
(Question No. 69/2015)

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO asked the Government, upon notice:

Could the honourable Minister inform this House as to whether people with a criminal conviction (previous conviction) can be employed in the Public Service?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney General and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications). – Thank you Madam Speaker. I thank the honourable Member for his question. The long and short of the answer is yes.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO. –A supplementary question. Can the honourable Minister inform this august House as to how many people have the Government engaged in this regard?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM – Madam Speaker, the Standing Orders actually say that if statistical information is required, it is generally done by way of a written question. So the honourable Member wants to have a written question on statistics, we can do that, but also, Madam Speaker, let me just state and refer the honourable Members from the other side of the House that they need to read the Constitution, because Madam Speaker, let me elaborate, the Constitution of the Republic Fiji says under Section 26 (it is not theatrics - it is facts) says:

1. “A person must not be unfairly discriminated against, directly or indirectly on a whole range of issues including supposed personal characteristics or circumstances or social status”

2. Madam Speaker, Constitution of the Republic of Fiji under Section 123 states:

“The values and principles of the States Service include:

- a) high standards of professionalism, including professional ethics and integrity;
- b) prompt and faithful implementation on the Government policies, administration of laws;
- c) being free from corruption (some people may not necessarily qualify in Fiji);
- d) efficient and effective and economic use of public resources;
- e) prompt response to requests and questions from the public, and delivery of service to the public in a manner that is respectful, effective, impartial, fair and equitable;
- f) accountability for administrative conduct;
- g) transparency, including:
 - (i) timely, accurate disclosure of information to the public; and
 - (ii) prompt, complete and candid reporting to Parliament, as required by law;
- h) cultivation of good human resource management and career development practices to maximise human potential; and
- i) recruitment and promotion based on -
 - (i) objectivity, impartiality and fair competition; and
 - (ii) ability, education, experience and other characteristics of merit.”

Madam Speaker, let me also refer the honourable Member to a particular law which I think the Opposition is not aware of - the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Irrelevant Convictions Act 1997).

Under Section 7 of that Act, it says:

“An employer cannot refuse to employ any person by reasons solely of the existence of the irrelevant conviction of that person.”

Now what is an irrelevant conviction? An irrelevant conviction says:

“For the purpose of this Act, the conviction is irrelevant if anywhere there is no direct relationship between that conviction and the particular matter in respect of which it is sought to take the conviction into account.”

So for example, you do not put somebody who has stolen money previously into the accounts division or as a cashier; you do not put somebody who may have stolen as a lawyer to be the Attorney-General; you do not put someone who may have, for example been convicted for dangerous driving and put them as a Land Transport Authority officer. That is the relevancy, of the conviction to the job that the person has actually applied for.

Now, it also says (I am talking about direct relationship), what is direct relationship? This law is actually, notwithstanding the fact that there were some lapses in terms of the drafting, it has actually got very good principles behind it.

A direct relationship is between a conviction and any matter in respect of which it is sought to take that conviction into account, if the fact of that conviction means that there is a real likelihood that the person against whom the conviction was entered will in relation to that matter be unreliable, untrustworthy or otherwise unsatisfactory or commit a further offence.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Point of Order.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - That Madam Speaker is what needs to be taken into account. I am answering the question...

(chorus of interjections from Opposition Members)

...they have asked me, when can a person be employed by the Civil Service?

MADAM SPEAKER. – Thank you, let us take the point of order before we continue.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. – Sure.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALVU. – Madam Speaker, I think the answer being given by the honourable and learned Attorney-General is irrelevant, because the supplementary question was only to do with - can a list be provided? That is all. Now he is going on with trying to educate us with the Constitution.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. – Madam Speaker, the honourable Member wanted a list of all previous criminal conviction. The reasons why I am highlighting the law also is because under this Act, there is also a rehabilitation period, where people’s previous convictions get wiped off after 10 years. So, my ability to provide a list – there is also privacy issues - of persons is obviously going against the law. If someone who has been convicted of an offence 15 years ago, is now in the Civil Service, I cannot say that this person was convicted 15 years ago. I already gave the answer, Madam Speaker, and I say that it must come by a way of a written question.

I think Madam Speaker, the problem is this, the honourable Members of the Opposition actually have a specific question, but they are not asking it directly.

(Laughter)

MADAM SPEAKER. – Thank you honourable Ratu Nanovo, you will submit your question that requires statistical information in writing and that will be provided.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI. – Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise to ask a supplementary question. It is so good to hear the honourable and learned Attorney-General trying to use up the time to tell us something that we already know.

