

THURSDAY, 27TH AUGUST, 2015

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

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All honourable Members were present, except the honourable M.D. Bulitavu; the honourable N. Nawaikula; the honourable A.M. Radrodro; and the honourable B. Singh.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Wednesday, 26th August, 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

Acknowledgment of Viewers

MADAM SPEAKER.- I welcome all honourable Members to another sitting and I also warmly welcome members of the public joining us in the gallery and those watching proceedings on television, internet and listening to the radio. Thank you for taking interest in your Parliament.

Absence from the Chair

For the information of all Members of Parliament, I will be travelling tonight to attend the 10th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament and the 4th World Conference of Speakers in New York. Therefore, the honourable Deputy Speaker will preside over tomorrow's session as well as this afternoon's session.

Professional Development Training - UN Fiji Parliament Support Project Team

Some honourable Members of Parliament have yet to confirm their attendance for the Professional Development Training that the Secretariat in collaboration with the UN Fiji Parliament Support Project Team are organising on (1) Media Skills and (2) Public Speaking, beginning next week on Monday, 31st August, 2015. Please do so with the Secretariat and you are all encouraged to make use of this opportunity to develop and enhance your knowledge on media skills and public speaking.

Ministry of Health - Awareness Session

Honourable Members, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services extends an invitation to a lunch and awareness session on mental health tomorrow, from 12.30 p.m. to 5.15 p.m. This will be held at the Big Committee Room. I encourage all Members to attend.

Prorogation of Parliament

As you were informed yesterday, according to the sitting calendar endorsed by Parliament, Parliament will be prorogued from 7th September, 2015. So, after adjournment tomorrow, we shall not meet here again until the Official State Opening of Parliament on Monday, 14th September, 2015.

As I will not be here tomorrow, I want to thank all honourable Members for their contributions to the proceedings of Parliament over the last year, and I wish you all the very best for the next annual session.

Correction of Statement – Uncorrected Copy of the *Daily Hansard*, Tuesday, 7th July, 2015

Before we move onto the next Item in the Agenda, I had received a written request from the honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport, seeking to clarify the record in relation to a question raised in a previous sitting.

I wish to inform honourable Members that I am allowing the honourable Minister to make his statement to clarify the answer given on that particular day in order to correct the record. I will not, however, allow any further questions on the matter, as it is still before the Courts. Standing Orders 61, 44(13) and 45(4)(e) all make it perfectly clear that Parliament should respect matters that are *sub judice*. I will now invite the honourable Member to make his statement.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, this is in reference to Question No. 148 of 2015 by the honourable Gavoka on 7th July, 2015 in relation to the Compensation For Fire Accident Victims in Nadroga. Madam Speaker, I seek to provide clarification to the answer provided by me on that day. After responding, based on the information provided to me by LTA, I initiated further investigation with the assistance of the Solicitor-General's Office to ascertain the true nature of the claims for compensation by the victims.

Madam Speaker, in 2009 and 2011, a total of 13 separate proceedings were filed in the High Court by the individuals affected by the bus fire accident against Raiwaqa Buses Limited and the driver of the bus.

Madam Speaker, LTA joined in the proceedings as a party. However, given that LTA has indemnity insurance, the proceedings were taken over by the insurance company on behalf of LTA. The name of the insurance company is Lumley General Insurance Limited from New Zealand.

Madam Speaker, the insurance company engaged Munro Leys and entered into a deed of settlement with Raiwaqa Buses Limited under which LTA has been fully indemnified by the Raiwaqa Buses Limited for the amount of \$20,000. This settlement was between LTA and Raiwaqa Buses Limited, it does not undermine the proceedings filed by the victims, who will be compensated for an award that will be determined by the Court.

Madam Speaker, the effect of this is that LTA is fully indemnified by the Raiwaqa Buses Limited and any awards that may be made by the High Court against Raiwaqa Buses will have to be

paid by Raiwaqa Buses Limited. Madam Speaker, therefore, the total amount of compensation to be paid to the victims will be determined by the Court based on facts and law.

QUESTIONS AND REPLIES

Recruitment of Medical Personnel – 2015 Budget (Question No. 191/2015)

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD asked the Government, upon notice:

Will the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services answer the following:

- a) How many doctors, nurses, pharmacists and laboratory technologists have been recruited from the total of \$10.8 million announced in the 2015 Budget and provisioned for such recruitment in 2015; and
- b) The 2015 Budget Estimates (Head 22; Programme 2; Activity 1) states \$4.8 million has been provisioned for the recruitment of 114 doctors in 2015. How many doctors have been recruited?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank honourable Dr. Biman Prasad for his question. The responses are as follows:

- (a) The \$10.8 million that was announced in the 2015 Budget was for 441 new positions created in 2015 which included doctors, nurses, dental staff, laboratory technologists, medical imaging technologists, pharmacists, dieticians, physiotherapists and people working in our stores. As we speak, we have recruited 126 doctors, 238 nurses, 10 laboratory technicians, 12 dieticians, 17 dentists, 4 medical imaging technologists. A total cost of this recruitment currently stands at \$9.6 million.
- (b) A sum of \$4.8 million was for the recruitment of doctors and nurses into the urban hospitals. As we speak, 71 doctors have been recruited at a total cost of \$2.1 million and out of the nurses that were supposed to be recruited under that provision, 215 nurses have also been recruited to work in the urban hospitals.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- A supplementary question; can the honourable Minister brief this House, with the shortage of doctors, how many nursing practitioners were given their Acting Appointments as Medical Officers in the various health centres and also the professional advice as medical officers to sign those legal documents?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, it is a question that is asking for specific numbers. The thing that I can say is that nurse practitioners are nurse practitioners, they are not medical officers. So, if they function, they will work as nurse practitioners. The exact numbers of nurse practitioners, I do not have that figure, I can provide it at a later date.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his explanation but I would like to ask the question on this recruitment rate, which is quite high. What is the attrition rate like for these doctors and nurses so that we do not have the same kind of recruitment again next year, or the year after?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Once again, Madam Speaker, the question is asking for statistics, attrition rates, those are details that I would have to source from the ministerial staff.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Now, you are only allowed one supplementary question. I will now give the floor to the honourable Semesa Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the honourable Minister for his answer. If the honourable Minister can explain why these doctors, nurses and other medical staff, although they have been recruited, why they have not been provided with overtime pay because that is the reason why most of those officials are not doing overtime?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did not get the full extent of that question but there was a hypothesis made there about what doctors are doing because overtime hours is not paid.

The fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, overtime pay is a major issue in hospitals. It is an issue that we have discussed and we are having discussions with our finance people and also with the Ministry of Finance, to see how best we will be able to pay off a portion of that overtime as soon as possible. So, those are things that we are looking at right now.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I give the floor to the honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The question I would like to raise here is, what sort of recruitment rate are you actually anticipating again for next year?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A few years ago, Cabinet had agreed that for the next few years, we will be improving our intake of doctors in improving the new doctor positions. That has been going on for the past two years and we intend to do this again for the next two years or so. We will be increasing the intake of doctors and nurses so we can get to the ratio that we need.

Our target is ultimately to get to a ratio of one doctor per thousand head of population. That is something that we project to be able to achieve around 2017 or 2018, provided we can maintain the attrition of doctors. So, those are the targets that have been put in place and a policy that has been put in place by Cabinet and we have to feed that into the budgetary process.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the honourable Mikaele Leawere for his question.

Recruitment of Student Nurses
(Question No. 192/2015)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform the House the current recruitment procedures that are in place to recruit student nurses and indicate when the last time the student nurses recruitment was undertaken?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, the last time that the Ministry of Health recruited student nurses was back in 2009. Since the establishment of the Fiji National University, the recruitment of student nurses has been undertaken by the Fiji National University and subsequently by the Sangam School of Nursing that currently recruits. Those are the two bodies that train nurses now.

Madam Speaker, they are recruited by those institutions, they are no longer recruited by the Ministry of Health. The basic requirement for the recruitment into the Colleges of the Fiji National University and the Sangam is based on merit, in terms of examination marks and that is the process they are using. It is basically based on marks that they have achieved in their examinations.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- A supplementary question; can the honourable Minister inform this House as to how many graduates have come out from the nursing institutions for the last five years?

MADAM SPEAKER.- It is a statistical question but the onus is on the honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam, Speaker, this question on the statistics, I propose to provide that statistics as soon as I can. However, I can say that for this year, we have about 200 nurses who have come out, 215 in particular, and they have all been absorbed into the Service but for the figures for the past few years, I will have to get those figures and provide it to you at a later date.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo.

Outstanding Compensation – Raiwaqa Bus Company
(Question No. 193/2015)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport inform the House what is the Government's plan to address the issue of outstanding compensation that was to be paid to the passengers, mostly school children, of the Raiwaqa Bus that crashed at Kubukawa Road in Kalabu last year?

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I also thank the honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, this question also relates to the supplementary question that was raised by the honourable Member yesterday. Madam Speaker, I would like to inform this House that the issue of compensation directly relates to the case against the driver of the bus, which is currently pending before the Nasinu Magistrates Court. Therefore, I seek that the provision of the Standing Orders 44 (13), 45(4)(e) and 61 to be applied. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, Supplementary question. This is the second case with the same company that has come up in this House. Also. there was an article in the *Fiji Times*

a couple of weeks ago regarding the difficulties people are facing trying to regain the use of their limbs, the use of their

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Point of order, Madam Speaker, can Standing Order 61 be applied?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the case is before the court and therefore, we will not allow Parliament to discuss the issue.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- But we are concerned about the general public because this talks about defects in the transportation system. Who is policing those defects? Madam Speaker, that is not related to the court. The public must be assured that the buses running on the road are free of defects, that was highlighted and that is what we need. We need some answers, Madam Speaker.

