

TUESDAY, 17TH MARCH, 2015

The Parliament resumed at 9.45 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present except the honourable Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports, the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, the honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs and the honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- Confirmation of Minutes.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Leader of Government in Parliament.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 16th March, 2015, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

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

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Parliament will now vote on the motion. Does any Member oppose the motion? Since no Member opposes, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

Secretary-General.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

MADAM SPEAKER.- I welcome you all to today's sitting, particularly the students of the University of the South Pacific who are enrolled in PL100, Politics and Government, and I hope that today's visit will be a learning experience for you. Thank you.

I now draw honourable Members' attention to the announcement of the membership of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs made on 9th February, 2015. There is a change in the membership and the honourable Salote Radrodro will replace the honourable Leader of the Opposition, Ro Teimumu Kepa.

On population issues, Fiji's population growth rate peaked at 3.3 per cent per year between 1956 and 1966, but has since declined steadily. Although the natural increase is 1.1 per cent, but this is offset by a net emigration rate of -0.9 per cent. Therefore growth is currently estimated at only 0.2 per cent annually, below the inter-censal average rate of 0.7 per cent. That is food for thought.

QUESTIONS AND REPLIES**Fiji Electricity Authority – Half-life Refurbishment
(Question No. 44/2015)**

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 44 of 2015 under my name. This is to the honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Transport.

Would the honourable Minister inform this august House, for FEA to provide an update on its plans to undertake the half-life refurbishment of the Monasavu Hydro Scheme?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA (Minister for Infrastructure and Works).- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I also thank the honourable Member for his question.

Madam Speaker, before I attempt to answer the oral question by the honourable Member, may I just take your leave at this point to place before the House answers to written questions that were made to me as Minister for Infrastructure. These are in response to Question No. 14/2015, Question No. 28/2015, Question 35/2015, Question 36/2015 and finally Question No. 37/2015. These were questions that were put to the House and before me at the last sitting of the House which I am now submitting and for the benefit of the honourable Members who had asked the questions.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, with regards to the substantive question raised by the honourable Viam Pillay, this is a question similar to the one that I answered yesterday with regards to the 33,000 volts which FEA is now undertaking to repair after being in use for so many years. That line is very much the line that was used when Monasavu Hydro was constructed and it has now reached a stage where either the lines were to be changed or re-fitted so that they are safe to provide a service that does not allow for interruptions and that it is efficient and effective.

Madam Speaker, Monasavu Hydro Scheme as you are aware has been in service for more than 30 years and it is a very critical asset for us as a nation because it provides for more than 50 per cent, particularly of Viti Levu's energy and electricity consumption. The dam, in particular, and the accessories to the dam that allow for the power to be conveyed to our door steps and to our homes, particularly within the major assets of FEA have not undergone any serious work during the time when they were constructed. So, in that light, Government approved in 2010 to commence the refurbishment of Monasavu which then commenced in 2012, and Government has committed an amount of approximately about \$70 million from within the resources of FEA to deal with this matter, and this is the repair works on the system including the dam, Wailoa Power Station, the power towers that convey energy from Wailoa to Vuda and also from Wailoa to Suva and including the 33,000 voltage cable that I had referred to yesterday.

To-date Government, through the FEA has already committed approximately \$13 million and some of the benefits that we expect out of this is improved plant efficiency and energy output, the extension of the economic life of the hydro scheme, the security of power in Viti Levu which is very critical for both our social and economic use to mitigate the risks that are associated with the scheme malfunctioning due to wear and tear. I want to assure the House that Monasavu Hydro, despite its age is safe. This is through the routine inspections that we conduct every once in a while from New Zealand and this is coming up also for another round of inspection. So, not only because of what Monasavu is providing for us in terms of electricity but the dam in itself needs to be safe and it is safe.

The socio-economic benefits that are befitting in the long term to the reliability of power is one of the other benefits. So, if there is a need, I will be able to go later into some of the areas that we are actually undertaking but suffice to say, that that commitment is there, Madam Speaker, not only to make Monasavu safe but to make sure also that there is a consistency of supply and a mark of this commitment is to make sure that whatever assets we have there, it is safe to use and it is providing for us a reliable and effective energy conveyed for the use of our people both social and for their economic benefits.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Supplementary question. Madam Speaker, it is good to note that Monasavu is providing over 50 per cent of the electricity in Fiji, and it is also sitting on a leased piece of land. The question that I would like to ask the honourable Minister this morning is during his routine half-life refurbishment exercise whether any consideration was given to the resource owners in terms of their participation in this exercise.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, in terms of Monasavu and its ownership and in recognition of the native landowners, this has always been a contentious issue. I have raised in the House that this particular area is a very technical one dealing with safety and that the resources that are available to make the dam safe and produce electricity is the responsibility of qualified competent authorities. Therefore, this is a work that is done by the Authority in itself and the technical experts that come from overseas.

The FEA always considers the landowners to be an integral part of the relationship that keeps any of its assets secure and serving the purpose for which they had been made. That is always in the forefront of all of this. Now, there are certain things that the landowners participate in and they are participating in. There are certain things that are only proper for the proper authority, where the authorities are vested and the risks are involved to do this work, include the inclusion of those confident people who come from abroad.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I would like to ask the Minister responsible to give us an assurance that there will be minimal or no disruption at all during these outlined refurbishment process. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, half of this work has already been in progress, so we have spent about \$30 million. Though certain interruptions have occurred, I had noted yesterday that part of the 33,000 volts change, we had also experienced some power disruptions around Suva. That is not with the intent, these things do give away but much of these re-fitted (I am talking about, particularly the repairs of the tower that comes from Monasavu and Wailoa), these will be done next year at round about Easter but this is a 6-year programme that we are doing. We have already done about 3. During that weekend around Easter, we would have already put in place these big emergency generators that you know are now in Kinoya.

They will be online, and then essentially, what we will do is that, we will generally just shut down the whole of Monasavu. So, for about two weeks that we'll be working on the tunnels, and on the wires and all that, we will be receiving power from these big generators that we now have powered by diesel, until such time that all the checks are done, all the rust are repaired, the lines are safe and then we put them back on, and then we hope that by the time that it will take another 50 years before we get to have a look at them again, if there needs to be a need to do that.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Thank you honourable Minister for the explanation on the refurbishment and the involvement of the repairing of towers, etc., because as an extension of Monasavu Scheme B Power Lines is a very important factor here. Can the Minister explain what will now happen to people that have built houses within the waitive area and the risk that has been involved in terms of their health and them having houses under this very very powerful lines that you are going to be repairing?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, I thank you and also thank the honourable Member for his question. Naturally, any raising of Monasavu's contribution to the power mix grid, particularly for Viti Levu depends on a number of factors. One, whether there is enough water to be able to allow for the generators to work overtime and produce more power. Sometimes, it is just within the capacity because the realigned power mix to give Monasavu, for instance, like a lower power output and have other sources to produce the power. I think I need to explain that because the honourable Member's question is implying that there may be a change to the power output that is coming through these lines and affecting the way that we do our work and the way that it affects the family. That is not going to happen, as I have said, that is not going to change, if not, Monasavu has a maximum capacity of what it can produce. Sometimes you take it up, but the authority have the proper power mix to do that.

