

**TUESDAY, 9<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2014**

The Parliament resumed at 10.05 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

**PRESENT**

All honourable Members were present, except the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs and Sugar; and the honourable A.T. Vadei.

**MINUTES**

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2014, 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.

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR**

Acknowledgment of Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER.- I would like to welcome all honourable Members to this Parliament sitting this morning, and especially to our guests who are sitting in the public gallery. I welcome you all to this session and you are invited to share with the refreshments later on in the morning. Thank you for your presence.

**URGENT MOTION**

Repeal of Television (Cross Carriage of Designated Events) Decree No. 19 of 2014

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order under Standing Order 46 (1) and I ask that you grant leave for debate on an urgent motion which reads: “ That this honourable Chamber, in a bipartisan vote, repeals the Television (Cross-Carriage of Designated Events) Decree No. 19 of 2014, to allow every principal broadcaster or broadcast rights provider under the Decree, to broadcast contents obtained from the rights provider without restrictions”.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Can I invite comments?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, if I could ask the honourable Member to please repeat what he was saying?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Gavoka, if you could just repeat your point of order.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- That under Standing Order 46(1), we debate an urgent motion, then we repeal the Television (Cross-Carriage of Designated Events) Decree No. 19 of 2014, to allow every principal broadcaster or broadcast rights provider under the Decree to broadcast content obtained from the rights provider without restrictions.

Basically, Madam Speaker, it is what we have today that is creating all this situation with the Sevens that this has been given to everyone, every television station in this country, and creating this debacle with IRB, hence the black out with Sevens in this country.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now invite comments from the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker. This matter was dealt with, not as a substantive matter, but the notion of bringing a motion. We all have to vote under Standing Order 46(1), firstly, to say whether the motion should be allowed, whether it can be moved without notice. We have to vote on that essentially. The Chamber has to agree whether the motion can be brought without notice and then the next step can be taken.

I also would like to remind the honourable Member that in order to bring about an amendment to an existing law, there are various procedures in regards to amendments to existing laws. You simply cannot stand up on the floor of this Chamber and bring a motion to bring an amendment to an existing law. There is a separate path to it. A motion is separate in this respect as opposed to an amendment to a Bill.

I refer the honourable Member to the amendments to Motions and Bills, if the Bill is before Parliament. There is a procedure in respect of bringing about an amendment to an existing law and what is being proposed is an amendment to an existing law.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Do we have any other comments?

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, on that point of order, would a corrigendum suffice?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, it has been said that “sarcasm is the lowest form of wit.”

(Laughter)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The people of Fiji need to be given an explanation, where they can actually be part of watching this IRB. It is not to do with laws, it has to do with you standing up and explaining to them why they are going to be denied this. That is what they need to hear from you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Before we ask the honourable Member to respond, you must understand that this is a matter of national interest and it is very important that we come up with some solutions this time. If we can just hear this other point of order, before I ask for your explanation.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. That is exactly what I want to say. This is a matter of national urgency. We were denied watching this very important Sevens over the weekend and Standing Order 46, as I have read, recommends (even if we do not enact it, we are not asking for an amendment) to the Government to make changes as are necessary, to allow us to watch the games and having aid that, the point that we are at now is to ask for notice to be dispensed

with. That requires leave. On that point, I second the motion on the leave and I ask that we debate on that before it is put to question on the issue of leave.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, that is precisely my point. The point is that, if we are to follow proper procedures in the Parliament, then we need to put whatever motions or amendments people want in the proper manner, as the honourable Ratu Tikoca has said that he wants to know the information. That readily could have been entertained. We are quite happy to provide the information but not to stand up and say from the other side to amend the existing law. If information is required, I am sure we, on this side of the Chamber, will be quite happy for a question to be brought without notice. There is a particular provision in the law. So that is what we are saying, to follow the proper procedures.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, I made a ruling yesterday on a similar motion issue. There is a need to suspend Standing Order (1) under Standing Order 6 on suspension of Standing Orders. In view of this, the ruling would have to be made to suspend Standing Order 46(1) and a vote taken. May I invite an honourable Member to move the motion.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Madam Speaker, I am sorry but just some clarifications. The way we read Standing Order 46(1) is that it seems there are two limbs to it. The first one requires that we only seek leave, and your high Chair dispenses the issue of leave here, Madam Speaker. The second one is the issue that you have been informing us on, which is going as far as having it put to the vote. However, it is the first limb, the dispensation from you, Madam Speaker, on the granting of leave. That is all we are seeking here.