(Laughter)

But let me go back, Madam Speaker, to the values he was referring to because those are the values that should be followed according to the Constitution as there are brains behind those who have written that.

Also in Section 127, which provides the appointing authority to those in the Ministry in the Public Service.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Can we have the question, please?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Section 123(1), Madam Speaker, it says “high standards of professionalism, including professional ethics and integrity.” This is what I would like the honourable and learned Attorney-General to explain. What does he understand about “high standard professionalism and integrity”, whether that also includes the employment of those who already have been criminally convicted.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, we do not understand the question because it is supposed to be a supplementary question to the substantive question but high standards of professionalism, including professional ethics and integrity do not necessarily have a correlation in terms of you being able to employ someone who has had a criminal conviction. As I explained, this is why I was taking the time to explain because they do need to be able to understand the rationale behind these issues. There are particular laws, Madam Speaker, that address these issues.

The Constitution, Madam Speaker, you see again, it is really quite perplexing because I am feeling like I am addressing a group of school children,...

(Chorus of laughter by Government Members)

... because it really feels like that. I mean jokes aside, it really does feel like that, because they do not read the Constitution, they are always looking for something, “oh I can do this, I can do that”. They are not looking at it holistically, they are not reading all the laws that are relevant, as everybody knows, the Constitution provides the architecture, the legal framework of any country, you have laws that actually beef that up, that is what they need to do, they need to understand that.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, the honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the honourable Minister, the supplementary question is, if people have been convicted, the Public Service Commission or public service requirement, is there a stand-down period before they are re-engaged in the Public Service?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Again, I refer, Madam Speaker, the honourable Member to the particular law that talks about the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Irrelevant Convictions) Act 1987, that sets out the general premise in terms of when you can employ a person and under what circumstances you can or you cannot. That addresses the issue. In terms of whether it is six months or one year, that is irrelevant.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will now move on to our third oral question and I invite the honourable Mosese Bulitavu to ask his question.

Work Done by Pacific Technologies Ltd
(Question No. 70/2015)

HON. M.D. BULITAVU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable and learned Attorney-General and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications inform the House as to what is the work done by the company Pacific Technologies Ltd based at the Government ICT; how much has been paid so far for services rendered, and when are they expected to complete work?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Attorney-General and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. Thank you, Madam Speaker. There is no Government entity called Government ICT.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. In the absence of any other supplementary questions, we will move on to the fourth oral question and I invite the honourable Ruveni Nadalo to ask his question.

Work Progress on Capital Works for the Hydrology
Flood Forecasting Unit – Department of Meteorology
(Question No. 71/2015)

HON. R.N. NADALO.- Madam Speaker, I now withdraw the question under my name. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will now move on to the next question by the honourable Brij Lal, to ask the Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration.

Improvement of Passport Services – Department of Immigration
(Question No. 72/2015)

HON. DR. B. LAL asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration inform this august House on the measures that have been taken by the Department of Immigration to improve the provision of passport services to our people?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration, you have the floor.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA (Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration).- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for the question. For now, the timeline for processing a new applicant is about five days, this used to be 15 to 20 days, and for urgent needs, it can be processed in one day with a cost of about \$190, or for a mutilated book, or a replacement, it is about \$340.

The checklist for the requirements of the passport had been minimised and reviewed with the checklist and has been disseminated to all the centres in Fiji, and also in Missions abroad.

We have already opened the Labasa office so that the people in the North can have access to the facility. In all, we have the Savusavu office, the Nadi office, the Lautoka office and we intend to also have an office in Taveuni and also in Rakiraki in the near future.

The Department has been actively involved in carrying out passport awareness in Government organised Road Shows and also in *Tikina* Council Meetings, to educate the public of the requirements required in order to apply for a passport.

We are also conducting internal training for customer services within the Department of Immigration, in order to educate them on new ways of meeting the requirements of the customers. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, honourable Lt. Col. Netani Rika.

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Can the honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration, explain if there are plans in place to print passport from outer stations around the country? Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration.

HON. CAPT. T. L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, there is ongoing consultation to enhance machine readable zone in the current passport and the introduction of new security features align to the ICO, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, where the chip has been included in the passport, to get all the information regarding the person and also other countries in the world, these people go through a smart gate instead of personal interview, so that it makes it faster for the services. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you honourable Minister. Supplementary question, the honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU. K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, I rise to address the question to the honourable Minister of Defence, National Security and Immigration. Commendable is the accessibility of the provision of passports locally. It is also noted that this service is available for overseas people who require double citizenry, dual citizenry in accessing passports.