Madam Speaker, also in light of the safety of those who build their houses close to the power line, this is a decision that these communities have taken. I think that is something is reasonably to know by virtue of common sense that these are lines that have very, very high voltage output. These lines are very powerful lines and people should be discouraged from building their houses to places that are within the areas of risk. Given the extent of where the lines are because people had moved into their own places, if the House wants to know how many homes are within the area where the lines are running through, this would be an information that we can find out but given the extensive nature of covering the line down to Vuda and also down to Cunningham, that request may be made to the House to the relevant Minister and also, be given due time to present such a report to the House by way of a written question or so, and I will be happy to facilitate that.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Kiliraki

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplementary question. It is appreciated the answers given by the honourable Minister to the first question, answering appropriately that the technical and professional assistance does not qualify the landowners but I would like to ask the Minister whether the landowners have a social obligation of the FEA as a goodwill for their co-operation and having good relationship with FEA, especially Monasavu for the last 30 years, if the Minister could be able to provide non-technical assistance to landowners in respects to transportation. As you know, Madam Speaker, the villagers have so many transportation in terms of carriers, as well as providing provisions, food and vegetables for those professional workers up there in Monasavu, as well clearing, etc., that are non-technical, that could be able to help the local landowners be able to get some economic returns for their daily subsistence every day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- That was the last supplementary question. Honourable Minister?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for his question. I think the other side of the House is getting very lively this morning, so they did yesterday as well, in terms of relevance.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Answer the question.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- We are always at goodwill, Madam Speaker, to answer questions as they are raised, but I am just trying to raise a point before the House this morning.

I do not think, Madam Speaker, I noted at all in my speech earlier on, did not make any reference at all that the landowners do not qualify for this work. I had never alluded to that. I said that the proper authority where this kind of work and the proper competency is in the authority that is dealing with it, and if so, external assistance where it is needed. I think that needs to be alluded here and corrected. No way did I say that they do not qualify, so I think that needs to be made clear.

However, the issue with regards to the assistance to the landowners, I have noted that the FEA is an integral part of the community where there assets are placed, including Monasavu. Monasavu has been a long standing case. The issue of Monasavu in terms of fair compensation has been awarded by the courts, as we all know. That is a fair compensation that has already been granted under the law, under the courts of Fiji. Now, FEA being a very good corporation, with a very good social corporate responsibility is always referring to the landowners on matters where they could be of assistance, and this is good practice by any company that is providing the service, be it private or be it that belongs to Government. So, I believe that is a matter that the FEA will now continually look at and it is something that they can always work out with the landowners as they proceed into the future. But, I think at the end of the day, the important thing here, Madam Speaker is that the landowners and FEA being the competent authority that provides for power are working together, and that the landowners themselves are also benefitting from what is being produced out of Monasavu.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Minister. We will go on to the second question, and that is question by the honourable Alvick Maharaj.

Youth Groups Registered with Ministry of Youth
(Question No. 45/2015)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Speaker, I rise in this Chamber today to ask Question No. 45 of 2015 under my name. The question is directed to the honourable Minister for Youth and Sports.

Can the honourable Minister inform this House why it is important that youth groups be registered with the Ministry and what programmes are available within the Ministry for out of school urban and disadvantaged rural youths?

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU (Minister for Youth and Sports).- Madam Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Leader of the Opposition, fellow Cabinet Ministers and honourable Members of Parliament, I must thank honourable Maharaj for that question.

Yes, Madam Speaker, registration of youth groups and organisations is a process available within the Ministry. This is to ensure that the groups are organised and have proper plans and strategies in place to achieve outcomes for their members. When youth groups are registered with the Ministry, they have the following advantages:

- (i) Youth groups can apply for youth grant assistance from the Ministry;
- (ii) Registered groups are provided opportunities for training and capacity building;
- (iii) Enhance youth groups of opening bank account;
- (iv) Gain recognition of youth groups with other government agencies where they may need to apply for assistance;
- (v) Improve youth groups ability to access funding, both with agencies and overseas donors; and
- (vi) Enhance their chances of participation in local and national and international youth conferences and forums.

Yes, Madam Speaker, we have programmes available within the Ministry for our out of school urban youth. This includes:

- (i) Seed of success, motivational programmes to assist young Fijians develop the proper mindsets and become active participants in their communities;
- (ii) The National Youth Band Programme offers the opportunity for youths to develop their musical talents and facilities, to facilitate their employment within the music and entertainment industry;
- (iii) The Ministry provides small business training process that prepares youths to enter into income generating projects, and develop a livelihood for themselves;
- (iv) The Ministry provides skill training like hairdressing, jewellery making that offers opportunities for urban youths to develop knowledge and skills to utilise resources for improved livelihoods; and
- (v) Youth family gardens. This encourages young people to utilise available pieces of land in their neighbourhoods to establish vegetable gardens for subsistence and semi-subsistence livelihood.

Madam Speaker, for the disadvantaged rural youths, the number of programmes available with the Ministry includes, Youth Training Centres Programme that offers rural youth training in agriculture and trade skills throughout the five youth training centres that are located around Fiji. These centres are located in Nasau, Sigatoka for the Nadroga Province, Naleba in the Macuata Province, Naqere in Savusavu for the Cakaudrove Province, Valelevu in Nasinu for Naitasiri Province and Yavitu for the Kadavu Province.

The Ministry also has Youth Grants available that offers rural youths and youth groups to access funding for income generating initiatives, community development projects and capacity building training. This grant is also available for urban out-of-school youths who also wish to access funding. We also offer empowerment training and integrated approach to develop rural youth knowledge and skills to

utilise local resources for improved livelihoods. The Ministry has also provided mobile skill training, where it takes training to the rural communities and provide opportunities for youths to develop skills and opportunities for income generations.

Rural youths can also access support to develop rural playing fields in their communities. This is in addition to the sports equipment and outreach programmes delivered through the National Sports Commission.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Minister.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable Minister for the information tabled in the House this morning. Youths are very important to us, they are the future leaders of this nation.

Can the honourable Minister inform the House, how many youth groups are registered in the Ministry from 2007 till to-date? *Vinaka!*

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Matanitobua for the question. Madam Speaker, a total number of 2,541 youth clubs are registered in the Ministry. Out of these, only 35 per cent are active, while 65 per cent are inactive.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I will give the floor to the honourable Gavoka. You did stand up previously.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, my question to the honourable Minister, I have always talked about the support system. All these grand plans always fall apart because there is no support system.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- That's not a question.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- He said that 65 per cent have failed. What support systems are in place to help make this wonderful programmes the Government has come up with work? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Madam Speaker, I must thank the honourable Member for the question. Yes, after having gone around for the last six months and sitting down with these youth groups, although the Government provides grants, but the feedback that we get, some of these youth groups must change their attitude. That is first. But, also the support that we have, we conduct mobile training to enhance capacity building and provide time and leadership training depending on the demands that come from the youths. But yes the failure that we see is that the attitude must change. We also have communication problems because of accessibility and the telephone network in some areas, especially in the rural and the outer islands where communication is a problem. We have sat down with Digicel and Telecom and we are coming up with a support facility to solve that communication problem.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the honourable Minister a specific question. Specifically in relation to disadvantaged rural youths and here I am talking about referring to

indigenous rural youths who live in the villages and in my area, who plant marijuana and who comprise the greatest population in our jails.