MADAM SPEAKER. – Thank you, honourable Member. Taking into consideration that, that is an issue of great importance to the nation...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA. – Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER. - ...we really need to act positively on this one. If we look at Standing Order 46, it reads, and I quote:

“A Member wishing to vote a motion must give notice of it, before it may be moved, unless the requirement for notice is dispensed with by leave of Parliament on another Standing Order, expressly provides that no notice is required.”

The leave of Parliament as you know honourable Members, in the Standing Orders means, and I quote:

“...permission to do something that is granted;”

by means of a motion, adopted by Parliament.

We really need to put this to the vote, so that we make a decision on it and in consideration that we are voting for something of national interest.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Madam Speaker, I think from what we have heard from the other side, they want information. We are quite happy to provide that.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - We have Ministerial Statements that can be made from this side of the Chamber. Ministers have the ability, and are indeed given the capacity under the Standing Orders to make Ministerial Statements. We are quite happy to provide Ministerial Statements in this Chamber tomorrow morning.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS. – No, no!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. – In fact, Madam Speaker, the only reason I am saying tomorrow morning....

(Chorus of interjections!)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... I can do it now, if you want. The only reason I am doing that is because I can furnish them with all the information and indeed copies of all the documents, so they can be fully versed with it. The idea is, from what I understand from the other side, unless they are trying to score political points that they be provided with the information, and that is what we are prepared to provide. There is not a problem with that, Madam Speaker.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD. – A point of order, Madam Speaker. I think you have made the ruling, Madam Speaker. Let us have a vote on whether to move ahead with that motion. Thank you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA. – A point of order, Madam Speaker. This is a motion, it has been seconded, and like any motion, it should be put to debate before we vote on it.

MADAM SPEAKER. – Thank you. My ruling on this is that we put this to a vote. Now, the motion has been seconded as well. As we put this to the vote, may I yet again please remind honourable Members that this is of national interest and attracted lots media attention, Letters to the Editor ....

(Chorus of interjections!)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Order!

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	17
Noes	-	29
Absent	-	4

Motion lost.

MADAM SPEAKER. – Honourable Members, in this respect, the honourable Minister had mentioned earlier on that he could make a Ministerial Statement on this now if he is required, and I would like to ask the honourable Minister to make that Ministerial Statement now.

### **STATEMENT BY MINISTERS**

#### Repeal - Television (Cross-Carriage of Designated Events) Decree 19/2014

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. –Madam Speaker, no doubt rugby is important to everyone in Fiji.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Not to you!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. – No doubt rugby is important to everyone in Fiji, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - No doubt, Madam Speaker, so is our country important to us.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS. – Hear! Hear!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. – Madam Speaker, the law that is in question, that is called the “Television (Cross-Carriage of Designated Events) Decree 19 of 2014”, sets out a number of designated events, which requires all free-to-air television companies to televise these events.

Let me tell you what these events are, Madam Speaker:

- (a) General Elections results;
- (b) National Budget Address;
- (c) Parliamentary proceedings (Question & Answer session);
- (d) State Funerals;
- (e) Rugby World Cup Sevens and 15s;
- (f) Rugby League World Cup;
- (g) IRB Sevens Series;
- (h) FIFA World Cup;
- (i) Netball World Cup;
- (j) Olympic Games;
- (k) Commonwealth Games;
- (l) South Pacific Games;
- (m) Mini-South Pacific Games; and
- (n) Coca-Cola Games.

Madam Speaker, this law that is in place in Fiji is nothing unique. There are many other countries in the world that has what you call “Cross-Carriage of Designate Events.” These cross-carriage events, Madam Speaker, allow people who only have access to free-to-air television to be able to watch these important events. It is also a given fact that not all the television free-to-air stations in Fiji have the ability to cover the entire country. There are many of what we call “brown spots” and “black spots” in Fiji, and these brown, black spots stop therefore, the ability of individual citizens to be able to watch these key important events, thus, the bringing in of the designated events.

Madam Speaker, the law is specifically in two parts; one pertains to the already existing sponsorships that were signed by the respective television companies prior to the law coming into place. The other part of the law deals with events that have been highlighted for which sponsorship deals have not been signed. So how does the law deal with these two specific categories of sponsorship items? One of them is for those who have already been signed up the provision in the law that whoever has the sponsorship rights is required to share that with other free-to-air television stations in the country.

Now the manner in which to share those free-to-air television rights is based on the percentage of viewership. There is a lot of work that went behind the scenes prior to this law coming to effect. We had hired an American Company that does this type of polling.

HON. P. SINGH.- Qorvis! Qorvis!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. – It was not Qorvis, actually!

(Laughter)

I apologise, Madam Speaker, it was not Qorvis.