My question is, can the honourable Minister assure this House the security of availing this provision of this dual citizenship in these passports in regards to the security of the nation, especially the global threats of ISIS. As you know, Australia, New Zealand, as well as Irian Jaya are prone to these threats and hopefully, they will put in measures to safeguard our nation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, I give the floor to the Minister for Defence.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, the question is not a supplementary question, it is a totally new question. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Any supplementary questions?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I rise on a Point of Order under Standing Order 124, Madam Speaker, in regards to the Business Committee. My question, which is No. 70 of 2015 came to the Business Committee on Friday, 8th May, Madam Speaker. Why did the Business Committee then, when the question came to the honourable and learned Attorney-General, not state that he needed further clarification on this question, instead of leaving it here to be asked? Is it just to prevent the question?

I request that the question be taken back to the Business Committee. It is the ITC, just a typing error.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You read it!

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- No, you read it. In the Business Committee, you allowed this question.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, order.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- It questions your integrity!

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order. It is very clear now, that we will have to refer the question under security of passports internationally, that can be resubmitted in another question at a later date. I think, right now, we need to have a bit of relaxation and we will break for tea. The sitting is now suspended until 11.30 a.m., when we will return to continue. I thank you, honourable Members.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.55 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.35 a.m.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I have an announcement to make. I would like to advise the House that I have been informed that due to ill health, the honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament, honourable Lt. Col. Pio Tikoduadua, has resigned from Parliament. I am sure honourable Members on all sides will join with me in wishing honourable Lt. Col. Tikoduadua all the best at this time. Thank you.

We will now move onto the sixth oral question for today, and I invite the Hon. Balmindar Singh to ask his question.

QUESTIONS & REPLIES

National Women's Expo 2015
(Question No. 73/2015)

HON. B. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to ask Question No. 73 of 2015 under my name directed to the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation.

Could the honourable Minister please enlighten this House on the Government's allocation of \$500,000 towards the National Women's Expo 2015, as follows:

- (i) What are the Ministry's plans for this year's expo; and
- (ii) How will the women benefit from this expo?

MADAM SPEAKER - Thank you. I invite the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation to take the floor.

HON. R.S. AKBAR (Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation).- Madam Speaker I rise to answer the question posed by the honourable Member. There are three parts to the question. One is, enlightening the House on Government's allocation of \$500,000 towards National Women's Expo 2015. The plans that the Ministry has in place, and of course, the benefits that the Expo will have for women across the country.

If I may inform the House, the first National Women's Expo was held in 2014 and the main objectives of the Expo is basically to encourage collective action, to recognise and celebrate women's talents and in addition, it is also to connect women's products to local and international markets, as well as to market quality products of women artisan to qualify for Fijian made labelling.

The 2014 Women's Expo, we had 448 women's group participating in this National Expo and all in all, they raked in an earnings of close to \$133,000 in monetary gains. If I may inform the House, the Eastern Division Women's Group collected the highest earning.

The plans for this year, Madam Speaker, in preparation for the National Expo, we are organising divisional craft shows and these craft shows are organised in partnership with the Ministry for Industry, Tourism and Trade and the Fiji Arts Council and of course with the Ministry of Health. The Fiji Arts Council is partnering with us in trying to select winners from the four divisions in terms of handicrafts and other craft wears, whereas the Ministry for Health is partnering with us in selecting winners for quality products in terms of jam, pickles and other home made products.

This year's National Expo has again been given a budget of \$500,000 and the theme for this year is "Connecting Women to Markets and Making it Happen" which is coinciding with the International Women's Day celebrations in October. The second women's expo will be held from the 14–16 October this year and it will be held in Suva. We are currently in the process of acquiring an Events Co-ordinator to help us organise the expo, as well as to assist us in our divisional craft shows. The winners of the divisional craft shows will be sponsored by the Ministry, whereby their fares, accommodation and food will be looked after by the Ministry while they will be in Suva.

Madam Speaker, if we look at the other plans, again we are working tirelessly with relevant stakeholders, corporate bodies in ensuring that we take this year's expo to a higher level and of course, join women to produce products which will qualify for the Fijian Made logo. The whole point here is to ensure that women are able to gain better value for their products.