When you send someone somewhere - your children or your family, you want to make sure that they board a bus that is free of defects. Madam Speaker, this lady from the Consumer Council is the most courageous woman in this country. She stands up to the insurance people, she stands up to the big companies, fighting for the rights of individuals and this Parliament should also be on the side of the general public, to make sure that they travel in safe buses. That is where I am coming from, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, I am very limited to this question in regards to this because we must respect our Standing Orders and I am not going to be trapped by this people. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Roko Tupou Draunidalo.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker. I think the honourable Viliame Gavoka made it very clear. He was not asking about any matter before the court and if the honourable Minister could respect the substance of the question which is, who is policing this issue of defective defects in buses and public service vehicles and can you give us an update on it because he is the honourable Minister responsible?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Given that question, the second part of the question really is different from the initial question. I uphold the decision that is made by the honourable Minister.

I now invite the honourable Alvick Maharaj to have the floor.

Banning of Four Products from New Zealand
(Question No. 194/2015)

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

Can the honourable and learned Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications inform the House on the banning of four products from entering New Zealand, and what measures have been put in place to improve operational measures that has caused the suspension?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for this question.

As you know, Madam Speaker, this matter was very much in the public space for a few days. Madam Speaker, the suspension actually took place by the New Zealand authorities. And, as you may also know Madam Speaker from the media reports that immediately upon the suspension, Fiji protested as to the suspension and we wrote immediately to the Ministry of Primary Industries in New Zealand and within a day, they were here.

We had the meeting with the New Zealand MPI, the honourable Minister for Agriculture was present and the honourable Minister for Industry and Trade.. We had discussions with them, they had their Chief Technical Officer from New Zealand, Dr. Steven Butcher, who came along and they actually admitted that the suspension was a wrong step that was taken by New Zealand.

Madam Speaker, I think in order to highlight and probably educate some people in this House, there are, Madam Speaker, four types of products; eggplants, breadfruit, papaya and mangoes that goes to New Zealand and that needs HTFA, in other words high temperature forced air treatment. And that facility, Madam Speaker, is only run by one particular entity in Fiji, it is not Biosecurity, but Nature's Way, which is a cooperative that provides this particular service, where these products are put in high temperature and forced air is put in, supposedly to kill any fruit flies.

These four products have been identified as possibly having fruit flies. So, there was one particular consignment that had gone off, which according to the New Zealand personnel down there, may not have necessarily achieved that level of temperature that it should have been treated at.

Now, what happened Madam Speaker was normally, under the Standard Operating Procedures, what you call the Bilateral Quarantine Agreement (BQA), when that happens, immediately the Quarantine authority, in this case, Biosecurity of Fiji or in New Zealand's case (MPI) would be notified and say "hey there is something wrong with the consignment." They either then resend it, send it back to Fiji, for it to be treated again and sent back again or they can destroy it.

We must also remember Madam Speaker that New Zealand also exports a lot of agricultural products to Fiji; onions, potatoes, garlic sometimes and other fruits, apples, oranges, what have you. They also have to meet certain protocols according to the Fijian standards. The Biosecurity of Fiji, like New Zealand they have what we call "a percentage of risk that they do allow". In some instances, the standard is about five per cent, if the risk is less than five per cent, they will allow it and it is a measure undertaken that they do take.

So, in this particular incidence, Madam Speaker, the suspension that took place was completely unwarranted as the New Zealand Authority's admitted. Immediately, a day after the meeting that was held, the suspension was lifted.

What also transpired Madam Speaker was the proper lines of communication was not being followed. One in particular was a gentleman from the New Zealand's MPI side was in fact, not following the proper protocols and was not getting in touch with the Biosecurity but going directly to farmers, to Nature's Way, to SPC, which obfuscated the whole lines of communication.

So all of that is in place now, there is much better lines of communication. Nature's Way was called in to ensure that they are actually adhering to the various standards. Sometimes farmers, because they are in a hurry to get their consignment in, they do not want to wait for 15 or 20 minutes and put pressure on Nature's Way to say "No, well, take it out of the furnace quickly so that they can put it on the plane."

So all of these sorts of things have been addressed. In fact, since then also, BAF has undertaken the training of farmers, exporters and quality controllers on the export requirements to ensure that the entire chain value is addressed and everyone understands the need to follow the proper procedures and protocols. I can say, Madam Speaker, that the relationship now between MPI and Biosecurity has now been put on the right track and the notification of the fact that some of the personnel were not following the right procedures is now being addressed and everything has been going well since then.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. A. NABULIVOU.- Madam Speaker, has the Government consider the option of having more of such facilities, as opposed to the only service provider, Nature's Way, that is operating now?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable Member for his question. It is actually a very important question.

At the moment, there is no competition in respect of providing that particular service. The HFTA service is only provided by Nature's Way. There is obviously merits in having another service provider. With that, they actually also charge farmers a particular levy for the processing of HFTA facilities. So, we, in fact, encourage more participants in that area providing service, they can have better competition and better services to the farmers.

It is very critical and very interesting with the facilities of HFTA that is there, we have tried to track back as to how it went to Nature's Way. In fact, it used to be run by the Ministry of Agriculture, Quarantine Department back in the 1990s. At some stage in the 1990s, it was transferred to Nature's Way. It is a cooperative and, in fact, we have looked at the Cooperative Articles of Association, it is very much outdated. We have had a discussion with the Chairman, they have also said that they want to make a submission regarding the fees that they are charging farmers. They are saying that they want a higher levy to be levied, so they can actually carry out many capital upgrades. So we have said to give in their submissions which we can look at for budgetary considerations.

The honourable Nabulivou is also a farmer and knows this that at the moment, we are beholden only to Nature's Way. It would be good to have some other providers of this facility, so we can get a lot more, not just competition for the sake of it, but better service delivery to the farmers. We are looking at that, in fact Biosecurity might even think of getting into that area themselves.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, the honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for that clarification of those issues. As you know, those products came from Sigatoka Valley, where I come from. Is this bio facility localised in the area where they operate because we are also looking at setting up in the Navosa highlands for the Nadroga/Navosa province a collection point? Can we be given an idea of where it can be located?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the honourable Member is speaking about the HTFA facilities. It is actually around the airport facilities because normally the idea is that, you get the treatment, it is in special trays, as specified by the New Zealand MPI. They need to be placed in a particular type of tray, they are put into the facilities in the furnace and then are immediately thereafter shipped. The idea is to have those facilities close by to where ever the point of transportation is, for export.

If, for example, we have the facility somewhere that is not closed by, there could also be the risk of infiltration by those very fruit flies or whatever you may, to avoid, that along the way to the airport, it could get in. Generally, you will find these facilities are close by to the site of transportation.

We are thinking, for example, Madam Speaker, with the extension of Nausori Airport, and with there being products from this side of Fiji on the central division side, the HTFA facility would be good from here because we can also export from Nausori with the direct flights to Australia and New Zealand. So, it will be good to have one in Suva or the Suva-Nausori area and of course, to have another one perhaps in the Western Division. But that is the general idea that you have it closer to the point of transportation.

The Minister for Agriculture has also advised, but we have BQA inspectors in the packing facilities also. So, in every point of transition, there needs to be these various requirements that needs to be met.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the honourable Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Speaker, what will be the impact on the farmers if some of those products are returned, will they be penalised in terms of financial gain or incentivised?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I do not understand which products, the honourable Member is referring to, is there a particular consignment he is referring to?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Please clarify?

HON. A.T. VADEI.- The eggplant that has been returned by New Zealand.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, again if he is asking a general question about products being returned by any authority, sometimes, for example, Fiji may return a particular product from Fiji because it has not met the Fijian standards. That is a matter between the exporter and whoever has sent it across to Fiji. In the same way, if there are products returned from New Zealand, it has not met a particular requirement of theirs, then obviously those risks need to be identified and whoever has carried out the breach will obviously bear the brunt of that.

In this particular case, as we have said, the suspension should not have been there in the first place. New Zealand has admitted to that, they should not have suspended it. If there was a particular consignment they thought there were fruit flies in, they should have identified that, sent it back and said "Look it has got fruit flies in it". To-date, Madam Speaker, Fiji has an unblemished record, no fruit flies have gone across to New Zealand, but this HTFA facility is there to ensure it does not happen. There could be other reasons, for example, sometimes a consignment may be rejected, if prior to the HTFA facility, some other protocols may not have been followed.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, I give the floor to the honourable Mikaele Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- It has already been answered, I was about to ask about the farmers.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Okay, thank you. Supplementary question, honourable Dr. Brij Lal.

HON. DR. B. LAL.- The same products are being exported to Australia, I would like to know whether the Australian market was affected as well?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Minister.

HON.A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for that question. It is also a very important question. The honourable Member is absolutely right. The same products are sent to Australia, the Australians actually take their lead from the New Zealanders. As soon as this suspension was put in place, we immediately contacted the Australian authorities at the High Commission here, because we did not want a similar suspension on the exports to Australia. I have got the information here, in fact I have got some of the letters that we had written to the various authorities. The Australian's actually were quite good, following the meeting, the Permanent Secretary had visited the Australian authorities, they reaffirmed that they were confident in the additional measures that we had put in and that no suspension would take place.

We also then wrote to the New Zealander's pointing out that Australian's have not suspended, but you have, and again I think that led to the whole precipitation of the fact that they withdrew the suspension very quickly. But, it did not affect those same products which are eggplants, breadfruits, papayas and mangoes to the Australian market; it did not affect it at all.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, given that the fifth oral question has been withdrawn. I will now give the floor to the honourable Jilila Kumar.

Poor English Language Content of Graduates
(Question No. 196/2015)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts explain to the House the strategies the Ministry has adopted to deal with the issue of poor English language content of graduates?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts).- Madam Speaker, allow me to respond to the question posed by the honourable Kumar on the strategies the Ministry of Education will adopt to deal with the issue of poor English content, a language content of graduates.

Before deliberating on the strategies, Madam Speaker, let me highlight some of the problems that we have identified that have contributed to the poor English language content of graduates:

- 1) We note that a vast majority of students and teachers in Fiji are second language speakers of English. This is not only common for Fiji but all the other Pacific Island countries as well and a number of other countries throughout the world.
- 2) A small percentage of students and teachers who operate wholly in English on a day to day basis, so English again becomes a second and third language.

Madam Speaker, teachers in Fiji whose language is other than English are not required to produce recognised standard proof of personal English proficiency. For example, if they are Physics or Mathematics teachers, et cetera, currently in the system, they are not required to show proficiency in English language.