(Chorus of interjections)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And Madam Speaker, I have listened very well to what he said and I never heard him referring to an institution called Tutu Training Centre.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Hear! hear!

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- What is the question?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I am coming to it.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- If you have been here on Budget day you would have heard.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The problem I see is that this Government has not properly addressed the concerns, the ideals, the priorities and the challengers of the youth in the villages.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Question!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- This is my question. Has this Government conducted a search to identify what the challenges are before it gets these programmes or in relation to these programmes, what specific challenges are its addressing in relation to these people? I am referring specifically to the youths who live in the villages, to the youth who use or plant marijuana, to the youths who are now populating our jails. What is there? Have you conducted a study to identify this, because as I see it, you have done nothing?

(Chorus of interjections)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order!

You would have noticed that I do allow some background information to clarify the question. Thank you.

Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Madam Speaker, I must thank the honourable Nawaikula for the question. Yes, we have the support but it was unfortunate that when we went to the district of Nasinu, they did not want to receive us. But we went to Tukavesi and talked to the youths from Tunuloa. The challenges that they have is accessibility and we have come up with some strategies and we did talk with their youth leaders. Last week we were conducting training at Wailevu on some of the demands and requests that comes from the Youth Clubs and not the Members of Parliament.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- *Vinaka! vinaka!*

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, I will allow this time to the honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable Minister for Youth and Sports for visiting our youths in Rewa and I am sure that he will find that they are very active members of their youth groups. My question to the honourable Minister is that many of our youths are looking forward to participating in the seasonal workers scheme both in Australia and New Zealand. What type of practical training is the Ministry carrying out in terms of good preparation for these young people when they do get called to join the seasonal workers scheme? Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. LT COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Madam Speaker, that portfolio for seasonal workers has been transferred to the Ministry of Labour and they are conducting the training. It is no longer with the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, my question as I listened to the honourable Minister for Youth's explanation, it suggests that the Ministry has reactive policies as alluded to by the 65 per cent of inactive youth groups.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Question!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- I am getting to that, my question is what is the Ministry doing or what policies does the Ministry have

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, please stop pointing, it is not respectful.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- My apologies Madam Speaker.

(Laughter)

What policies does the Ministry have to address the huge number of youths that flood our city in the early mornings of Saturdays and Sundays in terms of opening hours of night clubs? What strategies or what policies do they have in regards to the legislation to be able to address that problem which is a major youth problem in Fiji?

(Chorus of interjection)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Order!

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Point of order. We are now going into the opening hours of liquor outlets - that is irrelevant. The honourable Minister for Youth, if the Opposition have been listening well, had addressed various programmes in relation to the development of youths in this country and I did not hear anything to do with liquor opening hours.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I am sorry I could not hear what the honourable Minister was saying. Could you please repeat what you have just said? She will keep repeating it if you keep making a lot of noise.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Point of order, Madam. The subject matter is youth development.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- What is your point of order?

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Standing Order 40, thank you. The supplementary question relates to the opening hours of liquor outlets that is clearly outside....

(Chorus of interjection)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. You may continue honourable Minister.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you Madam Speaker, the opening hours of liquor outlets is not an issue in the original question that was asked nor in the answers that was given by the honourable Minister. As it is, it is an irrelevant question.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear! Hear!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, may I make a ruling on that particular point of order. Please take your seat. The point of order is taken but the question is what programmes are available within the Ministry for out of school, urban and disadvantaged rural urban youths and the issue raised is a problem of the urban youths. I will ask the Minister to respond to that question, please.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I must thank the honourable Radrodoro for that question. We have sat down with faith based youth clubs especially in the urban areas and have addressed these issues, especially for those dropouts. As I have alluded to before, for the out of school urban youths, we have been doing awareness programmes, especially the faith based ones and also with the youth clubs in the urban areas on the issue of urban drift. Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you very much, honourable Member. You will note that I am allowing more supplementary questions to be asked mainly because we have a lot of young people present in the gallery and this issue could be of interest to them. However, I am going to ask for the last supplementary question and I am asking the honourable Vadei to ask his question.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. My supplementary question to the Minister regarding youth issue is, what programmes are there for those youths who have not completed their tertiary education, can they be assisted by your Ministry?

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- I must thank honourable Vadei for that question.

Madam Speaker, going around and sitting with youths, they come up with those questions and we have opened avenues to them to be accessible to TELS, so they go to the Ministry of Education for registration.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you very much for that vibrant question and answer session. I will now ask the honourable Dr. Neil Sharma to ask his question to the Minister of Health.

Doctor-Patient Ratio
(Question No. 46/2015)

HON. DR. N.P. SHARMA.- Madam Speaker, Question 46 of 2015, under my name is directed to the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services.

Can the honourable Minister inform this House, what is the current Ministry's doctor-patient ratio, and its breakdown in the next five years? What percentage ratio would he be looking at?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Dr. Neil Sharma for his question.

Currently in Fiji, within the Ministry of Health, we have around 510 doctors, so the current ratio between doctors and the population is 1 doctor per 1,600 population. If we take into account the number of doctors who are working in private practice, that stands at around 200 doctors. So, if you take the combined number, the ratio would then drop to 1 doctor to 1,200 population.

The standard by the World Health Organisation for an acceptable and efficient health service is 1 doctor to 1,000 population, and that is also the target of the Ministry of Health, to bring the ratio of doctors down to 1 doctor to 1,000 population.

Over the past few years, my predecessor was very instrumental in doing this. The Government has already agreed to have a new establishment of 150 doctors every year, from 2014 to 2017. So for these next few years, we will be increasing the doctor positions in the Ministry of Health. This will cater for our new graduates from our two schools, namely the Fiji National University and the University of Fiji, and also graduates from other overseas organisations and institutions.

The first batch of University of Fiji doctors graduated in 2013, and this has increased the number of interns that we have up to 75 in 2014. That is the first time we had such a large number of interns - it used to be around 20 to 30. This year, we expected 79 interns from the two universities, although we only have about 70 in place, because 9 had to go back and complete their internship programmes.

We believe that if the number of new doctors entering the population of doctors and the attrition rate does not change, we should be able to meet the target of one doctor to 1,000 population by 2017. Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- I would like to ask the honourable Minister for Health if that doctor ratio includes the nurse practitioners, who also work as doctors in medical facilities?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I cannot confirm whether that includes the nurse practitioners, I will need to clarify that, but I assume at the moment the figures given to me relate to doctors themselves. So it does not include the nurse practitioners because they will be included with the number of nurses.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The honourable Karavaki, you are only allowed one supplementary question.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. If the honourable Minister for Health can confirm to this House whether those doctors who are expected to come into the workforce as stated, whether there is guarantee that they will actually join the workforce, or there are factors that might not eventuate as according to what they are expecting?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I am not sure what the question is. Perhaps, the honourable Member could elucidate a bit more on what sort of factors he is referring to.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Please, honourable Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- If I can be given time to explain the background of my question. In the past, and I understand that it is also now, it is not easy to retain doctors because doctors leave. They find where the opportunities are and they go there.