In terms of benefits that the expo will have, of course the expo will provide a secure platform for women to showcase their talents through products sold and access market opportunities. Furthermore, during the expo, we will be holding many side events such as financial literacy training, free medical check-ups, self-development and empowerment workshops. We are also trying to further our rocket stove making in this expo, sewing machine maintenance training and other empowerment programmes that will greatly benefit women during the three day event. Currently we have 1,702 registered women's clubs with the Department and are hoping that this expo will provide an opportunity for these women's groups from all across the country to be part of this expo and of course the monetary benefit will be the major draw card for this year's event.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, there have been testimonies of women going back to their villages and islands buying roofing irons, timber, other essential items for the wellbeing of their families and children back home, so we envisaged that this year's expo will be much bigger and better in terms of increased sales of products and more so in expecting better products from our rural women. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER - Thank you. Supplementary question, honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the honourable Minister explain their return on investment considering the \$500,000 which the Ministry is going to be spending on this expo and that only \$133,000 was collected by the various women's groups in last year's Expo? So, in terms of business economic analysis, it is not a viable event, it is less than 50 per cent considering the \$500,000 that was spent. Why is the Department repeating the event this year when you have explicitly mentioned that it's a non-economic viable event considering the \$500,000 spent and the \$133,000 net value return on that investment? Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- The honourable Minister for Women.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the honourable Member for the question. All in all, Madam Speaker we talk about women's empowerment, of course, there is always the question of return on investment. If the honourable Member had been listening to what I said, last year, the National Women's Expo was held for the first time. Of course lessons were learnt and based on those lessons we are organising divisional craft shows. We are selecting women, up-skilling them through the Fiji Arts Council and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism to ensure that the products developed for this year's National Expo are quality, export driven products and the skills training are still ongoing and we are working with the divisions to ensure that the products produced for display and sale at this year's National Expo are of quality and are branded *Fijian made*. Thank you.

HON. L. EDEN. - Supplementary question, Madam Speaker. In light of the last answer, could the honourable Minister please inform us whether she intends for this event to become an annual event?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON R.S. AKBAR- Definitely yes. We will have another expo next year and the whole point is to continue with the plans and projects. If I can mention here, the honourable Prime Minister

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Waste of taxpayer's money.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- That is for people to think, I do not think so because when we go around listening to women, Madam Speaker, women are very receptive to these things that we are doing to them. We cannot just look at one-off gain or loss, we will have to continue with these projects to ensure that we fully penetrate the market or the women's groups that we have around the country. Of course, when we look at these projects, Madam Speaker, there are various challenges; remoteness of islands, access to markets. So this the approach the Ministry is taking and of course we will have it next year too.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, the honourable Leader of Opposition?

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA - Supplementary question, honourable Speaker, to the Minister. Last week we had a meeting of women where there were up to a hundred women present from our province. Some of the arts and crafts that they were involved in could be considered non-traditional arts and crafts. I noted from the honourable Minister's response that there was going to be a divisional craft show in the various divisions. My request to the honourable Minister will be to ensure that those who are running these divisional shows are looking at other crafts to widen its scope like welding. I noticed in last weekend's papers that there are women also involved in welding arts and crafts like candle sticks and that was published.

Also, some of them are working with tiling, mosaic, stepping stone, so that when it comes to the national one, that the divisional ones are also looking at these and they do not confine it just to arts and crafts.

The second part to that question is connecting with the markets, if the honourable Minister can also ensure that there are advisors on hand to listen to some of the concerns that women who are marketing perishable items in the Suva and Nausori markets are also catered for when they have these divisional meetings. Thank you honourable Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER - Thank you honourable Minister. There were no questions, they were requests made so I will not ask for a response to that. Thank You.

Written Questions

Total Costs Incurred – Changing Fiji Flag (Question No. 74/2015)

MADAM SPEAKER.- The first written question by the honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua to ask his written question.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I ask question number 74 of 2015 as was listed in today's Order Paper.

MADAM SPEAKER.- - The honourable Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei and Sugar Industry.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Madam Minister, I will table my answer at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Orders 45 (3). *Vinaka*.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

Information - Toppers Scholarship Scheme
(Question No. 75/2015)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, can I raise a Point of Order in accordance with Standing Order 124(5) in regards to this question? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER -Written question?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO- Madam Speaker, I am raising a Point of Order in accordance with Standing Order 124(5) in regards to this written question.

Madam Speaker, I submitted the question to the honourable Minister for Education because we had written letters on the 2nd and 11th March respectively, requesting information on the Toppers Scholarship distribution list in terms of names, schools and division to which a response has not been received until to-date.