Madam Speaker, a small but significant number of registered teachers do not have minimum qualification of an Undergraduate Degree or formal teacher training. This is from an old system and they are still in the system now because at that particular time, due to lack of graduates in certain

areas, formal teacher training qualification was not required, otherwise we would not have had them in the system.

Madam Speaker, the Rote Learning Methodology is a methodology which basically in simple term means memorizing. This teaching methodology gets students to memorize things. We noted that it neither encourages individual talents, nor the development of language in a creative and an exploitive context. Madam Speaker, teachers are required to use a specific assessment methodology, teaching to the test and not to the goals and proposed outcomes of the programme or the needs of the students in a common response, so that is again an issue.

Madam Speaker, teachers own use of English is quite inadequate, for example, Bachelor in Arts, majoring in Mathematics or Physics, they do not have an English major. Bachelor of Economics/Accounting, they do not have an English major. What happens then, Madam Speaker, is that, when they give out assignments, et cetera, they do not correct for language proficiency. They just mark the subject matter content, so that is an issue that we have identified.

Madam Speaker, teachers requiring students to copy a standard text that again used to be the issue because students did not have copies of the textbook of their own. The teachers would spend a lot of time, the learning hours for students, to copy the last text of material and, therefore, lose the learning hours, actually teaching language in the class.

Madam Speaker, to some extent, high rate of absenteeism by teachers is also an issue and what happens then in that case is that, you get someone else to sit in the class, another subject teacher, so you lose the language teaching hours or the actually learning hours.

So, those were the problems that have contributed to-date for poor language content of proficiency of students who are coming out of our school system.

Madam Speaker, these are the strategies we would want to adopt or some of the strategies that was used to be there some time back, we want to bring them back. Firstly, what we want to do is, from next year, provide an online training course on Basic English Language Proficiency for all existing teachers, non-English majors will be required to undergo and then they will be sitting for a diagnostic test. So, again, this is not with a view to “those who fail will be out of the system”, no. I mean this is the kind of incorrect information that will be spread out by some. If they will fail, they will sit again, so they do not lose their job but will continue to sit until such time they get proficiency in the English language. These are again, Madam Speaker, both for primary and secondary who are non-English major teachers.

Madam Speaker, what we want to do is to examine the content of the compulsory English language unit that is being taught by the tertiary institutions which our teacher graduates are undertaking. Some of them are basically undertaking a communication course but communication course is different from the English language course which includes grammar and comprehension, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, we want to bring back some of the old strategies that we had, for example, from Year 6 to Year 13, we want to reduce compulsory journal writing. Journal writing means that everyday, a student will come with a one page writing of what they saw last night, what they experienced, et cetera. In fact, they will pick out some of the key words, new vocabularies in English which they can now use in their normal writing. So, Madam Speaker, assume from Year 6 to Year 13, if they do that on a daily basis, of course it will take their class teacher time to do basic marking of it. Amazing development in terms of the language content; both writing as well as identifying those deficiencies like grammar, comprehension, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, we also want to get back to the DEAR Programme where all primary and secondary schools and teachers will absorb it. DEAR refers to Drop Everything And Read (DEAR), so on a daily basis, there will be some time allocated for students to actually go to the library, sit down and do some reading, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, what we also look at, which we are doing now but probably put more attention to it, in terms of the whole issue of library resources and library utilisation. On that, we want to ensure that every school has a separate library room. A lot of schools in the outside, interior and the rural areas, they do not have at the moment a separate library room. So basically, having a separate library room demonstrates the importance of library in a student's life, so we want to do that and that would require funding and encouraging schools who use part of their FEG money to construct library rooms. We want to ensure, which we are doing now is to keep the library with adequate reading materials. We have got the Read and Learn Programme, a separate body, NGO working with us closely to assist us in getting reading materials, set the reading set for primary schools from Year 1 to Year 8 and giving out to schools; this assistance is greatly appreciated and we want to spread that out.

This year, we are looking at close to 400 primary schools getting that set of materials, Madam Speaker. A lot of the libraries in our school system in Fiji, the so-called librarian does not have a formal library qualification. What we are doing now is, our library staff are going out to run short courses for them because not all of them can come and do a Certificate in Library Studies or even do from online as some of the places do not have the online facility. So we are doing that, we are upgrading course for them on basic library services. Madam Speaker, these are the strategies that we have.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, we want to go big-time with respect of e-books. As we get into digital learning, students are able to have access to e-platform, we want to introduce them to e-books. A lot of e-books out there are free, Madam Speaker, and we want to use them. At the moment we are uploading them on to our Ministry of Education homepage, so that is the strategy we have at the moment.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Speaker, these graduates who are teaching in our schools are products of universities and tertiary providers and here we are being told that their English is not good. Can the honourable Minister inform this House if the English taught in these tertiary institutions is not good for our country and he is providing another avenue to remedy that by offering in-service courses or whatever he is trying to do?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, what I have said is that the problem is not only in the universities but from our own primary and secondary schools as well and we want to deal with that comprehensively.

On the universities, as the honourable Member has mentioned, for example, USP used to have a basic entry exam, they sit for it before they get admitted into Year 1 and that has been removed. So we are going to talk to them, but universities now have introduced a compulsory language course for all students, immaterial of what programme they are going to enrol in, they will have to do that. So what I had alluded to earlier on is that, some of the universities have a communication course which is really not dealing with the issue that we are confronted with.

Secondly, what I said is that, they are Physics and Chemistry major, they are not English major, they do not pick up English except for that one little unit that they have. So, what we are saying is that, we want to fix these things for our school system. If by Year 13 for the 13 years, we fix the

English content, then I do not think we will be confronted with the problem that we are confronted with now. I think we need to fix the school system.

(Inaudible interjection)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Please continue.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Oh, I see a lot of problems....

(Laughter)

HON. V. NATH.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I would like the honourable Minister to explain as to who will pay the cost of the training and fees for the exams as he has mentioned in Strategies 1 and 2?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I want to thank honourable Nath for asking that question. The Ministry will pick up all the costs. We are developing that online course now and the exams, we were looking at whether we could put it on online or there will be some problems, someone else can come and sit for them, et cetera, but again we will minimise the cost of it and the Ministry will pick up all the costs. The idea is to upgrade our teachers and there will be no cost implications on our teachers.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think English is an important issue but can the honourable Minister inform the House, is he looking at a possibility of making sure that we raise the entry requirement for teacher education programmes in the three universities? I think what has happened, Madam Speaker, over the last many years is, the dumbing down of the entry of smart people into the teaching profession. I think that is the real cause of difficulty that we have. So, is he looking at the possibility of raising the entry level and doing away with the Volunteer Scheme of \$12,000 so that we can attract smart people into the teaching profession?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the honourable Dr. Prasad is saying that we deny a lot of people who may have aspirations to become a teacher. We are saying that we will raise the bar with respect to exit, the best minds will graduate. So we raise the bar with respect to exit, the best mind would be able to pass through, and, Madam Speaker, if honourable Dr. Prasad had listened to my presentation yesterday on reforms, what we had said was, we want the best and the brightest minds in our classrooms and therefore we will admit graduates as teachers based on the grades, GPA.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his responses this morning. What we have been hearing from our side is that there needs to be an Education Commission, Madam Speaker, because that will solve most of his problems. He says that there are some resources that were used in the past, they are trying to bring it back now, I thought they had thrown them out and he speaks about online, Madam Speaker. What about the teachers who are not accessible to the online strategies that he is speaking about? What sort of plans has he got for these graduate teachers who are out in the remote areas and the rural areas?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, definitely the second part of the question, I will talk about the first part of the question as well in response to the first part. The second part, Madam Speaker, we will make alternative arrangements. Again, as I have said, there are two parts to online, one is the online training. Those who do not have access to online platform, we will provide print material to them so that they read that and there will be a guide as well. For exams, they might come to a particular centre, we merely have centres with District Offices where they can come and sit for their exams.

On the first part, Madam Speaker, our philosophy is this, if the light bulb is broken in the house, you do not go and have a big consultation and have a Commission to decide whether you should change the light bulb.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. If you can just allow me 30 seconds, Madam Speaker? We go back to a period, Madam Speaker, when we had teachers from New Zealand and Australia, when we were in RKS, QVS and ACS and we had these drama clubs which helped us celebrate the English language. I think most of us did very well out of that.

Instead of having this cadetship, can we do away with the cadetship and set up a drama club in every school in Fiji to help them celebrate the English language? In that way, it creates an environment where people can appreciate the English language. It has to come from a secondary school level before you go to university. This was our experience and I think people in the 1960s had a better grasp of the English language because we celebrated the language, and drama clubs, I think must be mandatory, Madam Speaker, as opposed to military cadets because SODELPA is very much against these military cadets in the secondary schools. Go for drama clubs, Madam Speaker.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- I will certainly examine that. The drama club, we surely see that without any drama, we will see how we can include that.

(Laughter)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Remember QVS used to have a Shakespeare, we used to tour the country every year, that was a beautiful generation, Madam Speaker. Forget about the militarisation of this country and look at developing, we will be all be happier, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you I give the floor to the honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Thank you Madam Speaker, the biggest volume of exchange is now through online or computers using shortcut languages and colloquialism. How can we use that platform to develop better English? Can you repeat what he said?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I do agree with the sentiments raised. I think that is something that is also destroying the children who are using text platforms et cetera, and something that we want to talk to the mobile operators as well on how they could probably discourage people or have some system which will discourage use of this sort of acronyms et cetera which is kind of having an effect on student's writing skills.

Also, I was talking to some IT provider on developing an application which students now, a lot of students have handsets with them, how that application could assist them in developing their language. So, we will look into that. Thank you

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, that brings us to the end of the question time and we will take a break for refreshment now and resume at 11.00 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.29 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.03 a. m.

CLOSED SESSION

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I received written communication from the honourable and learned Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications requesting that proceedings immediately following will be conducted in private.

I am satisfied that the requirement set out in Standing Order 24(1) are met and the grounds are in my opinion, reasonable and justifiable and in line with the specified Standing Order, as well as Section 72(2) of the Constitution.