Madam Speaker, the polling that was carried out found that 43 per cent of Fijians watch *Fiji TV*, seven per cent watch *Mai TV* and 50 odd per cent watch *FBC*. So, for example, if the sponsorship deal hypothetically that has been signed up is a million dollars, then *FBC* will need to pay \$0.5 million to whoever has sponsorship rights. If *Fiji TV* has got the rights, prior to the law coming into effect, *FBC* will need to pay *Fiji TV* \$0.5 million, *Mai Television* will need to pay 7 per cent and *Fiji TV*, of course, has the 43 per cent.

Let me give you a live example as to what happened when the law came into effect. One may know that *Mai Television*, quite surprisingly had secured the rights of the FIFA World Cup. FIFA World Cup is watched by nearly 3 billion to 4 billion people throughout the world - the most watched television sport in the world. When they had acquired the rights and subsequently when the law came into effect, they were very concerned because they said that they had already signed up all the sponsorship deals – close to \$0.5 million. They said that if *Fiji TV* and *FBC*, which have a larger footprint throughout Fiji, is allowed to show the FIFA World Cup, their sponsors will probably go running from *Mai TV* to these two companies.

The law also provides, Madam Speaker, that within that context, there can be arrangements made, so both *FBC TV* and *Fiji TV* agreed that they were not going to steal any of the sponsorships deal that *Mai TV* had done and further to that, had all the sponsorship deals that *Mai TV* had done, their sponsors advertisements will also be shown on these two televisions. Anything over and above that would then be in the domain of *Fiji TV* and *FBC*. That worked out beautifully.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, as we know that the proceedings of this Parliament are being televised under this. There is a compulsion for them to show this, and the Fijian people get to watch it because “Question and Answer” time is an important event, budget address and so as other events pertaining to Parliament.

When it came to the IRB Sevens Series, *Fiji TV* had already signed a deal. Before the Gold Coast Sevens, all parties were brought together, and as you know, the Gold Coast Sevens was in fact televised on all the television stations. What this meant, that parts of Taveuni, Koro, Ra, Nadarivatu, Ba, Tavua, et cetera that do not get *Fiji TV* were able to watch this on *FBC TV*. Similarly, those people who may have only got *Mai TV* were able to watch this event also.

So the rationale under this law is to provide the equilibrium and the equilibrium, Madam Speaker, is not about television stations, but about Fijian fans who want to watch television live broadcast, that is what it is all about.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- It is a monopoly.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You don't take what you don't own.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is, Madam Speaker, for those people who say, “well, we do not care, we just want to watch it” are extremely selfish. They are extremely selfish, in particular,

when it comes from honourable Members who are supposed to be concerned about everyone, not just about those people who get *Fiji TV*, *FBC* or *Mai TV* reception. It is not about one television company.

So, IRB or as it is now called “World Rugby” allowed for the televising of the Gold Coast Sevens. There was nearly a two-month gap between Gold Coast Sevens and the Dubai leg of the Sevens’ series, only two and a half days before the Dubai leg, we got a letter from World Rugby saying that they were going to essentially disallow the screening of it because they did not want it televised. Now, let me tell this Chamber what they said to us in a correspondence before Gold Coast Sevens. In the correspondence before Gold Coast Sevens, we have correspondence between World Rugby, Ministry of Communications and through the Solicitor-General’s Office saying “we do not want to interfere with the laws of Fiji, if there was a compliance issue, let it be so.” It was on that basis that the Gold Coast Sevens was shown.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Let them watch.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is precisely what happened, Madam Speaker, - everyone watched.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is not their problem.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, two and a half days before when they sent this correspondence, we whole-heartedly engaged and to the credit of the Chairman of Fijian Holdings Limited and the Chief Executive Officer of Fijian Holdings Limited, who are the majority shareholders in *Fiji TV*. They also sent letters to World Rugby in which they said, “We want to share because these events are of national importance. We do not mind the Television (Cross-Carriage of Designated Events) Decree 2014.”

What it would appear, Madam Speaker, as I said to the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Fijian Holdings Limited in a meeting which we had just last week, that there are some people within *Fiji TV* who were going behind their backs to try to undermine this important matter. In fact, the management was there, and none of them objected to what I said. Madam Speaker, we tried right up to the eleventh hour to try and broker a deal. Now, one of the rationales that the World Ruby is saying is that “we will be losing out on sponsorship deals.”