The honourable Minister has explained that he is expecting doctors to complete their studies and join the workforce. I am asking the honourable Minister to confirm whether that will actually happen that those numbers that they are expecting to join the workforce will actually join the workforce or there are expectations they might not. What are the remedies they have in order to achieve what they are expecting to achieve that is, the standard of one doctor to 1,000, according to the population?

HON. J. USAMATE.- I thank the honourable Member for his question. There is no doubt in my mind that the purpose that we develop doctors is to make sure that they can provide the services in Fiji. So the doctors that we are talking about here are the young doctors – the new ones who are coming out with their initial degrees.

Most of these doctors when they come out of their training programmes, they look forward to being employed in the Ministry of Health. We assign them responsibilities in the Ministry of Health and I think one of the questions that is being raised by the honourable Member relates to the retention of doctors. We understand that there are a lot of factors that affect retention, such as remuneration, opportunities for further career development and the structures and the availability of positions within the workforce.

These are some of the things that we are looking at now, and it would also be a part of the programme that we are working with the World Bank, in terms of the overall reform of the Civil Service - to structure the medical fraternity in such a way that it encourages doctors to stay. It is not going to be something easy because you know, once doctors become specialists, the amount of money that they can command in other countries is far higher than what we can offer here in Fiji. However, we look to be able to create a culture in the Ministry and structures that encourage them to have career paths, to enhance their learning, and at the same time try to keep them in the country, and that is something that the Ministry will be focussing on.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Minister. Supplementary question.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Thank you Madam Speaker. My supplementary question is, can the honourable Minister inform this House how many of these doctors are locals, and how many are foreigners? Also in the next five years, how will he remedy the situation so that they can meet the doctor-patient ratio?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Since the question is statistical in nature, the onus is on you to answer orally or in written form at a later date.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, that was what I was going to suggest because it involves statistics, if I could be given time to submit it.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I will therefore, give the last question to the honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Thank you Madam Speaker. I thank the honourable Minister for his reply, and on the issue of this doctor-patient ratio and on the issue of private doctors. Can the

honourable Minister explain as to whether there is a policy in place where it is mandatory on private doctors to spend some hours in the nearest public hospital so as to cushion the impact of shortage of doctors?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, there is no such policy in place. Where there are shortages, the Ministry of Health sometimes invite Doctors on locum, where they spend a few hours and they can help out in the Health Centres. We also have a provision where all the Doctors in the Ministry of Health who are not involved, for instance, people at positions of Deputy Secretaries or Directors, they are also required to give around four hours of their time to provide clinical services in our various Health Centres. So, there is no policy as such but we do where there is a need, we invite them or we take them as locum to provide services within our health centres and hospitals.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you very much, I will now give the floor to the honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

Fijian Affairs (Amendment) Regulations, 2010
(Question No. 47/2015)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, may I ask your approval just to give a brief background to this controversial issue, especially in the presence of our students this morning. It is going to be 30 seconds only.

MADAM SPEAKER.- 30 seconds.

HON. RATU I. TIKOCA.- Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I will give you 30 seconds.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- The question first, if the Ministry that was Fijian Affairs is now called the *iTaukei* Affairs, secondly the Native Land Trust Board is now *iTaukei* Land Trust Board and then the Fijian Holdings still remain Fijian Holdings; Why? This institution was actually created by the Great Council of Chiefs. It was to help reduce the disparity of our economic earning.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Question, please.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- The question is:

The honourable Prime Minister, Sir, can you please inform the House whether the Ministry consulted and obtained the prior and informed consent of Native Fijians before it passed the Fijian Affairs (Amendment) Regulations 2010 that took away the name "Fijian" to be replaced with the word "*iTaukei*"?

MADAM SPEAKER.- The honourable Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs.

HON. S. VUNIVALU.- Yes, good!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- For the information of the House, Madam Speaker, the Fijian Holdings is a statutory body. It is a company and has its own board and directorship. But I thank the honourable Member for this question because it once again demonstrates his lack of fundamental understanding...

(Chorus of interjections)

...of what the Government priority is or should be. As we have said before, we thank the Fijian people for keeping him to that side of the House.

(Laughter)

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Answer the question.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Could you listen, please.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I am sure Members of this august House are privy to the process undertaken to propagate the People's Charter for Change, Peace and Progress that the then Interim Government through the NCBBF, to ensure changes to our system of government, our Constitution....

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Your Constitution.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- law, economic...

HON. RATU I. TIKOCA.- Your Constitution!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- And what are you doing here.

(Laughter)

...resources development policies and our leadership values. The draft People's Charter, Madam Speaker, was compiled by drawing upon the findings, recommendations and also feedbacks obtained through outreach activities undertaken throughout the country, including all the urban areas, over 1,000 villages. So the concept of common and equal citizenry has been promoted but how can you pretend, Madam Speaker....

MADAM SPEAKER.- Could I ask, honourable Members to uphold the decorum of this House and be respectful. Let us listen to the answer and we will give you time for supplementary questions. Thank you.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- It is intimidating from that side of the House, Madam Speaker, I am not easily intimidated. That is why I am here with this group of people and they are there. But as I said, Madam Speaker, the concept of a common and equal citizenry as often been promoted. But how can we pretend that this was reality when we did not even have a common name that reflected the name of our country.

HON. GOVT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- In the United States of America, no matter the ethnic background, all citizens proudly call themselves "Americans". The citizens of the Commonwealth of Australia are Australians, the citizens of France and Italy are French and Italians. In New Zealand, all citizens are New Zealanders and the indigenous people are "Maori", which is an indigenous word. In Malaysia, all its citizens are Malaysians, however, the indigenous people are called by a term in their own vernacular language *Bumiputra*.

In Fiji's case, all citizens are Fijians and the indigenous people are known as *iTaukei*.

(Chorus of interjections by Opposition Members)

It is very simple.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Sorry, they did not hear the last bit.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- They did not hear the last bit, Madam Speaker, well, I said in the last bit, "in Fiji's case, all citizens are Fijians" and the indigenous people are known as *iTaukei*.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- *Kai Viti*.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I have said it before and I will say it again in this House, especially in the presence of university students, the word "Fijian" did not exist before the arrival of the white men. I repeat, Madam Speaker, it is an English name coined by the English, to describe people from the place the Tongans called "*Fisi*" and which it became Fiji.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- Tell them.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- That is a history lesson for the Members of the opposite side of the House and the university students. Our ancestors had no concept of the name "Fijian". It was not part of our language. The word "Fijian" did not belong to us, the "*iTaukei*". So, how can it be taken away when it is not ours in the first place?

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- It is a word coined by the British and it is not even an indigenous word. It must be noted, Madam Speaker, that the *Yash Ghai Report*, ...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- The one that you burned.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ...that they have been promoting, also stated that all citizens of the Republic of Fiji should be called "Fijians". I wonder if the honourable Member, Madam Speaker, asking the question is asking us today.