I, therefore, order the following:-

1. All strangers as defined in Standing Order 24(2)(b) are to withdraw from the public gallery and this includes members of the public, the media and any person(s) who are not parliamentary staff except staff from the Ministry of Finance and the Reserve Bank of Fiji.
2. The live feeds of the media organisations on air and via the internet are to be temporarily suspended.
3. The Hansard will record proceedings but they will not be included in tomorrow's *Daily Hansard*.

I will now adjourn the sitting for 10 minutes, to allow my Orders to be enforced, and I thank you all.

Parliament met in private, pursuant to a Ruling under Standing Order 24(1) from 11.05 a.m. until lunch.

The Parliament resumed at 2.45 p.m.

The Honourable Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will continue from where we left this morning. I now call upon the honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

That so much of Standing Order 46 is suspended so as to allow the Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications to move his motion.

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

Question put.

Votes Cast:

| | | |
|-----------|---|----|
| Ayes | - | 29 |
| Noes | - | 13 |
| Not Voted | - | 8 |

Motion agreed to.

INCOME TAX BILL, 2015

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

- a) That the Income Tax Bill No. 22 of 2015 be considered by Parliament without delay.
- b) The Bill must be immediately referred to the Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Human Rights.
- c) The Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Human Rights must report on the Bill to Parliament in the November session of Parliament.
- d) Upon presentation of the report by the Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Human Rights, Parliament shall consider the report in the November session and that the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament in the November session.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Deputy Speaker, by way of background, in 2012 the honourable Prime Minister had announced in the National Budget that a new Income Tax Law

would be implemented to simplify tax administration in Fiji in conformity with the recommendation made by the International Monetary Fund to simplify the Fijian tax law system.

Deputy Speaker, undertaking a re-write or revision of tax laws, especially Income Tax Laws is not an easy task. Therefore since 2010, several years of work in preparation had been put into ensuring the consultations for this Bill are extensive and far-reaching enough to ensure that this Income Tax Law re-write is inclusive and will suit Fiji's economic and social climate.

Additionally, Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Income Tax Act Cap. 201 was enacted in 1974 and given that it is quite outdated and as we regularly amend it to the point, that it has become difficult to read in totality, it is only prudent that a re-write or revision of this law takes place; there has been amendments to amendment to amendments.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this Bill was drafted by Professor Lee Burns of the University of Sydney through the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre and with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund. Honourable Deputy Speaker, Professor Burns specializes in international and comparative tax law and worked with many other countries in providing assistance in the design and drafting of Income Tax Laws, VAT laws Excise and Tax Administration laws.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Bill has been in the consultation process since 2010 for the last 5 years, and in total 14 drafts of this Bill has been circulated following significant period of awareness and discussions on the Bill. Additionally, Honourable Deputy Speaker, at least 50 different consultations and events were held with internal and external stakeholders in relation to the Bill. Furthermore, wider consultations and public hearings have been hosted extensively including discussions with the Fiji Institute of Accountants, the Fiji Chamber of Commerce, Fijian Employers Federation, Fiji Hotels Industry Association and other stakeholders to ensure that this Income Tax re-write, that is the Bill, is suitable for Fiji. Consultations have also been held with the Ministry of Finance, FRCA and the Solicitor General's Office.

Just very briefly, Honourable Deputy Speaker, the pertinent features of the Income Tax Bill provides for the imposition of the Income Tax, Capital Gains Tax and regulation of Fringe Benefit Tax which currently sit in all different laws at the moment.

The Bill, therefore, repeals and replaces the Income Tax Act, the Capital Gains Tax Decree and the Fringe Benefit Decree 2012 with effect from 1st January, 2016. The Bill has several purposes.

Firstly the Bill simplifies and streamlines the Income Tax Laws so that all tax laws are available in a one-stop shop legislation.

Secondly, the Bill includes new provisions in areas that were previously left to administrative practice, particularly in the area of tax accounting and the Bill includes detailed provisions relating to the taxation of international transactions which align with international norms expressed in tax treaties.

Thirdly, the Bill includes measures to prevent the avoidance of tax commonly known as Tax Evasion. These include transfer pricing and thin capitalisation rules as I had mentioned previously yesterday in one of our debates. The Bill has been drafted to cater for the re-write of the Act due to the following factors:

- a) The uncertainties in tax application due to amendments and its original logical structure has been lost through the sheer volume of amendments and the different drafting styles that have been used by different drafters over the past few decades.
- b) The technical deficiencies in the current law will increase compliance and administrative costs. Given the evolving business and investment environment, an Income Tax Law now probably has a shelf-life of only 10 years. In many countries, the Income Tax Law is one of the most amended laws. After 10 years of amendments, the law is likely to have lost some of its coherence, the different drafters using different terms, languages, styles and reforms drafted onto reforms.

While double taxation treaties facilitate foreign investment, it is not possible for Fiji to negotiate double tax treaties with a large number of countries on a timely basis. Consequently the re-write is an opportunity to revise the international provisions in the Income Tax Law so as to better facilitate foreign investment. This is done by internalizing the tax rights commonly found in tax treaties into the law.

The re-write, Honourable Deputy Speaker, will facilitate key administrative reforms such as self-assessment, final tax, which is PAYE, dividend interest and voluntary compliance. Under self-assessment, there is an obligation by the Government to ensure that there is certainty of law. This means that the law must be capable of easy application by the vast majority of taxpayers, that is, Honourable Deputy Speaker, it must be user-friendly and as far as possible, it must provide simple and clear rules.

Additionally under self-assessment, any discretionary powers left to the CEO of Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority relating to liability must be replaced by objective rules. Self-assessment will not work efficiently and effectively if taxpayers have to continuously seek the discretion of the CEO. Therefore, Honourable Deputy Speaker, this Bill and through this law Honourable Deputy Speaker, we want to bring about greater objectivity and in fact greater transparency. Otherwise, what we have at the moment, is many of the assessments are left to the discretion of the CEO or his officers. Of course, Honourable Deputy Speaker, lastly it will remove the exemptions and concessions that have already expired in the Act.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, with those brief introductory remarks, I now move that we accept this motion and just to reiterate that the Income Tax Bill No. 22/2015 be considered by Parliament without delay; that the Bill must be immediately referred to the Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Human Rights; that the Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Human Rights must report on the Bill to Parliament in the November session of Parliament; that upon presentations of Report by the Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Human Rights, Parliament shall consider the report in the November session and that the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament in the November session. .

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now invite all other honourable Members of the House to speak on the motion. The floor is now open for debate.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe there is a short sitting in November and that usually is reserved for the budgetary debate, then we have to look at this as well. I am just wondering, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there could be more time given in that session to justify having this comprehensive Bill go through this Section 51 provision again which we have objected to quite a few times, Sir. And not just for any reason, but only to properly consider the

things that come before us. I am just saying this in terms of the future process in this place, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I mean we just had a Business Committee meeting during the lunch break, we had lunch, and informally it could have been brought to our attention. We could have thought of some of these things, so that we come here and not having to be flipping through, checking schedules and doing all of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it really demeans the process of this place.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you Honourable Members, this is a debate. I will now call upon any Honourable Member of the House to speak..

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Honourable Deputy Speaker, I support the suggestion made by honourable Draunidalo. Already in November we have a one-week session and that itself is pretty short for the Budget debate. I think this is a comprehensive Bill and I don't think there is so much rush to get that approved in November, so I would urge the Government side to consider this, refer this to the Sector Committee and bring it into the February session of Parliament, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.-Honourable Deputy Speaker, the issue always had been from the other side about time respect to going over this, deliberating and consulting. That was always the issue they had been raising. Now this is August, September and October, they have got two months in detail to go over this document. Now they have come up with another issue that in Parliament time is short.

Deputy Speaker, I think we should move on with the business, their idea is to get this into motion from 1st January, I think that is the idea from this side. So, Deputy Speaker, I support this motion.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you honourable Member.

HON. LT. COL I.B. SERUIRATU.- Honourable Deputy Speaker, if I may add to the debate before the House. When we did discuss the sessions for 2016, we did come up with the issue of allocating time for Committees of the House to deliberate so that when it comes to the passing of the Bills, we can spend minimal time on it, given the fact that it has been scrutinised thoroughly by the Committee responsible.

The honourable Members have highlighted that we will have a short session in November, however, if we look at Standing Orders 87(3)(b) particularly, given the fact that there will be time, the option is there for us not to go clause by clause, but we can get that lumped together like we did yesterday. So, it is still flexible on them. We will leave it to the Committee to work on it so that we can have it. Government has reasons, we need to have this in place before we start with the new financial year.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- The floor is still open for debate.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Deputy Speaker, I would just like to contribute to the debate on the motion. Just one request, Deputy Speaker, to the Government side there are other Bills before the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights. It does not mean, Deputy Speaker, that we are not ready to take care of whatever is given to us, but my request is, we have had a debate on motion of resources to be available to the Committee. In this one here, we know that if we are required to bring it up in November, we would require the services of the drafters who are experts in the tax area. If that could be considered by the Government side, so that the work could be easily undertaken or otherwise it would be a very big work to carry out, it takes time to wait for resource people to be available and it always drags the time to carry out this work.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you honourable Member. I will now call on the honourable and learned Attorney General for the Right of Reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.-Honourable Deputy Speaker, as the honourable Minister for Education highlighted and also the honourable Minister for Agriculture, the tax laws are actually a lot more effective if they commence in the financial year. If we look at this Bill, the commencement date, unlike some of the other Bills that have been presented, is not at the discretion of the Minister, but it is to commence from 1st January, 2016.

This is why it needs to be brought in now. If we miss out on this date, Honourable Deputy Speaker, then we will have to wait till 1st January, 2017 which is another year that would have been lost. The reality is, Honourable Deputy Speaker, as I said in my introduction that it has been in a consultation process for the past five years. The Bill has been through 14 drafts, it has been headed by an internationally recognised drafter who specialises in this area. Numerous sectors of the Fijian economy have been consulted in this re-draft. In fact only about three weeks ago, the final public consultations that were held with the different segments in the sector.

So Honourable Deputy Speaker, I think quite a lot of work has already been done, the Committee, of course, as we mentioned the other day, is at liberty to call upon the services of the drafters that are within the Solicitor General's Office. When they contact them, they will be readily available to assist them. Yes, there are other Bills that may be before the Committee, but we are asking the Committee, through this motion, to give this particular Bill a priority because it is critical, it comes into effect from 1st January, 2016 and I am sure there will still be individuals or groups who may want to come and make submissions to the Committee on the Bill.