On Thursday, 4th December, 2014, we also had communications with New Zealand Rugby. I had direct communications with the Chairman of New Zealand Rugby who empathised with what we were doing, and also we have other people say that and also pointed out to us the amount of commercial dollars available in Fiji is very limited. The type of sponsorship deals one gets in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, France, England and enormous multi-national corporations that are willing to throw in millions of dollars.

Madam Speaker, the issue is this. The door is not closed. We want to be able to negotiate with World Rugby and make them see that Fiji, Tonga and Samoa are in the top 15 countries. Yet, the demographics, socio-economics changes, the differences between those countries in particular in the Northern Hemisphere and the three other countries in the Southern Hemisphere are vastly different.

Fiji, as a nation, punches way above its weight in the international rugby scene. We contribute enormously and for them to be able to turn around and completely dismiss this, I think is really quite sad. We have kept the doors open; we want to communicate with them. In fact, I received a text message from the Chief Executive Officer of Fijian Holdings, who has proposed that a team goes down

to World Rugby in Ireland to hold talks with them, and in fact, we still have people on the ground in New Zealand who are trying to also mediate.

It is probably one of the biggest issues that faced us. Obviously it appeared to be bigger than the Budget, at least for those on the other side of the Chamber. But the point is, all of us were deprived of it, but in order to be able to fight for the rights of those Fijian fans who do not get to see World Rugby, we had to take a principled approach and we intend to take the principled position. In fact, Madam Speaker, through New Zealand Rugby, we also offered to offer them some more money to be able to top it up, to get those rights to everyone. This is how concerned we are, Madam Speaker. We are not here to score cheap political points. I can assure the rest of this Chamber that we will continue to fight for our ability, to be able to have this televised to every single corner of Fiji.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- It's not good enough.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sometimes, Madam Speaker, to be able to stand up to the big boys, one needs to take a principled position. This Government has never shied away from standing up to the big boys as long as it is the right thing. This has paid off, in the same way we stood up to Qantas and in the same way we stood up to the other countries.

Madam Speaker, this is my ministerial statement explaining the situation pertaining to the IRB Series.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 34, I will be inviting a reply from the National Federation Party and the Social Democratic and Liberal Party.

HON. V.K. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I will reply on behalf of our Party.

HON. RATU N. LALABALAVU.- Tell him, tell him!

HON. V.K. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, it is a principled position. Even doing so, Madam Speaker, we need to be mindful of who IRB is. They are the body that is tasked with growing rugby across the world. There are about 165 members now and every dollar they make, a huge part of it is powered back into the development of rugby in every country. We should be careful, Madam Speaker, not to undermine that ability to make that revenue that is so important for rugby to grow.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. V.K. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I speak as a former chairman of Fiji Rugby Union (FRU) and I have been to Dublin and spoke with those people, we should protect that leadership with IRB.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Teach him! Teach him!

(Laughter)

HON. V.K. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, as we know, IRB is providing funds for FRU, even to the extent of setting up Lawaqa Park as an academy, jointly funded by FRU and IRB, but when we asked Government for permission, they said; "No". If the Academy had been running through the IRB, we would be punching way, way above our weight today.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!



HON. V.K. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, please, we can be principled, ...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You tell him!

HON. V.K. GAVOKA.- ... we can do many things in Fiji but when one is part of a global community, one tries to observe the rules that apply globally.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. V.K. GAVOKA.- We cannot be decreeing things from Fiji and expect everyone to fall into line. Please, Madam Speaker, I beg all honourable Members in this Chamber, protect world rugby.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you.

HON. V.K. GAVOKA.- They are looking after us, and we know how much they have done for FRU. So, it is our duty, as rugby loving people, to support this world body and be observant, respect what is in place to help rugby grow in this country. Please, let us have a debate one day to repeal this Decree and bring Fiji back into that family of rugby lovers, instead of being outcast today. I know, and you will also know that our people had a bleak weekend.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. V.K. GAVOKA.- What will happen with the George Sevens, is it going to be a bleak weekend again for us, Madam Speaker? Thank you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- There's another one coming up.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- But we lost!

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his statement. This Decree, to break it down in a nutshell, tries to use the lawmaking powers in this country to override private contracts ...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- ...between private persons and bodies. It is alright if those persons and bodies are in Fiji because the laws of this country bind them, but we cannot bind people and bodies who are not within this jurisdiction. We cannot dictate to them terms. They, of course, if they own something, they own their content and they can do with it as they wish and they have given exclusive licences to various countries. "You can have this content and pay us this much but these are our conditions". That is their right, they own it. We cannot usurp them. We can usurp people in this country if we have the power ...

(Laughter)

... but we cannot usurp people overseas, Madam Speaker, ...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- ... because they own it, they are governed by their own laws and they have their own lawmaking bodies that dictate those to them.