Madam Speaker, during the drafting of our Constitution, the Fijian Government also held nation-wide consultations.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- No!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Even in their own villages,...

(Chorus of interjections by Opposition Members)

... which also received and also reaffirmed that the citizens of the Republic of Fiji should be referred to as "Fijians".

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- The Constitution, Madam Speaker, our Constitution...

(Chorus of interjections by Opposition Members)

... recognises the principle of common and equal citizenry whilst simultaneously recognising the indigenous Fijians as "*iTaukei*". Very simple. His was the ultimate expression of the will of the Fijian people and therefore, is expressed in the supreme law.

I have been termed a liar by a Member from the opposite side of the House, Madam Speaker. He really would not want me to go into that lying business about him.

(Chorus of interjections)

I say, let us keep the good comments.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, we must not politicise such a basic issue. We must put behind us once and for all the ethnic centric politics of yesteryears and leave it in the history book where it belongs, which is where the honourable Member belongs, certainly not in this House with his type of questions and thinking. One nation, one people united with a common and equal citizenry. We are all Fijians because we are citizens of this country and our indigenous people, who have a special recognition are of course called the *iTaukei*. The sooner the honourable Member and others like him accept our common destiny, the sooner we will become even stronger nation, to tackle issue of growing our economy, providing sustainable livelihoods, creating more jobs, providing education and training and gaining basic amenities like roads, water and electricity for all Fijians. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER.- I will now open the floor to three supplementary questions and I will now ask the first one, the honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, the term "Fijian" has nothing to do with the Charter, nothing.

(Chorus of interjections)

May I remind the other side, Madam Speaker, that a ruling which says that you can have a brief explanation to clarify the question.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Tell them, tell them.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- So, I am telling you it has nothing to do with the Charter. This belongs to us. It came to us under a law 1900 which defines us as Fijians. We did not ask for it.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- What is your question?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- But it became ours and is associated with our language, it is associated with our *i tovo*, it is associated with what we do, with our culture and the question is, he has made a brief

explanation without attending to the question. Could you explain briefly, had you consulted the chiefs and the people who owned this name before you changed this? And if not, why not? That is the question, he did not answer it. Prior and pre consultation, did you do that?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- That was not the question, I will not answer it. Thank you.

HON. NAWAIKULA.- Whether the Ministry consulted and obtained the prior and informed consent of Native Fijians before it passed this? Did you consult them, did you ask them? Did you ask for their permission?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Repeat that question, please.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is written right there, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Can you read it please.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is written right there, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Can you read it, please.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.-Can the honourable Minister inform this House whether he consulted and obtained the prior and informed consent of Native Fijians before it passed this Act to change their name.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I am sorry, that is not the question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is the question, Madam Speaker. I am probably holding on to a different one then.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, we will now move on to the next supplementary question by the honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Supplementary Question, Madam. Speaker. I think there are two sets of questions. What we have here is whether the Ministry consulted and obtained the prior and informed consent of the Native Fijians. That is according to our Order Paper.

MADAM SPEAKER.- That is not the question.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- For the last 10 minutes I have answered the question. Maybe he was not listening, maybe he did not want to listen to the answer I gave, that is his problem.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The question has not been answered.

MADAM SPEAKER.- The question that has been approved by the Business Committee has been adequately answered. Thank you. So, I will now move on to the next question and I will ask the honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa to ask her question.

One more supplementary question, the honourable Ratu Lalabalavu.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplementary question to the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs.

Would the honourable Minister please explain as to the fate of the renaming of Register of Native Lands (RNL) when this came into effect – the changing of all of these because I understand, Madam Speaker, if I may be allowed to elaborate on that question to help the honourable Prime Minister? If he makes a check now to the Native Lands Commission, this Register of Native Land, in short known as RNL for all registered native lands in Fiji has not been changed, RNL still remains the same. Can the honourable Minister explain as to why that has not been changed or will that open up another can of worms? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Point of Order.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Minister of Point of Order.

(Laughter)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order, order. Let us hear the Point of Order - Honourable Minister for Lands.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- The way I heard that question, it was in relation to the register of *iTaukei* land? Am I correct, Madam?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Sorry, I did not hear that, can you repeat it?

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- The supplementary question was in relation to the Register of *iTaukei* Lands?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Is that so?

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Yes.

Madam Speaker, this amendment that has been made by the honourable Prime Minister or his government for that matter, you being part of it, there is a downstream effect of all that, by changing all the word “native” to become *iTaukei* and all that. In that downstream effect, can the honourable Prime Minister explain why the RNL still remains RNL, why haven’t they made those changes to reflect the view, whatever names they want to put on it. Will that open up again another can of worms?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister for Lands.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- I am asking the honourable Prime Minister not the Minister for Lands.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Point of order, Madam Speaker. If the question is leading to the impact of a change of name from Register of Native Land to Register of *iTaukei* Land and what that would mean later on, that is a totally new question, Madam Speaker and it should be raised as such, it is hypothetical.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I agree with the point that has been raised and the question can be re-formulated at a later sitting.

I will now take the last supplementary question by the honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I thank the honourable Prime Minister for his replies this morning. I think the question was a very simple one on whether the Ministry did consult or obtain prior and informed consent from the native Fijians. The mechanisms that are set in place in the *iTaukei* Affairs Act, that is Decree No. 31 of 2010 sets out the powers of the Minister in receiving recommendations or submissions from the Great Council of Chiefs in order to act in making any changes relating to the good governance and well-being of the *iTaukei* people.

The question is, I put to the honourable Prime Minister that he does not have any power according to the Decree within the Decree to make changes without the consent and consultation of the GCC. That is the mechanism in place in Decree No. 31 of 2010.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Read your Decree.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- The GCC has been taken out from the Constitution but according to Decree No. 31, it is still in place. The Minister has to consult the GCC before it makes any changes in regards to the indigenous people. So, I put to the honourable Prime Minister again, that the only power that he exercised when he abrogated the Constitution in 2009

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Point of Order. Madam Speaker, the original question is whether the native Fijians were consulted or not. The question did not say whether the Great Council of Chiefs or the chiefs were consulted or not. If they want to bring in a new question, there are procedures to follow, they have to go to the Business Committee and bring in a new question. It is specified in Standing 45(2) that if a question raises a new matter, it should not be allowed. It is a new matter.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The procedure is consultation.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Consult the native owners, not the Great Council of Chiefs, Madam.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Member. I do agree that the supplementary question is really going off tangent, you may re-formulate the question for a later sitting, to answer the particular issue you are raising.

Great Council of Chiefs
(Question No. 48/2015)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. This question is about the Great Council of Chiefs and ILO Convention 169. ILO Convention 169 like UNCAT which we have just ratified mandates and directs Fiji to protect its customary institutions as well as to consult....

HON. J. USAMATE.- Question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Should I remind the other side again of the ruling that was made by the Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Yes, 30 seconds.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- We are entitled to make some points to clarify the question that comes later.