With those few introductory remarks, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I would like to say once again, this law would be good for Fiji, it simplifies a lot of the taxation issues that have been languishing in the whole reform and the amendments upon amendments, it will also provide a lot of clarity, provide a lot of transparency, remove the subjectivity that currently exist with the officers of FRCA, so the taxpayer knows exactly what the rules are. This, of course, is not to say that there won't ever be any litigation that may arise, it happens in all the countries, but this again is to simplify it so that we have a lot of objectivity and, of course, it enhances our ability to collect tax and for people to actually pay tax in a very transparent manner.

With those few words, Honourable Deputy Speaker, I move that the motion now be voted upon and supported.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote. Does any honourable Member oppose the motion by the honourable Attorney General, Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications?

Question put.

Votes Cast:

| | | |
|-----------|---|----|
| Ayes | - | 30 |
| Noes | - | 14 |
| Not Voted | - | 6 |

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- The Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration has informed me that he wishes to make a Ministerial Statement under Standing Order 40.

Internal Security Situation

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Honourable Deputy Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament, today I will be speaking on the internal security situation in Fiji.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the general security situation since the last General Elections of 2014 has been relatively calm and quiet. Over the last few weeks, we have been informed of an event that unfolded in the province of Ra that has resulted in the sedition charges laid against a select number of individuals. I will get to this security issue later but, please, allow me to first speak on other issues that contribute to Fiji's internal security landscape.

Deputy Speaker Sir, the opposing prejudiced remarks towards Government through social media continues but encouragingly is less than pre-elections. This is partly attributed to the opening of Parliament and the issues discussed within these forums are now been thrashed out in this noble House.

During the leadership of the pre-elected Government till now, the nation has recovered well, however there is still widespread of fear, mistrust and suspicion by a small number of *iTaukei* community. This is fuelled by the rumour mongering that has unfortunately been a part of the *iTaukei* community for some time on the alleged economic threats posed by the Fijians of Indian descendants' minority and further exacerbated by the misinformation and misinterpretation of certain Government policies by certain individuals and groups.

The lead-up to the 2014 General Elections was a challenging time for law enforcement agencies as prospective parliamentarians hammered each other out in an effort to be elected by our people as honourable Members of this august House. Rumours and irresponsible statements were made that was thought to contribute to the insecurity and instability of this nation. Now that we are here, it is rather unfortunate that the repercussions of those war of words has continued to live on in the hearts and minds of the very people that we had sought vote from to get to where we are today. The Fiji Police Force continues to receive rumoured reports of instability from time to time and we will continue to stamp down hard on any effort to bring insecurity to this country.

Over the last few months, you may have also noted a distinct increase in the number of high profile drug busts in Fiji. A lot of these drug apprehensions are controlled deliveries which are supervised by law enforcement officers both here and abroad as a means of exposing the intended targets of the drug trans-shipment. Because of Fiji's strategic location within the Pacific and the ease of access to bigger markets such as, Australia and the United States, it is considered as an ideal port for trans-shipment of drugs by drug smugglers.

Deputy Speaker Sir, let me assure you and honourable Members of this august House that the Fiji Police Force is doing all it can to stop this trans-shipment of drugs through Fiji. The drug confiscation that has already taken place here in Fiji is a reflection of commitment and hard work of all the border agencies in Fiji and our counterparts in the region.

It must, however, be noted with concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, that we now have a relatively small market for sale of these hard drugs. The Fiji Police Force is working around the clock to ensure that anyone that engages in this unethical act is brought to justice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, moving on, Fiji in 2014 recorded a significant decrease by 22.8 per cent in major crimes recorded by the Fiji Police Force with the exception of crimes against morality and drug-related cases. The increase in the reports on crimes against morality could be attributed to the increase in public awareness by our law enforcement agencies through various policing awareness campaigns such as the *Duavata* initiative and also through awareness campaign done by the NGOs. The rise in reported drug cases is attributed to the close collaboration between our border agencies and the development of close working relationship and exchange of information with our international partners.

Apart from these two major crimes that recorded increase in 2014, all other major crimes such as theft, assault, burglary and rape dropped significantly in 2014 compared to 2012 and 2013. Whilst theft, assault and public morality remains the prevalent offences, burglary is slowly rising and the Fiji Police Force is working hard on curtailing these major crimes further. The Ministry of Defence together with its key security stakeholders are currently discussing on a way forward for the Government to counter occurrences of rape in the country.

Deputy Speaker, Sir, please allow me to deliberate more on the incidences in the provinces of Ra and Nadroga/Navosa. As I have stated over the last few weeks, we have been inundated on news of a group conducting training at Navalidi Settlement in the province of Ra. The allegations of this training is indeed correct and the Fiji Police Force and the military are gathering more information to be provided in court regarding the charges that have been laid.

As I speak, the Fiji Police Force has already confirmed charging 33 individuals on sedition and inciting communal antagonism charges. This in addition to the 16 individuals that were charged earlier in relation to attempt to create a Ra Sovereign Christian State and another charged last week in relation to attempts to create a Nadroga/Navosa Sovereign Christian State.

Deputy Speaker, Sir, there were allegations of weapons being used during this alleged training exercise and more investigations are being carried out about that, but because of the alleged involvement of weaponry arms, the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) is now involved in the investigations but with the Fiji Police on the lead role. The Fiji Police Force and the RFMF are working tirelessly to gather more information on these alleged and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Deputy Speaker, Sir, given Fiji's history in such incidences and the significant number of individuals involved, there is a reason to believe that there are more influential people behind these moves to create an illegal independent State and further that racial antagonism is being misused to promote these ideologies. Let me assure Members of this august House that we are doing the best to ensure that there are no stones left unturned during this investigation. In today's dailies, a suspended Member of Parliament and senior leader of a political party even sought the honourable Prime Minister's executive hand to release current detained persons involved in sedition, dismissing the fact of Government's pursuit of its independence of the Judiciary and for the rule of law to take its course. This contradictory demand portrays how blatantly ignorant and insulting this leader has towards the path of democracy and Government's commitment to adhere to this path.

Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is quite disheartening to note that while Government attempts to address these illegal activities bound to cause inevitable instability and incite communal antagonism, Members of the other side of the House seem unbothered by this real threat to National Security.

(Chorus of interjections)

Very disconcerting and alarming to note that some Opposition Members of the House have even expressed support to this unconstitutional act to pursue visitation to the remanded perpetrators. I again refer to one of the honourable Members of the other side.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Who?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Commenting through his convictions using biblical references and saying and I quote "...even God instructed these people's appointment through His criteria...";

(Chorus of interjections)

I wish to respond to the honourable Member's remark in that from a religious perspective, it is unmistakable that leadership appointments is godsend. Biblical history undeniably acknowledges that leadership is given and endorsed by God and even the honourable Member in his wisdom of religious theology must admit and accept that.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- If his perspective is embraced then it is definite that the grooming of our honourable Prime Minister years ago is evident through divinity from God resulting in his Leadership of the FijiFirst party and now this elected Government. He is also the principal advisor to security of this Government in his position as Chairman of the National Security Council.

Deputy Speaker, Sir, this House has been bombarded during various sittings on the *coup* culture and obvious repugnance towards the RFMF's involvement. During Tuesday's sitting, an honourable Member on the other side of the House expressed outspokenly and emotionally her evident scorn towards the RFMF and the *coup* culture. These incidences of sedition in Ra fall into the realms of *coup* culture, and yet there is no vocal disdain recorded by any form from the other side of the House on the intolerance of these seditious acts in Ra to disrupt the democracy of this nation. Could their silence be interpreted as in support of this sedition act?

Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is highly unlikely so and therefore totally contradicts their blunt non-support of seditious acts and/or their contempt for *coups*. Parliament's *Daily Hansard* records numerous eruptive repulsions by honourable Members on the other side of the House on issues presented and tabled in this Parliament like Human Rights, Constitution Day Holiday, Bills on Sugar Reforms, which I admit deserves such great passion. However, why do we not witness this same outburst passion from the Opposition to publicly oppose this sedition incidences and their denouncement of such acts? Do they not support the pursuit of democracy and the stability of this nation?

Deputy Speaker, Sir, I earnestly urge all members of this Parliament to unite as one and denounce these moves to create an illegal independent sovereign State and also to use all powers that we have to ensure that peace and stability is maintained at all times in our beloved Fiji.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.-Deputy Speaker, Sir, the members of the public must be reassured that Fiji remains safe, secure and enjoys a benign environment. I wish to fervently inform members of the public to not be easily influenced by people whose intentions are to derail the progress that Fiji has made over the past nine years. The safety and the security of Fiji is not a law enforcement agency's obligation alone but a collective responsibility of all the people who call Fiji their home in here and abroad.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- I also take this opportunity to dispose of any anxious queries and doubts towards the security of Fiji to current and prospective foreign investors. Through Government's incentives and lucrative provisions Investment Fiji has experienced an influx of foreign investors taking advantage of the reforms. Obviously scrutinized by security vetting, these foreign investments offer local development and employment contributing to the evident growth of Fiji's economy. The growth of a nation's investment environment is somewhat and crucially influenced by the security situation. Fiji remains a hub for foreign investment and envisaged to increase potentially because the security of the State is normal.

Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a positive note, I must commend the Methodist Church of Fiji as shown in Wednesday's *Fiji Times* for the inaugural introduction of a code of conduct in the Methodist Church Constitution, particularly the ethical concept of the church's non-involvement in politics of the nation and *coup*. This is an encouraging venture by the Methodist Church in support of democracy an avenue that governs and positively promotes. This constructive progress is a significant mark of the Methodist Church's patronage towards the enforcement for stability and Fiji's national security.

(Chorus of interjections)

Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I conclude, I wish to emphasise to the nation, with due respect to the press and social media, that if an authentic and accurate assessment and analysis of the security situation of Fiji is required, it is nobly sound to obtain such reports directly from officials of the relevant Government Ministry.