World Rugby owns this content. They have licenced people to broadcast it in various countries and they give conditions. Madam Speaker, a side issue from this is that, this is not a very good signal to give investors - local or foreign. If one owns something and has contract with another person or body, this lawmaking body in this country can override your right to ownership. What sort of signal does this send to investors?

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Budging!

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- They are watching us, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the honourable Minister also referred to prior approvals of IRB and FIFA on another occasion. However, we humbly request the honourable Minister, if he can provide proof of those approvals, so that we can see why, if indeed, World Rugby is so unreasonable to us.

Madam Speaker, I have touched on the issue of jurisdiction, we simply cannot go around dictating our terms to people who own things overseas - we cannot, only our laws in this country binds us. May we offer a very humble and helpful solution; I have talked about the Military budget before, perhaps \$20 million could be taken from the building of Black Rock since now we want to export our *coup*-making business regionally ...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- ... and buy content for FBC. Madam Speaker, we support that solely.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I will not allow any more discussions on that. I think there has been a lot of information exchange on this and a lot of information that will actually move this issue forward.

## QUESTIONS AND REPLIES

### Rural Water and Electrification Problems (Question No. 26/2014)

HON. S. PATEL asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister, please explain to the Members of Parliament what the Ministry is doing to address the problems faced by rural communities in areas of water and electricity?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA (Minister for Infrastructure and Transport).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the honourable Member, and I thank him for his question on the issue of water and electrification.

Madam Speaker, before I answer his question, yesterday in answering honourable Ratu Nanovo's question, I had promised the Chamber and the honourable Member that I would come back to him on the answer to the cost of the projects in Kadavu. With your indulgence, Madam Speaker, may I be allowed to address this in Parliament.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Yes, you may do so.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, in answer to the honourable Member's question from Kadavu. This year, the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development was allocated \$375,000 in addressing the road works in Kadavu, in terms of general repair works. I also mentioned yesterday about the works that are presently being undertaken, particularly, rehabilitation and the amount that will be allocated in 2015 with regards to these works, amounting to \$1.8 million. The major renewal work in Kadavu, as I alluded to, was the Vunisea Jetty, and that will be reconstructed at a cost of \$2.9 million in 2015. There is a total of over \$1.5 million allocated in 2015 and \$1.4 million in 2016, hopefully that will now go into rural roads in Kadavu. Generally, the sum of all that is going to Kadavu, in terms of the cost of the projects that I have mentioned.

Madam Speaker, in answering the honourable Patel's question, as you know, the heart of this Government's work and commitment is the people, and majority of these people of our nation live in rural areas do not have benefits of water and electricity. That has been one of our major areas of assistance.

In the areas of water, the policy as it stands is that, the communities that do not have water within the Water Authority of Fiji reticulation system need to contribute up to 10 per cent of the cost of the project that needs to be done in their area. So, most rural communities, including villages do that, and 90 per cent of the cost is borne by Government.

We have made some very significant work in that light and we have also tried to vary the means and ways of getting water to the people, particularly where not all sources of water are available to all of the places at any one time. Sometimes, there are no rivers, people live in the mountains and valleys, and so we try and get them water tanks. In the islands, where they virtually lack rivers and other water sources, we try and get them desalination plants and at the moment, there are five desalination plants that have now been located in the islands.

I just want to give this Parliament some run down of what we have done and what we will do in the areas of water in the coming year. I made some notes here, Madam Speaker, that in this year alone, we implemented 65 water projects, worth \$4.07 million, and 19 of these were fully funded by Government, at a total cost of \$813,713, while 46 communities paid the one-tenth that I had alluded to earlier.

The fully funded government projects for the region are as follows, (I will just give you a very quick rundown on them.) There were two for the Central Division and those were for Muainaweni and Baulevu, which consisted of a community of 750 people. In Togalevu Village, consisting of 216 villagers and that project had cost Government, \$529,008. We had one done in the Eastern Division, which was at St. John's College, covering a population of around 650, which included St. John's College itself, amounting to almost \$70,000. There were 16 communities that benefitted from this fully funded project in the Western Division, that is, in the district of Waya in Yasawa, three from Ra covering schools and settlements of Nanukuloa, Dadamu, Vunikavikaloa, Ra High School, and that had cost Government a total of \$915,000.

Now, Madam Speaker, I have a whole range here of list of projects that we will be doing next year under the Budget that we passed yesterday. I could make this available to the other side and of course, if I am subjected to questions, it is just that we will be funding, I will very happy to do so.