Would the honourable Prime Minister undertake to restore the Great Council of Chiefs by repealing the *iTaukei* Affairs (Great Council of Chiefs) (Revocation) Regulations that terminated its existence, so as to fulfil Fiji's obligation under ILO Convention 169?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA (Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs).- Madam Speaker, I just passed a comment to the Leader of Government in Parliament because without people like him, the so-called *Bati*, there will be no Great Council of Chiefs.

Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for his question and for reminding us while the Government has set its sights firmly on the future, and the opportunities that await every Fijian including the university students sitting at the back there, the Opposition keeps looking over its shoulders in the past. Whether it is the question of our national flag, or the fate of the perpetrators of the 2000 *coup* or indeed this question about the Great Council of Chiefs. The Opposition keeps raking over the coals desperately hoping to ignite some kind of controversy where none exists.

Madam Speaker, on Friday when we put the agenda together, I had the wonderful opportunity to ask you to get rid of this question because ILO does not relate to the Great Council of Chiefs, nor does the Great Council of Chiefs relate to the ILO. Everyone inside this House understands that.

Our lawyers ...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- They don't know!

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- They have no choice.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ... Madam Speaker, the practicing ones ...

(Laughter)

... understand this.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- For some reason, that side of the House, except for that group on the other side ...

(Laughter)

... don't understand it.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- You don't even understand it!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- But let me give the honourable Member, including the...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Don't point!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ...university students. Let me give the honourable Member a history lesson.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Aw! Aw!

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Listen!

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- You don't like history!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I love this opportunity, Madam Speaker, because the university students are here.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Yeah!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- They can also listen in while I give the honourable Member a history lesson.

The Great Council of Chiefs was established in 1875 to, amongst other things, enforce the system of indirect rules which the British had implemented in other colonial territories it occupied. Indeed, when the Great Council of Chiefs ...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Great Council of Chiefs did not try to bring the Fijians down.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Hear! Hear!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- That's why, Madam Speaker, he's sitting on that side of the House and we're here. But indeed, when the Great Council of Chiefs was established, it was called the Native Council.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- So?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- It was not called the Council of Chiefs or the Great Council of Chiefs.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- You're wrong!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- As with many other colonies in particular, where there was no standing British Army, the colonial powers chose a handful of locals and created elitism by giving them the status and certain privileges which they did not enjoy previously, and used them to rule the mass.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- Typical British politics!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- This is not the time to go into a full history lesson because we really don't have the time, Madam Speaker, and an added history lesson but the point being in short, that the Native Council

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Keep reading man! Don't waste the time.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- This is the kind of opposition that we have in this country, Madam Speaker.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Aw! Aw!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- The British created the Great Council of Chiefs at their whim, as can be seen from colonial records and indeed, its suspension by one of the Governors. One of the Governors had initially suspended the Great Council of Chiefs. It was not an indigenous institution.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- You don't have any roots.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- The formal legal recognition of the GCC was via a colonial Ordinance in the 1940s which eventually became known as the Fijian Affairs Act.

Then the 1970 Constitution gave powers to the GCC to select the number of members for the Senate. Further, the 1990 and the 1997 Constitutions gave powers to the GCC to make appointments to the Senate and appoint the President.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Because of respect!

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- What is wrong with that?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- These are historical facts that cannot be denied, no matter how hard the Opposition tries.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Then why you want to take it away?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- They have not been listening, Madam Speaker, that's the whole problem.

My Government is committed to the ideals of a common and equal citizenry...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Aw! Aw!

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear! Hear!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ...as prescribed by our Constitution.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear! Hear!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- We are no longer, Madam Speaker, a nation where accidents of birth elevate certain individuals above others. No more!

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- *Vinaka!*

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- We are all Fijians and we all enjoy equal access to our rights and privileges under the law.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear! Hear!

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections)

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Therefore, Madam Speaker, to put it simply, the answer to the honourable Member's question is, no. My Government will not repeal the *ITaukei* Affairs Act to bring back the Great Council of Chiefs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Prime Minister. Supplementary Question?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, wonderful history, albeit all wrong.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Aw! Aw!
(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I just take that history further and bring it to current days, Madam Speaker, GCC is an apex body for the *ITaukei*. Our friends from the South Indian community have the Sangam,
...

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Kubuna, Burebasaga and Tovata are the apex bodies!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- ...our Muslim people have the Fiji Muslim League, ...

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Incorrect!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- ...our Chinese people have the Fiji Chinese Community ...

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- What's your question?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- ...every community in Fiji has an apex body. Can I ask the Prime Minister, what is the apex body now for the *ITaukei* community?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I don't think the honourable Member was listening to me. This is an apex body.

(Chorus of interjections)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, what is the apex body for the *ITaukei*? Where do we go from here? We have the Sangam for the South Indians, we have the Fiji Muslim League for the Muslims. Where are we? Where is the apex body for the *iTaukeis*? Where is it? You can't remove something and not replace it, you can't just take it away. Please, answer that? Where is our apex body?

(Chorus of interjections)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the question has been answered. Are there any other supplementary questions?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, before I start, the honourable Prime Minister took a snipe at me but let me say, he committed treason and is still here. He has to account to that.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- That's your version!

MADAM SPEAKER.- Excuse me, before you ask the question, would you withdraw that statement.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I withdraw my statement, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The honourable Prime Minister said that this has nothing to do with ILO 169 and let me quote to him Article 4, it says, I quote:

“Special measures will be adopted for safeguarding customary institutions.”

The Great Council of Chiefs is a customary institution. Also, with the ILO 169 requires prior and informed consensus.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Teach them! Teach them! Tell them!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- This is my question, did you as a Fijian, according to our tradition of *veivakaturagataki* consult with the Great Council of Chiefs before you do this? Did you seek their views?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Please, do not ask the question directly, ask it through the Chair.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Did you seek their views, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Me?

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The question is, did the honourable Prime Minister, before terminating the GCC, seek the opinion or consulted with the Great Council of Chiefs? If not, why not?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I think the answer to that has been relayed to the House when I answered the first question by the honourable Tikoca, very simple. But I note that the Member related his question when he first started, to the ILO Convention 169...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Correct.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.-...about customary rights.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- On customary, not land!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Let me elaborate on ILO C169 which he keeps harping about and which I said that the legal fraternity on this side of the House, the serving ones ...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Because they're all wrong!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ...understand. The rationale behind the ILO Convention 169, Madam Speaker, within this context envisages indigenous people who have been marginalised completely from society.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Wrong! Totally, wrong!

HON. MEMBER.- Take advice from the Human Rights Commission.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Within its context envisages indigenous people who have been marginalised completely from society, whose lands have been arbitrarily and permanently alienated, whose cultures and traditions and way of life have been erased...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- That's Khaiyum's definition!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ...or made almost extinct and indeed, whose population have been systematically killed off and marginalised.

HON. N. NAWAIKILA.- According to Khaiyum.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- This is not the case in Fiji.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- It is!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I ask the Members of the House or that side of the House to read 169, and come up with the right interpretation of ILO C169.

(Chorus of interjections)

The name of the honourable Attorney-General has been mentioned. He is a serving lawyer, Madam Speaker.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- He doesn't practice!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Some have not been.

Let me again quote from the Explanatory Notes on the ILO website. This is the ILO Website, in relation to Convention 169. This has nothing to do with the Attorney-General.