Deputy Speaker, Sir, I therefore, wish to conclude by saying that the internal security situation in Fiji continues as normal and is serene as Fiji ought to be. Government does not envisage any significant changes in the short to medium term.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker Sir.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Deputy Speaker, ours is a young democracy, our democracy is ...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- One year.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- ... not even one year old, and a democracy that needs to be nurtured and handled with great care. We do not see that care, given the reaction of the Government over the last few days.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Tell them! Tell them!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I come from a global community, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I understand how sensitive things can be, to have troops in full combat gear in the headline of today's paper ...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- *Lamu!*

...and in yesterday's media, is sending the wrong signal about our young democracy.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I rise on a Point of Order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think the honourable Ratu Tikoca said something.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- It is scared.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, no. I just want to know what he said, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- *Lamu.*

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Who was he referring *lamu* to; the RFMF? I just wanted clarification.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- To everyone who is scared.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That was in relation to when honourable Gavoka was saying; "The RFMF soldiers were out in the streets.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- More to him.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Wonderful! Well, thank you, that is good.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must be cautious, we must follow the Constitution. We must let the Police handle this thing properly. We do not want to prematurely deploy the troops in the streets.

Deputy Speaker, Sir, images of what happened yesterday would, no doubt, be all over the world today. Like I said earlier, I was a global marketing person and already, I can imagine the concern of the tourism industry as emails begin to arrive; "Are you ok. Is Fiji ok?"

When you have an industry as global as tourism, this is a natural reaction from the outside community when something like that happens. I re-emphasise that ours is a young democracy, let us be careful. Let us exercise caution on the way we use these three Arms of Government in bringing control into internal security.

I am being blamed for being silent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I come from Cuvu and that flag flew in Cuvu for three or four months, and no one did anything about it. So, how can I turnaround and condemn them when it was flying for months in my area?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to have goodwill. I was telling myself, Sir, instead of sending the troops, why did we not get two busloads of Parliamentarians and go there and ask them; "What can we do? What is the problem?" That is what we should do as leaders.

(Chorus of interjections)

We must create goodwill. Our President tries to help, and he is told; "Stop the head tricks!".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are the acts of people who want to create goodwill. On the other side, anything we attempt to do, we are called liars and all sorts of names. Every time they open a bridge or a dispensary or a gate somewhere, they say; “SODELPA are lying”. So, can we just get on with our lives and create goodwill? We are here, we are your partners!

(Laughter)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Order! Order!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- When you ride roughshod over us, when you railroad things over us, we will react. I mean, just today, we asked; “Why is this Bill being fast-tracked like this?”

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Who fast-tracked? Who?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- The Income Tax Bill is being fast-tracked.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Two months!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Why did we have 15 Bills discussed over five minutes? Remember all that!

It is the majority that is a tyranny in this country, and that is exactly this Government today.

(Chorus of interjections)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Order! Order!

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want stability, we want tourism to survive.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Member, your time is up.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Now, I call upon the honourable leader of the National Federation Party..

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I wish to welcome the statement by the honourable Minister, who acknowledged that the number of rumour mills and scare mongering significantly dropped since this Parliament opened and started thrashing all these issues out. I welcome that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it gives support to what we have been saying on this side of the House, that the more we sit here and for the Opposition to bring things that dissent with Government policies, and then the Government explains it away peacefully in this House, the better it is for the peace and stability of this country.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear! Hear!

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- So, I welcome that statement by the honourable Minister.

Having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the statement is rather confused and the actions of the Government in this whole situation, at the end, the honourable Minister says; “We want to assure

investors and everybody, Fiji is serene, Fiji is beautiful, Fiji is good for investment and stable”, what is the problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What is the problem?

(Chorus of interjections)

I mean, we agree with him, there is no problem! Fiji is serene and Fiji is beautiful. Then why did you send out kitted men to little towns who appear in the newspapers and look like they are bullying people, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Then the Land Force Commander said that they are just going shopping.

(Laughter)

So, that means, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the honourable and learned Attorney-General said through his favourite mouthpiece media outlet; “Questioning the leader of the National Federation Party and the Party itself, why we have not made statements about the situation in Ra, Nadroga and Navosa”.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the answer is very simple. Apart from agreeing with the honourable Minister that Fiji’s serene and beautiful and nothing is wrong here, we do not want to comment on things that are before the court of law ...

(Chorus of interjections)

... and the Chief Legal Advisor, Mr. Deputy Speaker and our Standing Orders forbid us from discussing things that are before the courts.

I was quite amazed with how much the honourable Minister has said and how much he has given the defence counsel in this matter. We are now prejudicing the matter that is before the court and coming from the honourable and learned Attorney-General, that is really quite shocking.

As far as the rule of law is concerned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very proud to say that the National Federation Party has never instigated, supported and never will support an unlawful overthrow of an elected government, including this Government. We will never support an unlawful overthrow of an elected government. We have said that many times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, only one institution in this country causes problems of this kind, only one and in one place in 1987, 2000 and 2006. We know where we come from, Mr. Deputy Speaker...

(Chorus of interjections)

...not the National Federation Party.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we are serene and beautiful, then nothing is wrong in this country. The National Federation Party is very happy that Fiji is beautiful, serene and law-abiding and that is what we are all about. But only one institution causes problems and we talk about them all the time, Mr. Deputy Speaker and we welcome that the Methodist Church is now going to go into that and they are not going to support *coups* and all of that. I just wish that the institution that commits all *coups* in this country would do the same.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Members. Before we go on to the next speaker, at this juncture, I wish to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the second year

Constitutional Law students from the University of Fiji, School of Law. Welcome to this afternoon sitting, I trust you will find this sitting interesting and of value in your studies. *Vinaka*.

The honourable Minister for Youth and Sports has informed me that he wishes to make a Ministerial Statement under Standing Order 40. I will now call upon the honourable Minister to take the floor.

Sports as an Industry

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.-Honourable Deputy Speaker, we just finished a very hot debate on security, and from the security field, we are now going to the sports field.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, before I deliver my statement on sports as an industry, allow me to wish John McKee and the co-coaching panel well on their preparation that they are doing right now. In the last two days, they gave a brief on their preparation for the World Cup and we would like to thank the CEO and the Fiji Rugby Union for their preparation and wish them well that they come victorious in their first game.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I rise to deliver a statement under my name in accordance with today's Order Paper, where I speak on sports as an industry.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Fiji is undoubtedly a sport loving nation that takes pride in participation and competing in the international sporting world.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, sports in Fiji has demonstrated over the years its power in uniting the Fijian people; whether it is watching our Sevens Team compete in the Sevens World series, or the Fiji Pearls for Netball or the under 20 Soccer Team qualifying for the Olympics. These moments truly shows patriotism that we all have for our country.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, sports development in Fiji has come a long way. Since the early days of amateurism, sports have become a multimillion dollar industry, with the advent of professionalism.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, with the demands and rigours of professional sports, media corporations and the television networks have their grips on sports, dictating fixtures, tournaments and competitions. As a result, top players become marketable and their services become sought after by professional clubs.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, sports as an industry continues with great potential to grow even further and offer employment to Fiji's talented athletes and technical officials.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, approximately 500 Fijians play rugby professional overseas. These players, most of whom would otherwise have been unemployed, are now earning good income and have invested funds back into the country. Some have purchased homes, assisted their families and communities. In total, Honourable Deputy Speaker an estimated \$100 million in remittances is being received by families of professional Fijian sports people overseas.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, this Government, through my Ministry and its statutory arms, the National Sports Commission and the Fiji Sports Council has reformed our approach to sports development to ensure that our young sporting men and women fully benefit from the opportunities provided in sports.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, a major reform initiative established the Fiji National Sports Commission to align and guide the delivery of sports programme in Fiji, through a coordinated and partnership approach at all levels of participation.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, these reforms in sports by Government has reaped rewards, especially with the following initiatives in places:

- 1) Overseas specialists conducting training clinics in Fiji for athletes, referees and technical officials.
- 2) Overseas sports scholarships for talented athletes.
- 3) Provision of sports development officers for national sports organisations.
- 4) Improved ranking and experience through overseas tours.
- 5) Hosting of international tournaments has far reaching benefits, especially for the local economy and for the development of our athletes by providing a competitive stage here at home.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, by allowing sports in Fiji to access international coaches through our International Coaches' Initiative, we have achieved the following:

- 1) Football qualification for the Under 20 in the FIFA World Cup and for Rio Olympics;
- 2) Cricket qualified for the U19 World Cup in 2016;
- 3) Table Tennis, we ranked number 2 after Australia in Oceania;
- 4) Netball won Gold at the Pacific Games;
- 5) Rugby Sevens qualified for the Rio Olympics; and
- 6) Rugby fifteens, as number 1 in the recent Pacific Nations Competition.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, also in 2015, we have made a special allocation for the major international events which our national teams are attending. These include the:

- 1) Commonwealth Youth Games which will be held next week in Apia Samoa 2015;
- 2) South Pacific Games;
- 3) Under 17 Men's Oceania Football;
- 4) Under 17 Women's Oceania Football;
- 5) Under 20 FIFA World Cup;
- 6) World Netball Champs;
- 7) Rugby World Cup;
- 8) Pacific Nations Rugby Cup;
- 9) Pacific Rugby Cup; and

10) Junior Rugby World Cup.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, while our sports loving public and our elite sportsmen and women have benefitted from sporting reforms, our sports facilities administered through the Fiji Sports Council has also undergone its fair share of refurbishments to meet international standards. This is in addition, Honourable Deputy Speaker, to rural playing fields constructed nation-wide and the three new integrated sports complexes in Kadavu, Gau and Vunidawa where preliminary works are currently underway.