If you will allow me also, Madam Speaker, very briefly to cover also the area of rural electrification, we conducted this service to the community through the FEA grid and house wiring,

which is happening around Fiji today in different places. We also have diesel schemes obviously there are villages that we buy diesel generators for where appropriate. I have already mentioned, minor housing wiring and we also do renewable energy, particularly solar and hydro. I will be giving you some figures later on.

We also have some biofuel mills that are located and these are primarily in the outer islands. These, are perhaps, Madam Speaker, some of the areas where we provide electrification to our communities in the different areas of Fiji. I just want to make some references to some of the electrification projects that we have already done and in the areas where this assistance will be provided. However, we also heard of the projects that are now underway and I think it will be a motion to be raised by the honourable Member for Tailevu, with regards to the electrification project between Rakiraki and Wailotua, so that is something that we will be covering.

Madam Speaker, I can just take us quickly into the areas of solar homes, maybe that was of some interest. From 2011 to 2014, a total of 2,334 homes were installed through the solar home scheme, to a total value of \$2.8 million, and that is enough for the solar to power up some appliances like refrigerators and television, to name a few. This started in 2011 for communities in the provinces of Bua, Cakaudrove, Macuata, Navosa, Ba and Ra, and I believe that lit up a total of 966 homes. We also have this project in Cakaudrove, Ba, Kadavu, Lau and Lomaiviti, and obviously that essentially almost covers the whole of the Fiji Islands.

The other source of electrification that I had also alluded to earlier is the biofuel mills. We had constructed seven biofuel mills so far, at a total cost of \$3.1 million in the islands of Gau, Rotuma and Cicia in 2011. The remaining four was done in 2013 in Gau, Rabi, Lakeba and Vanua Balavu. Obviously, Madam Speaker, including the grid and the diesel engines, this biofuel is also giving power to the islands that I had already mentioned.

In terms of the FEA grid, I just want to inform Parliament today that we will be extending the FEA grid to about 2,000 more homes, and in the areas of Vatukoula, Keiyasi, Vatubalavu and Nacokaika Farming Settlement. We are taking this also to Rotuma, Tokaimalo, Nacavanadi to Korotasere, as alluded to in the Budget speech and also the area of Dawasamu to Bureiwai, and this project will cost about \$5.6 million.

Madam Speaker, I will leave it at that and just pose some indications in terms of where this electrification works is going. It is quite extensive, it is a measure of our commitment and I think we are all determined to have Fiji lit up and we all want our people to drink clean and quality drinking water. I want to reassure Parliament again today that we are not going to be short in that commitment and we will try to bring these services to the people, especially when they need it.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, in relation to rural electrification, the problem has been timely attendance to the repair and maintenance of these generators. In one instance, for example, in Natewa and Nawi Villages, there are generators which have sitting for a while, and when they asked, the Department of Rural Energy said that there was no money to pay for the staff to attend.

Could the honourable Minister please tell Parliament what measures can these people rely on to take away those problems – timely attendance to the repairs?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for the supplementary question. Obviously, I agree that there have been places where generators were given, some of the generators are about 10, 11 or 15 years old and they have almost come to the end of their life. We have a capacity that deals with those kinds of problems, Madam Speaker, from the

Department of Energy. Obviously, it takes some time for the officials to come down and provide these services, and this is one thing we are looking at. However, I want to assure the honourable Member that, that capacity is available to be used within the Department.

In some places for instance, if I dare make a mention of a case, last year, I went to my wife's village. I was baffled because I arrived there at night and it was the first time for me to get to Natewa at night. It was quite dark, except for Valelevu which had some lights. But then I discovered when I went down to my end in Dreketi, I realised that the village generator had not been working for five years. That was not the fault of the Government at the time, but because part of the engine the villages had sent to Labasa for repairs was going to cost about \$500, then they could not get it back in two years. This is something that we are trying to help the community with, and obviously we are trying to, as much as we can, get away from the diesel generators to avoid problems. Solar is the way to go, and that is our main effort really to try to get power out to the community. However, in answering the supplementary question, yes, we do have the capacity, and we will continue to do it.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I come from the Sigatoka area, and we have some huge resources there. The *Soqosoqo Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT) Government had set up the water system at Matovo in Sigatoka, but it continues to be problematic. In hotels, we have asked our guests to reduce their water consumption. I do not know what the problem is, Madam Speaker, whether it is capacity or distribution? Would the honourable Minister inform us what the problem is or repair it? It was a great project by the SVT, but most of the time, it lacked the ability to supply water for residents around the area.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for the supplementary question. Some of the issues that we are facing at the moment are legacy issues, and we are trying to correct that through sound engineering solutions. I thank the honourable Member for raising that case. If it is an issue, then I am willing to take it up as you have noted it. I know that we only have one SVT Member here, the honourable Kubuabola, but I am sure that that level of commitment that they gave then is still also the same for this Government to do something about it. I will bring an answer back to Parliament with regards to that project.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- *Vinaka!*