“Indigenous and tribal people's cultures and identities form an integral part of their lives...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Correct!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.-

...their ways of life,...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Correct!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.-

...customs and traditions, institutions, customary laws, forms of land use and forms of social organisation are usually different from those of the dominant population”.

(Chorus of interjections)

I am quoting from the ILO Website. You have all agreed to it. They have all agreed to it, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

And at the end of the exercise, when I mentioned of the ‘dominant population’, he said, “Well, no!”

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, which is the dominant population in Fiji?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- It’s got nothing to do with that!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Define “dominant”.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Indeed, if we are to look at purely population numbers, Madam Speaker, the percentage of the vernacular language...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Point of order!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ... most widely spoken and ownership of land,...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Point of order!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ...then the *iTaukei*...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Point of order!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ...are the dominant population. I am answering your question, sit down!

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Point of order!

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Point of order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Point of Order simply is, did he consult with the Greta Council of Chiefs? If not, why not?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- He related his question to ILO. I am trying to explain, Madam Speaker, to him...

(Chorus of interjections)

... the relevance of ILO and the Great Council of Chiefs. Very simple. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. You have one last supplementary question.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I must thank the honourable Prime Minister for his answer to this question because the answer is no, the GCC will not be reinstated.

I am quite surprised, Madam Speaker, to hear the honourable Prime Minister say that the chiefs are born by accident. I just want the Prime Minister to reconfirm to this House whether that is really what he believes in, because I understand the Bible says that the chiefs are born from God.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Hear! Hear!

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- They are chiefs because it comes from God!

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- *Emeni!* Amen!

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- And in this House, the honourable Prime Minister stated in his answers that they are born by accidents. The question is, is that the reason the honourable Prime Minister will not bring back the GCC because you believe they are born by accident? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Prime Minister?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I will give a quick answer to the honourable Member. The honourable Member had said that that is in the Bible. I do not know which Bible he is quoting from, that says that the chiefs are from God.

(Chorus of interjections)

I would like to see, Madam Speaker, this Bible reading, seriously! Seriously! Because, in the Bible it does not say, 'chiefs'. What it means is, leadership is from God.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear! Hear!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- This is the interpretation that the Bible bashers are using to elevate the chiefs so that they can buy each other Sky TV.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you very much. Thank you very much for that very vibrant discussion on that question. I will now move on to the next question, and I give the floor to the honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa, Leader of the Opposition.

Road Building Plans for Tailevu South/Rewa River Delta
(Question No. 49/2015)

HON. RO T.V. KEPa.- Madam Speaker, may I ask the question, directed to the honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Transport.

Can the Minister confirm the Government's road building plans for Tailevu South and Rewa River Delta areas?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Transport.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA (Minister for Infrastructure and Transport).- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for her question, and with all the hype of the previous question, I am not sure if mine is going to be boring in terms of the answer I am going to give. But, roading nevertheless is still a critical area of Government's essential service to the people, and the question specifically relates to roads that are within the areas of Tailevu South and Rewa River delta areas.

Madam Speaker, before I outline to the House specifically those areas where we are doing work with regards to the areas in Tailevu South and the Rewa Delta, I would like to note first to the House statements that I had made previously as Ministerial Statements about the functions of the Fiji Roads Authority, and in particular the Ministerial Statement I made yesterday about what Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) and the Government is doing, and the rationale behind it in the development of rural roads, and most of the roads that I am going to be referring to today, being the subject of the question that is raised by the Leader of the Opposition are in the rural areas.

Madam Speaker, the Fiji Roads Authority has a long term plan, and in fact, that is 10 years and beyond, and this is essentially for recovering of previously neglected network of roads, bridges and jetties, and I had alluded to this earlier. Essentially, we need this long-term planning because the demand is so great and the resources are meagre. But, we still need to do the roads nevertheless because they help get the children to school, they provide communities with new opportunities, and they become more socially and economically active.

The Fiji Roads Authority Work Programme is made up of a whole range of activities, and I had alluded to that yesterday, and I am not going to repeat that. But, one of the most essential area of the Fiji Roads Authority's work is the management of its assets. This has been, I believe personally, that one of the main reasons why our roads have been left to such a deteriorating state because roads were cut and were never really given the resources to keep them in good running state in so many years previously.

Now, in the management of the assets, I would just like to elaborate on that, and what are some of the essential works that deals with that. This includes:

- (a) regular resurfacing of our roads both, gravel and tarseal to extend their life well into the future;
- (b) cutting vegetation to keep the roads clear and open;

- (c) fixing the potholes to prevent damages to cars, trucks, buses and repainting the lines;
- (d) clearing drainages to avoid flooding and damage to the road structure; and
- (e) all the other things that we take for granted but are essential to keeping our roads in better conditions than they were kept in the past.

But, Madam Speaker, coming to perhaps, the focal point of where the question is directed in terms of Tailevu South and Rewa Delta, these are roads that are in the Central Division in the low lying areas and of course these network of road has their own challengers for maintenance, and also we are looking at areas where we will be providing new access to areas within Tailevu South and the Rewa Delta that do not currently have access, and I am going to go allude to that later.

Starting in 2015, FRA is looking at new ways of reconstructing the roads to survive flooding events and this is a concern in the areas that I have mentioned because they are very prone to flooding. The idea is to look at these new ways to survive so that buses and cars would still use these roads after the event of a flood.

With the FRA, we will develop and start to implement the plan for the deltas road network that will include improve pavements with some roads being raised above flooding levels as I have said earlier. We will also look at re-routing parts of the Kings Road to ensure that long term erosion does not threaten the resilience of this key economic corridor to Northern Viti Levu and beyond to Vanua Levu via the Natovi Jetty.

Madam Speaker, the maintenance programme for Tailevu South and Rewa Delta includes over 1800 kilometres of grading on gravel roads to keep them serving the purpose for which they were constructed. In addition to this, the Authority intends to spend \$18 million renewing, rebuilding roads that are beyond repair in southern Tailevu and the Rewa Delta region.

Let me name a few these roads are included in our rehabilitation include parts of the Kings Road and the unsealed Logani Sebi Road, Waikete Road, Naduru Road, Namara Road, Vusio Road will be re-gravelled to provide a better and longer lasting surface into the future.

Madam Speaker, without these critical renewal projects Fiji would continue to suffer from a crippling road maintenance, a liability into the future. And one of FRA's top priorities is to reduce this ongoing liability to a stable and affordable level.

Madam Speaker, this year, the new Vunivaivai Bridge on Ratu Kadavulevu Road will be rebuilt at a cost of \$1.5 million. The route provides a vital link across the area in the existing bridge is falling down under its own weight. Without this bridge replacement, communities will be severed from each other and essential services. People would have to make much longer journeys, costing them more money. Over the course of 2015, 30 villages along the main roads across Fiji will have new street lights lightning installed, providing improved safety as well as opportunities for new enterprises along these well used roads. Eight of these villages allocated in the Tailevu Province along the Kings Road and also in Vuci Road. One of the main arterial linking communities in South Tailevu will be provided with new footpaths to allow pedestrian and children to walk along the road with improved safety and comfort.