Honourable Speaker, in order to attract international sporting events to our shores, our sporting infrastructure needs to meet international standards. Hosting international tournaments allows more of our athletes to compete with the best apart from the myriad of economic returns to the economy.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, with appropriate sporting infrastructure and our breath taking scenery attracting international events to Fiji, Government has maximised on this opportunity to support world class sporting events.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Sir, Fiji's support which began last year to the upcoming Fiji International Golf Tournament in Natadola in October, will see Fiji projected to about 400 million homes worldwide. This exposure of tapping into the international golf market is important for Fiji's wider tourism strategy. Golf tourism is an emerging market with over 20 per cent growth from 2012 to 2013 alone, and with further growth forecast for 2014. Another example, the impact of the Fiji International Golf Tournament in Natadola that took place in 2014, the Korea PGA has taken interest in Fiji golf courses so to avoid the winter in Korea. Consultation has been ongoing and they have already visited the three golf courses in Fiji and they are negotiating with our Fiji Ambassador in Korea for confirmation.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Sir, our swimming facility at the National Aquatic Centre is being put to great use as we expect to host the upcoming Oceania Swimming Championship next year.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, in order to ensure that all Fijians enjoy the benefits of sports apart from those enjoyed by our elite athletes, sports development programmes must be accessible to all Fijians. Programmes introduced through the National Sports Commission continue to be well received, and to-date since the establishment of the Commission in 2013, it has delivered Sports Outreach Programmes to 1,748 youths in 353 villages and 85 *tikina*. In 2015, Rural Outreach Programmes have been conducted in Ba, Macuata, Yasawa and Nadroga with two more to be conducted in Bua and Lau. Honourable Deputy Speaker, this one week long programmes not only introduce new sports to the rural areas but also includes special programmes for the whole community for their wellness and development through physical activity.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the advent of professionalism requires equally proficient sports officials and administrators. Train the Trainer programmes are conducted to train and certify coaches, referees, technical officials and administrators throughout the country. In 2015, these have been conducted in Suva, Dreketi, Serua, Ba, Ra and Taveuni.

In addition, Honourable Deputy Speaker, The Educate the Educator Programmes are designed to upgrade and up-skill school teachers in sports and to provide certification for them to coach and referee. To-date, 272 teachers have received certification.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Fiji National Sports Commission staff have been specially trained by overseas experts to take sports to our disadvantaged and programmes have been conducted for our special schools in Labasa, Suva, Nausori and Lautoka. The Commission is now working with

all National Sporting Organisations (NSO) to ensure their individual sports are inclusive and now cater for the disadvantaged.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Fiji is well positioned through the reforms undergone in sports to allow all Fijians to pursue their dreams of a livelihood in sport. Since the Pacific Games, a number of our sports have commenced four and eight year development plans to ensure our youth get the required training to take them to the next games and onto the 2020 Olympics.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, sports in Fiji has always struggled with appropriate funding and sponsorship. To this end, a reform of the Tax Act has reduced the sports sponsorship rebate threshold from \$100,000 to \$50,000. This allows sponsors to sports of not less than \$50,000 to benefit from the 150 per cent rebate with FRCA.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, we work and try to do more with the budget that we are given. In partnering with the Fiji National Sporting Commission and Fiji Sports Council, we are able to achieve positive results in sports.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, Fiji's future in sports is promising as this is ensured by the reforms and initiatives that are in place to guarantee that Fiji remains at the forefront.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.-Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his Ministerial Statement and I do not think that anyone in this House would question or deny the fact that sportsmen and women are among the highest paid people in the world. We have many world famous sons and daughters in sports who have excelled to the top in this world like Serevi and Vijay Singh, to name just two. What we are not doing as a nation, Honourable Deputy Speaker, is funding our national sports agenda adequately and while I appreciate, there are many other priorities we have to fund.

Another area that needs to be promoted and I acknowledge that the Golf Tournament is one such measure, but Sports Tourism is an area that is in need of exploitation. Not all of our citizens are academically inclined but have natural talents in various fields like sports, art and music and they too deserve to have adequate resources put behind them to enable them to excel and become professionals in their field.

Sports is already an industry, as stated by the honourable Minister, a multi-million dollar industry with the advent of professionalism. Nevertheless, sports as an industry cannot and will not grow or be sustained and offer employment to Fiji's athletes and technical officials unless the sports industry is adequately funded, honourable Minister of Finance.

Training clinics, overseas specialists, technical officials, international tournaments as a form of development needs a lot of money. Without adequate finance, sports growth will move at a snail's pace. So, while we witnessing positive growth and benefits, let us not forget to do our part - what is our part? Our part is to provide the fuel necessary to drive, and continue the growth of sports as an industry in Fiji.

The honourable Minister says we are receiving more than \$100 million as remittance from our sportsmen and women from abroad. I do not doubt that 25 per cent from that \$100 million be invested in the development of our sportsmen and women's future is a worthwhile investment. Therefore, I trust that the honourable Minister of Finance will take heed of this and allocate appropriate funds to our sports industry. Thank you Deputy Speaker.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Member for your contribution. I will now call upon the leader of National Federation Party or his designate.

HON. P. SINGH.- Honourable Deputy Speaker, may I thank the honourable Minister for his update on the sports development around the country and I also thank him for being so proactive about developing sports in this country.

I also take this opportunity to wish our 15's rugby team, under the guidance of Coach John McKee, well in their endeavours in the World Cup campaign.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, when we talk about sports, we have a very heated exchange on internal security and from both sides, we had our views. But let us talk about a topic which unites the nation. This is where Parliamentarians must bury the hatchet and do something good for the people who voted us into this House.

All citizens, Deputy Speaker, shall be given the opportunity to participate in sports and recreational activities at a level that suits them according to their interests and abilities and to this end, I also welcome sports facilities in our maritime areas which have been constructed because we have some very inspiring and capable athletes from our rural and maritime areas as well.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- In the Parliament too.

(Laughter)

HON. P. SINGH.- Only you.

(Laughter)

And testament to this fact is that during the last Coca Cola Games, schools from the West and North really shown.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, I would urge the honourable Minister and the Government, and I had mentioned in my opening address sometime back, that we need such facilities in the West and the North as well, particularly for our athletes and despite this shortcoming, they have done extremely well. Well, I think it is food for thought for the honourable Minister in the next year's budget.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- No money!

HON. P. SINGH.- Well, this is where the Minister of Finance will look up the money.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, developing sports in Fiji does not come without its challenges and I just like to sound out a few, we are becoming so reliant on remunerations from overseas through our sports. The challenges that are facing us; are elite athletes, how we tackling them.

Fiji sports has been drug free and safe. The quality of coaches, sports science, sports medicine, sports education, juvenile delinquency and one of the most important is school sports. So, if we concentrate on these areas, and I am sure we are looking at a holistic approach to developing our sports, in spite of us taking these sports to the people and encouraging our youths, I am sure once we have our youths engaged in some purposeful activities, this will not only improve our economic situation but it will give them a sense of participation. They can purposefully engage in the activities of the nation.

MR DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you honourable Member for your contribution.

Honourable Members, the honourable Minister for Employment Productivity and Industrial Relation has informed me that he wishes to make a Ministerial Statement under Standing Order of 40. I now call upon the honourable Minister to take the floor.

National Occupational Health & Safety Services (NOHSS)

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) J.K. KONROTE.- Honourable Deputy Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of the House, ladies and gentlemen and students in the public gallery. Recently we have had a series of accidents in the Fiji Sugar Corporation Mills in the Western Division which unfortunately, resulted in the untimely death of a worker and injury to another in the Rarawai Mill in Ba, and a worker who suffered minor burns in the Lautoka mill.

Therefore, Deputy Speaker, I deem it my responsibility and obligation as the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations to appraise this august House of what happened and at the same time, highlight the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry's National Occupational Health and Safety Services (NOHSS), in our endeavours to ensure that employers provide a healthy and safe work environment for the workers under the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1996 and its subsidiary legislations and also to ensure that those who are killed and injured in the workplace are duly compensated under the newly revised Workmen's Compensation Act (Cap 98).

Honourable Deputy Speaker, the National Occupational Health and Safety Service is responsible for the promotion of OHS and enforcement of Health and Safety at Work Act 1996 and the Workmen's Compensation Act (Cap. 98).

These activities of the NOHSS are based on the concept of duty of care. It is a principle that promotes the proactive OHS risk management culture, emphasizing the creed, and I quote "that those who create the risks in the workplace and those who work with them have the primary responsibility to solve them", rather than relying on OHS Inspectors to prescribe the remedies as encouraged in the former statutory and administrative arrangements under the former Factories Act."

Deputy Speaker, the service aims to promote and maintain a working environment, which is healthy and safe to both workers and the employers and directly contributes to improve productivity. This is achieved by improved OHS awareness through the training of OHS Committees and OHS representatives, joint OHS partnership projects development, projects for OHS Regulations and Codes of Practice, OHS audits, investigations and enforcement initiatives. This service also processes workers compensation claims for work-related injuries and deaths.

Deputy Speaker, the OHS service comprises the following three (3) specialized units: The Training, Accreditation, Chemical and Hygiene (TACH) Service Unit is responsible for occupational health and safety training, which is an integral part of the OHS management strategy and the implementation of its strategies, policies and procedures.

It is also responsible for the administration and delivery of specialised OHS training and promotion for OHS Committees and representatives in workplaces around the country. The unit is also responsible for chemical assessment and control and occupational hygiene services, and administers Part IX of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1996, which stipulates the assessment and control of chemicals, including pesticides that are used in Fiji's workplaces.

The Unit also conducts occupational hygiene audits of workplaces as part of its duties, which predominantly undertakes the supervision of asbestos removal in affected buildings around the country. In view of the high risks involved with this specific activity, the unit is also responsible for the training of workers involved in the actual asbestos removal and disposal processes.

Deputy Speaker, within this Unit is the HIV and Aids Unit, which operates under the Health and Safety at Work Act. The National Code of Practice for HIV and Aids in the Workplace 2007 and the Employment Relations Promulgation 2007.

The Unit is established to advise employers and workers of acceptable preventive action for averting occupational deaths, injuries and related diseases from HIV/AIDS in the workplace, whilst respecting the fundamental principles and rights at work and also to empower workplace stakeholders to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS to businesses and the community at large through the implementation of workplace policies including the National Code of Practice and programmes that support prevention activities and those who are infected and affected by HIV and AIDS within the country.

Deputy Speaker, the Risk Engineering and Capital Projects Unit is responsible for the vetting of plants and machinery designs gazetted under Schedule 4 of the Health and Safety at Work (Administration) Regulations 1997, and the Non-Destructive Testing (NDT) of high tensile load structures such as tank surfaces, pipelines and building steel structures, with special emphasis on welding, to ensure compliance with the approved engineering standards for reliability and safety under the OHS legislation. The NDT techniques utilised are industrial radiography (X-Ray), ultrasonic, magnetic particle and dye penetrant.