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. There is a huge water tank, (I am not sure whether that is the correct term for it) which could contain maybe thousands of litres of water sitting in Navaka Village, in Noco, Rewa. It has been there for the last eight years, and the villagers are hoping and praying that a Minister might visit them and put some water in that water tank so that they are able to access good drinking water. I hope the honourable Minister would be able to look at that particular problem. It is there waiting to fulfil the wishes of the nearby villages, but for the last eight years, that has not been so.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition, the *Marama na Roko Tui Dreketi* for her question. I want to assure the honourable Leader that this Government, the interests of the people of Rewa and Burebasaga are very paramount interest to us, and I could not endeavour to even think of not responding to it. I know that the honourable Prime Minister, in the last few years, talked about how well we could bring the water down to the flatlands of Rewa, Tokatoka and the surrounding areas. Unfortunately, maybe in that light, Navaka Village probably never ended up with water, but I want to assure the honourable Leader that we will be making our way there to have a look at that tank and make some determination. Like I said, Madam Speaker, we are dealing with a lot of legacy issues here, and it is our firm commitment to make sure that they work, so our people should be there in no time.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- *Vinaka!*

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I note the special interest on Rewa, Burebasaga, as well as Nadroga. Lest we forget, there are 10 grandmothers who are qualified solar engineers available to the Programme of Solar Electrification. We will move on to the second oral question.

Land & Maritime Transportations for Accessibility to Remote/Rural/Maritime Areas  
(Question No. 28/2014)

HON. B. SINGH asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Rural and Maritime Development inform the Parliament, what plans are in place to ensure consistent land and maritime transportations, to ensure the accessibility to remote rural and maritime areas?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA (Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Rural and Maritime Development).- Madam Speaker, I have a prepared answer, but I had given all my long talking so far, I think I will try to keep this one short and be subjective to other questions, should the need arise.

Obviously, like water and rural electrification, Madam Speaker, communication lines for communication are a very critical component of a capacity that builds a nation. So movement on land and sea, this being an archipelagic nation, is very critical for us to make sure that people can travel when they need to, and when they want to and travel safely. The commitment on Government in this particular area, like that we have done with water and rural electrification, we have made a significant investment on roads, in particular. Given that also, Government Shipping Services and the Maritime Safety Authority lies within my portfolio, which is also a very significant area where we are looking at providing those resources that need to get these services up and running.

Madam Speaker, \$600-odd million to get the roads up and running, apart from the general maintenance services that are adequately covered for in the Budget, through the contractors that we have.

We are re-dedicating \$20 million only for access to rural roads for RSL licences, and also for farm roads through the funding that is available with the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA).

Also, I had spoken at some length about Land Transport Authority previously, which is the regulator for movement. We want to have a safe transportation mode, we want our people to be honest and look after that, to make sure that we have a safe travelling public. There is always a concern in that area, but for land transport, the management is something we are looking at. All the areas that they look after, whether it be from public service to private vehicles, they allow for travel around the country.

In areas of maritime, this is a joint effort, Madam Speaker, between the private sectors and Government. I had alluded to on some other occasions earlier when I had spoken about this commitment that we are making to the Government Shipping Services.

We have purchased so many ships so far and then we are awaiting the arrival of another one. Obviously, there are franchises that go out to the islands of Lau, Kadavu and the Lomaiviti Group, I have a list of those that I have here in terms of the franchise, which is going to continue. Obviously, travel for our *tauvus* from Lau, *mataqalis* from Lomaiviti and the *naitas* from Kadavu is a very, very

important concern for us and we want to be as consistent as possible. Our commitments are in those areas.

We are also spending time and resources in capacity building, not only on the islands in terms of jetties, but also here in the main centres in Viti Levu, where boats actually come to berth or to park. This year, and 2015, we are reconstructing the Government Shipping Services wharf in Walu Bay, in order to give us a safe environment for the berthing of our ships that come to Suva from the islands and the waiting areas as well.

Madam Speaker, the general commitment is there, and I would like to reassure the nation again, as I have done earlier in terms of water, electricity, transportation on land and the sea is our firm commitment. I have alluded to sometime earlier and I can make a commitment on my part, the Government and also the Ministry that I lead, we will continue to further this, particularly in maritime shipping services that go out to the people that are not on the island of Viti Levu.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I thank the honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Transport for his commitment in terms of transportation, particularly to the maritime islands in the Lau Group.