This question had gone to the Business Committee and there was a unanimity in the Committee having my question re-worded or amended. Under sub-section 124(5) of the Standing Order states that the Committee does not take away the powers of this House regarding the business of this House. I therefore request you, Madam Speaker if I can read out this question.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Salote Radrodro. The Business Committee has a made a decision on this question and it has to be tabled as a written question and the answer will be provided to you accordingly. Thank you.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 124(5), it clearly states Madam Speaker, "... Powers of the Business Committee do not limit or affect the powers of the Speaker and Parliament..."

So if it is your ruling that it is to be deferred to the Committee, Parliament has not decided, you put the question to Parliament.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Just a comment on that. Actually it is not only Parliament, it is the Speaker also.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Draunidalo, as you are a member of the Business Committee, you are well aware of what transpired with regards to this question and the decision that had been made on this and we will stand by that decision.

We will provide a written response to the honourable Salote Radrodro. We are aware that you had asked this question before, but the honourable Minister for Education will provide you with a written answer.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 124(5), is it your ruling that the interpretation of that section is only you will make the decision on the issue and Parliament is to be disregarded? I am just helping my colleague out because we get quite a lambasting when questions do not get through the Business Committee. So there is this subsection of the Standing

Orders and we are asking you, Madam Speaker, to exercise your powers in interpreting that subsection which states that it does not take away your powers, you have exercised your powers, and you will put the question to the Parliament whether the question can be asked or not? Clearly the Standing Orders states that the Business Committee cannot take away your power in the House nor the Parliament's. You have exercised yours, can the House exercise its power now?

MADAM SPEAKER.- The honourable Attorney-General?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the honourable Speaker and the Parliament are not two disjointed entities. The Speaker, Madam Speaker, has also control over Parliament. There are obviously certain instances in which the honourable Speaker has the ability and indeed must make various rulings and in this particular case, Madam Speaker, you are also the Chair of the Business Committee in which a particular decision was made. Even if that matter is now being put before the House on this floor, you can also make a ruling because by its very nature, let me read out, "the powers of the Business Committee do not limit or affect the powers of the Speaker and the Parliament to determine which matters may be properly introduced, debated or resolved in Parliament."

In the same way, Madam Speaker, you, for example determine when supplementary questions exceed the supplementary confines. You determine whether a question is out of order or not in the same way, you make the determination on the floor of the House and which is what you can do under Standing Order 124(5).

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you very much. It seems that honourable Members are bringing the Speaker or the authority of this House into the debate, and the Speaker had already made a decision, which is the decision of the House, and that is, the answer to this question will be provided to you in written form.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- A point of order, Madam Speaker. In terms of the question that I had asked the honourable Minister for Women, could we please perhaps, in future when a supplementary question is asked

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order. That question has been dealt with, and we will not return to that question.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker, on that Standing Order 124(5) where the honourable and learned Attorney-General has correctly pointed out

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order. I have already made my ruling on that

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- And your ruling is that the House cannot consider

MADAM SPEAKER.- And my ruling is that, the answer to this question will be provided in written form, as has been answered to.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- That is my point of order, and it refers to the Speaker and Parliament. What about that issue, what is your ruling? Can we have a ruling on that because your ruling is going to stand, not only for our Parliament because we will go, we will get out of here, one day, we will die. What about the next 10 or 20 parliaments, they will abide by your ruling, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER.- I have made my ruling and my ruling is not just the Speaker's but the ruling of the House. I will not entertain any more comments on that particular question.

I do thank you all for the vibrant session that we have just had on the oral question and the question time is now over.

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

MADAM SPEAKER.- The Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration has informed me that he wishes to make a Ministerial Statement under Standing Order 40. I now call upon the honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration.

HON. P. SINGH.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, I understand that in the last Business Committee, we had agreed that any Ministerial Statements, the subject matter will be conveyed to the Opposition one hour before the Ministerial Statement, and I note that as of now, we have not been given that.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Yes, you are right. That decision has been made that the Ministerial Statement is to be provided one hour before and that the Statement will be given to the Opposition Parties before the Sitting. Since that has not been made, then we will have to defer this Statement for a later day during the Sitting.

Honourable Members, on Item 9 of the *Order Paper*, on Motions, I am informed that the Government wishes to postpone the honourable Prime Minister's motion to tomorrow.

That brings us to the end of our sitting today. I thank you all for your discussions and contributions to today's Sitting.

The House is now adjourned to 9.30 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 12.01 p.m.