The key role of the Risk Engineering Service is to facilitate, provide advice on and enforce safety engineering principles to improve reliability, health and safety in all workplaces.

Deputy Speaker, the Field Operations Unit of the Ministry is responsible for effectively delivering of OHS Field Operations services in all workplaces in the Central/Eastern, Western and Northern Divisions.

Deputy Speaker, let me talk about the Workers Compensation (WC) Service. The Workmen's Compensation Act (Cap. 94) places on employers the legal responsibility to compensate workers who sustain injuries, lost their lives or contracted diseases during and in the course of their employment. The actual compensation is through monetary payments and medical care provisions for the injured workers. In cases involving the death of a worker, compensation is paid to the dependants of the deceased.

The challenge for the Workers Compensation Service within the Ministry is to efficiently and effectively clear all backlog cases for both the Private Sector and the Civil Service, including the Disciplined Forces personnel who were injured or lost their lives during their service overseas.

Deputy Speaker, for the information of this august House, a total of 2,201 cases of claims for compensation (for deaths and injury) had been pending and unsettled from the period 2001-2014. This very high number of unsettled claims was the result of a Cabinet Decision No. 339 of 2011, when the Interim Government under the leadership of the honourable Prime Minister decided to include all the Republic of the Military Forces servicemen and women as eligible to be covered under the Workmen's Compensation Act and subsequently added another 285 cases to those pending settlement prior to 2011.

Deputy Speaker, prior to this, all of us who had served in the Middle-East with either the 1st Battalion of the Fiji Infantry Regiment, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) since the initial deployment in 1978 or the 2nd Battalion Infantry Regiment with the Multi National Force and Observers (MFO) in Sinai since 1982, were not covered under the Workmen's Compensation Act, and as a result, there were no compensations paid out to those who were killed or wounded on Active Service in these theatres of Peacekeeping Operations.

Deputy Speaker, I am glad to report and inform this august House that as at 31st July 2015, a total of about 2170 (98.6 per cent) of these outstanding cases from the year 2001 to 2014 have been settled with a remaining 33 cases consisting of 25 injuries and eight death cases are being processed for settlement. Presently, there are 32 cases which have been referred to the Employment Relations Tribunal for a ruling.

Deputy Speaker, for the RFMF personnel and their dependents, a total of about \$2,175,616.00 had been paid out to the dependents of about 29 personnel who were killed and 256 personnel who were injured. Deputy Speaker, please allow me to refer very briefly to the payment of compensation to our veterans who were deployed in the 1950s to participate with other British and Commonwealth troops during the British Military nuclear tests on Christmas Island, code-named "Operation GRAPPLE."

Deputy Speaker, on 4th November, 2014 through its Cabinet Decision No. 261, the FijiFirst Bainimarama-led Government once again did the right and honourable thing after successive British Governments had refused to acknowledge and compensate our veterans who had become ill after contracting ailments associated with exposure to nuclear radiation, by approving and effecting a one-off gratis payment, on humanitarian grounds to about 300 veterans and their families. Deputy Speaker, an allocation of \$2.95 million was provided for this activity in the 2015 budget and to date, about 40 survivors and 800 dependents of the 150 veterans who had died had been paid their compensation. The remaining claims are being processed for payment as soon as possible to those dependents who are away overseas.

Deputy Speaker, at this juncture, I would like to refer very briefly to the Workmen's Compensation (Amendment) Act 2015, which will bring about an increase in the amount of compensation afforded to the dependents of a deceased worker from \$24,000 to \$50,000 – an increase of \$26,000 or 108%. An increase in the amount paid out to a worker for sustaining an injury at the workplace that would permanently incapacitate the worker – a payment of \$67,000, which has increased from \$32,000.

Deputy Speaker, now for the first time in Fiji's Workmen's Compensation laws, de-facto partners are now recognised as legal and rightful beneficiaries. Therefore, if two people living together under an exclusive relationship, but are not married and one of them becomes a victim of a workplace accident and dies, under the new amendments, the surviving partner will become the legal and rightful dependent or beneficiary.

Deputy Speaker, I would like to conclude by referring this august House to the fatal accident and the injuries I referred to at the beginning of this presentation and provide a brief summary of what actually happened, but more importantly, what actions are being carried out by the Ministry's OHS inspectorate officers, to address these incidents with the management of the two Fiji Sugar Corporation Mills in Lautoka and Rarawai, Ba, in a collective endeavour to prevent the recurrence of such accidents.

Deputy Speaker, between 0800 hours to 0900 hours on Sunday morning, 26th July, 2015, a causal worker who was engaged in cleaning bagasse within the confines of machinery within the

Rarawai Mill in Ba was accidentally caught and trapped between a tail drum and a conveyor belt and was regrettably crushed to death.

Deputy Speaker, sadly on Friday 31st July, 2015 within the same Rarawai Mill in Ba, another casual seasonal worker whilst engaged in cleaning the tubes at the evaporating station within the mill, accidentally fell into a well of hot water and suffered severe burns to his lower body.

Deputy Speaker, at approximately 1000 hours on Sunday, 2nd August, 2015, a casual worker suffered superficial burns to his upper body when hot water spilt on him from a discharge line whilst he was working within the Diffuser station of the mill in Lautoka. In accordance with the relevant OHS regulations, the Ministry's inspectorate officers have completed their preliminary investigations and are presently coordinating and pursuing the prompt payment of compensations to the dependants of the deceased and the two injured workers.

Deputy Speaker, the core responsibility of the Ministry is to continue to pursue the attainment of Decent Employment Standards through the promotion of unemployment opportunities, development of healthy workers, the provision of healthy and safe working environment, fair employment conditions, good faith employment relations and productive workplaces. These responsibilities are achieved by focusing on developing a modern, structured and enabling policy environment, supported by sound labour laws, policies, institutions, international best practices and values, underpinned by tripartite social dialogue and self-regulation.

Deputy Speaker, these recent incidents in the Fiji Sugar Corporation Mills in Ba and Lautoka highlight the need to develop, establish and sustain a safe and healthy work-related culture and attitude within the workplace by all stakeholders in order that as a nation, we can prevent and avoid injuries and fatalities which inevitably result in low morale and productivity.

I thank you, Deputy Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Minister for your statement. I will call upon the Leader of Opposition or her designate for their contribution.

HON. RATU. S.V. NANOVO.- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First, I must commend the honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relation for the very interesting and very successful outline of the statement that he had just delivered to the House this afternoon.

We all aware that it is one of the main priorities of the Ministry is to ensure that the OHS is closely observed by all the industries throughout Fiji. In many instances, many of these industries and business owners they do tend to take it very lightly. But fortunately with the awareness that has now been carried out by them and all the results that have been highlighted to the House this afternoon, we just thank them for the high achievements that they have done so far, especially for the compensation that has been paid to the outstanding workers, or the families that they have been claiming for that in the past years and now they are working on that, and right now they are about to be cleared.

We also thank them for the work that has been done towards the RFMF personnel in this area and I think that was also one of the areas that this side of the House is trying to take up with the Government. We are grateful that now it has been solved and we hope that this will continue in future.

However, as for our side of the House, we have noted that recently, there are few traffic accidents that have occurred in the past years and have not been compensated, especially the one that

was raised this morning by myself regarding the crash at Kalabu, if the honourable Minister can also look into the outcome of that, plus the other two buses that also had accident early this month, one at Tavakubu in Lautoka and the one just last week at Serua.

This side of the House, I think, with the type of awareness and the drive that the Ministry is taking through, listening to what has been delivered to us this afternoon, I hope they will also be able to solve the outstanding issues with bus passengers, which their complaints have not been solved up to now and we look forward to that. We thank the honourable Minister once again. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you honourable Member for your contribution. We will now invite the Leader of NFP, the floor is yours.

HON. P. SINGH.- May I thank the honourable Minister for enlightening us on that topic and I also thank him for telling this House the various provisions that exists under OHS and the Workers Compensation Act.

At the outset, Honourable Deputy Speaker, any dispute resolution be it under OHS, Workmen's Compensation, if there is a successful resolution, we welcome it and we thank the honourable Prime Minister for taking the initiative to address the concerns and the outstanding issues of the veterans and the RFMF personnel.

Honourable Deputy Speaker, as alluded to in this statement by the honourable Minister, the incidents that happened at the FSC Rarawai Mill, naturally are not in isolation.

The FSC is a huge institution and OHS within the mills and the factory is an area of concern, just because by the very nature of the factories. During the six months of harvesting, what I suggest to the honourable Minister is if they can increase surveillance of OHS within factories, not with only FSC but with other factories, so that we are in line with and up-to-date with the machines, the requirements and the various things that go with it.

Furthermore, Honourable Deputy Speaker, the accidents and the victims in these mills (three of them), they are in the process of being compensated. What I also suggest to the honourable Minister is, the person who died, he left behind a family. He has a wife and children and if there can be an assistance whereby these institutions like FSC, if they can extend some sort of gratitude towards the family by employing their own children, so that they continue with the benefits. This would be in cases of large institutions like FSC and one of the incidents at the Rarawai Mill, Deputy Speaker, was very careless in nature, where hot water spilt. If you had visited the factory you would note that the two who were cleaning did not have any sort of protection from the hot water.

So these are what the OHS people should be looking at these things, not just theoretically looking at what is on the paper, you tick 21 boxes and you come out of it. They must realistically look at the factory, the workers safety and not only safety of workers but all those personnel who work in the factory.

These are some of the suggestions that I'd like to leave with the honourable Minister and I would join my other colleagues in saying that OHS, Workplace Compensation, there are still many cases pending and if a speedy resolution like the one initiative by the honourable Prime Minister last year, if that could be taken on board and if you can have a speedy resolution, it will be good for us all.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you honourable Member, I thank you for your contribution.

Honourable Members, we have now come to the end of today's sitting, I thank you all for your participation and we will now adjourn the House until 9.30 tomorrow morning, Friday 28th August, 2015.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.19 p.m.