One of FRA's most important activities in 2015 is the building of new rural roads Madam Speaker, to provide new access for villages which have been isolated from our transport network, and I am talking about here villages, that are within Rewa and within South Tailevu.

These projects are in the Southern Tailevu Rewa Delta area. The first stage of a new road along Kiuva-Kaba peninsular is one of this. This area currently has no road at all, with villages and resorts in the area being entirely dependent on road transport.

The villages of Namata and Natila will benefit from improved access via the new roads, where there was none before. A section of the Cautata road frequently cut off by flooding will be improved to allow more reliable access.

Madam Speaker, as I alluded to yesterday, it is not possible to do everything in one year. The FRA's planning for its programme looks 10 years ahead with a detailed 3- year programme to ensure that the pipeline of projects is kept focussed on goals and moving through the various stages of projects investigation, design and construction. FRA works closely with the Commissioner Central and the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development to ensure that priorities in the region are as closely aligned as possible.

We have already started to investigate and plan for other projects in South Tailevu and the Rewa Delta. Projects like Rewa-Vutia Road and Nabodrau –Taci access road, which are under consideration at present. Although they did not make this year's programme, FRA continues to look into the case moving this up in the list of our priorities.

You are all aware that these are all villages in the lower Rewa Delta, are totally dependent on boat access for their transportation needs. Despite the high financial environmental cost of building roads and bridges in this unique type of environment, we will work with communities and other agencies to find ways of providing for the access needs of people in these areas.

As I had said, the reach of FRA's activities is far and wide across Fiji, Madam Speaker, of course Southern Tailevu and Rewa Delta is no exception. The Authority works very hard to understand the particular needs and aspirations of all the different regions and areas of Fiji whether it is outer islands, mountain villages, river valleys, urban corridors or in the coastal fringes. I thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. RO. T.V. KEPA.- Supplementary question. I thank the honourable Minister for giving us the information on the Tailevu South and Rewa River Delta area roads.

My supplementary question Madam Speaker is on the Rewa- Vutia road, which he has mentioned which covers 11 villages Madam Speaker, the villages of Naselai, Vutia, Nukui, Lomanikoro, Nabua, Drekena, Nadoi, Vunuku, Tavuya, Narocivo and the villages of Vutia Muanaira and Muanaicake. And also Madam Speaker, this road would serve the schools, one Secondary School, Rewa Secondary School and the Primary Schools of Naililili, Rewa District, Vutia and Nukui District Schools.

My question to the honourable Minister is, when will they have this in their budget because I know that all *mataqali* landowners of the areas where the road is planned to go through have been given, their major pipes are already on the ground, there is dredging that is being done in the river and I thank the honourable Speaker for the dredging that has been done. My question is; which budget is he planning to put the Rewa-Vutia road honourable Speaker.

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, one of the best areas about this reform at the FRA is because the asset management allows for a plan to give us the plan so that we can address these issues as they occur in our priorities. Obviously, we cannot do all the roads at any one time because our resources will not allow for that. I think for the benefit of the honourable Leader of the Opposition I had noted in my statement is that, it is not being planned for this year because projects had already been set for projects that will commence this year. It is going to be considered amongst the projects that we will be looking into 2016 and beyond. I can understand that this has been an area where the road has been cut so has it been in many other areas, Madam Speaker.

Government considers all these communities important, if we had unlimited funding I am sure you will see that all these access to those villages that have not had access be done all at once. But I want to assure the honourable Leader of the Opposition and this House and the members of the community that lie within Rewa-Vutia area that their concerns and their plight is well within our radar, we will attempt at best to come to their aid in the not distant future. I think I alluded to in my ministerial statement yesterday in terms of rural road that we are re-looking increasing significantly the allocation for rural road in 2016 and beyond.

Most of these projects that we now are in waiting, and have been waiting for some time can then be brought to the future and brought to actions sooner rather than later. But obviously that is going to be the subject of the budgetary process, and I, as Minister will be pushing for that, as this is one of Government's top priorities - access for rural areas. I hope that when the time comes, this is going to be part of a budget that is going to get the support of this whole House.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- I thank the honourable Minister for his response. He said "2016 and beyond budget", I like the 2016, but not so much the beyond. Also, I would like to thank the honourable Minister, he is usually a man of his word, and I know that it will be on the 2016 Budget.

MADAM SPEAKER.- That was not a supplementary question but merely an acknowledgement.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, honourable Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Looking at the demand for the road upgrading in the rural and maritime areas and the capacity, we are into the first quarter of 2015. My question is, whether the 2015 Work Programme can be completed so that come 2016, there are no delays or outstanding work by the FRA for those rural and maritime roads to be upgraded?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- I thank the honourable Member for his question. It is general in nature, not specifically for Tailevu South and the Rewa Delta. Nevertheless, as I had noted earlier, Madam Speaker, the best part of this is that, we do have a plan because nature is something that is beyond everyone's control. The intent of any government when it budgets for any event is to go all the way, to make sure that we spend these funds in the areas where it is needed and required.

The honourable Member would be informed that much of the work that is done around this part of the year is very, very subjected to inclement weather, and this drives very much the way that we do our work. In FRA, the first part of the year, particularly around January, February is the time that we are dedicated on re-enforcing, restructuring and restrengthening our plans. We react to certain things that need to occur, but then we take advantage of the good weather to try and push and get all the work done in the meantime, and then that is really built over plan and time, given the capacity and capability available

on the market in Fiji and overseas that we will need to do all of the work that we are planned to do for a particular year. So if they do not see any major thing moving right now, otherwise it will be just a weight cutting and then coming back to try and repair it. Nevertheless, Madam Speaker, the dedication is there as well as the plan, and in alluding to the earlier statement made by the honourable Leader of the Opposition, Government is always committed to things we say we would do. There are elements out there as well as the variables that we do not control, but nevertheless the commitment is made.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, honourable Ratu Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- We do thank the honourable Minister for Infrastructure for all the work plans that they have planned for the year. And for the question this morning, can he advise the House whether the contractors have been aligned for the work proposed for the Rewa, Vutia and the areas mentioned in this question?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, that would not be. It is a route that we are considering, subject to finances. It is a plan that we have made. We have a process, where our board gets to sit and we have a tender committee that discusses that. Obviously, most of our investigations have been done, subject to confirmation, and then the whole process follows on. The best part that we are trying to do is trying to move the project sooner rather than later, and obviously when we do that, we make sure we put all the ticks in the box. But, no, it has not been appointed yet.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you very much and that brings to the end of question time and it is also the last item in the Order Paper for today.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- With your leave, Madam Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Minister for Public Enterprises and Public Service, I have a written answer to Written Question No. 7 of 2015 to lay on the table.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Minister.

I thank you all for the discussions today and also thank the guests in the gallery for your patience. From the expressions on your faces, I am sure you have enjoyed today's sitting and I thank the honourable Members for such vibrant debate that you have had this morning.

We will now adjourn this sitting to 9.30 tomorrow morning but meanwhile, I ask the Business Committee that we meet in the Committee Room straight-away before we finish for the day.

The House is now adjourned until 9.30 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 11.31 a.m.