May I ask the honourable Minister, what immediate plans does he have, or his Ministry to be able to cover the maritime islands, particularly the Lau Group at this time of the year? More so when the children are going on holidays, for the people of Lau, this is the only time they visit their islands, and also because of the upcoming school year, particularly the safety of members of the community in terms of embarking/diseMBarking, for example in Lomaloma, Vanua Balavu as the Lomaloma jetty is still out of service. At this time of the year, the people from Lau, particularly from Vanua Balavu, in the absence of any shipping assistance from either the Government or the franchise, hire boats like the roll on roll off that uses the jetty and now because the jetty is out of service, that initiative by the people will not be able to come through at this time of the year, which means the movement of people to the province will be very restricted or limited.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for her multiple supplementary questions, which is substantive in nature. The honourable Member is alluding, particularly to two areas. Firstly, she is primarily concerned about the travelling of people to Lau during Christmas and their safety. Secondly, I believe she made specific reference to the jetty in Vanua Balavu.

Madam Speaker, I will endeavour to address the first issue. I do not necessarily have with me this morning a programme for the boating services to Lau, within the immediate period here before Christmas. I can readily make this available to the honourable Member in no time, probably round about lunch time, for the benefit of Members in this Chamber. However, I had noted earlier that we have franchises to go to the whole of the islands in Lau (and I have the list here with me), where they are chartering boats if they want to, in excess of what is provided for at the moment by the franchise. That is a matter for the islanders to actually do themselves. As to the actual boats leaving, I can provide those in the afternoon.

In relation to the second issue, with regards to the safety of the jetty in Lomaloma, I believe is before this Parliament as a motion for Friday, but given that the question has been raised now, I want to assure you, Madam Speaker and the Parliament today, that the safety of the services at Lomaloma Jetty is the priority of the FRA. We are working on it. We have a temporary solution now which should work by around Christmas. That is the commitment that we put to it. Obviously, there needs to be some substantive amount of work that needs to be done on the Vanua Balavu jetty in Lomaloma.

There needs for some design work and level of preparation. We already have the funding for that to be done next year. However, I can assure the honourable Member in Parliament about our commitment to safety. We have a team that is working on it. We are trying to get the work done so that people can then safely work on what is left of the structure when they are travelling to Vanua Balavu around the time of Christmas.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Transport for his commitments of taking care of the developments to meet the needs of people, especially in the maritime areas.

Madam Speaker, considering the needs of the islands within Central Lau and also Southern and Northern Lau, most of these islanders come to Lakeba, which is most central, to take their supplies from there, especially in cases where it has taken a long time for any of the vessels to visit the islands, and they are running out of supplies.

My question to the honourable Minister: if there is any plan now for the construction of a jetty in Lakeba, to accommodate roll on and roll off, so it can meet these kinds of needs, not only for Lakeba but also for the other nearby islands that will always make their way to Lakeba through fibre to get their supplies. If the honourable Minister can explain to this Parliament whether there is any plan now, or in the immediate future, or when that can be taken care of?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Semesa Karavaki for the supplementary question.

Yes, I think that has been the subject of study on how to try and get better shipping services, particularly to Lakeba, because as you know, the jetty in Lakeba is in Tubou and it was constructed at the time of the former Prime Minister and President, the Right Honourable Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. The unfortunate situation here is that, it is not necessarily in terms of some of the observations that have already been made that there are better places within Lakeba, where a better jetty could be constructed, so the whole idea is to move it from Tubou to another area in Lakeba. I know I had some discussions with the honourable Member relating to this. So I believe it is going to be very close to the village of Vakano, so the honourable Member can safely reach his village when it is time for him to use the jetty, but it is definitely in the pipeline honourable Member and, Madam Speaker, that we just only have to try and list it within our list of priorities.

Obviously, Madam Speaker, our constraint has always been resource and we want to reach out to everyone but we have a list that we have to follow, given our own limitations, but I want to assure the honourable Member again that we are aware that the jetty in Tubou is not the most ideal jetty for the island of Lakeba. So the honourable Member actually knows where a better spot is and he is already alluding to that earlier on in some of our discussions. But I want to assure this august Chamber again that it is one area that hopefully, when we get more resources we could do it sooner rather than later.

HON. V. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. On maritime services, I am from the heartland of tourism Malolo and the Yasawas. There is a lot of traffic there on a 24 hour basis and I just wonder if the honourable Minister could commence chartering the waters of Malolo and the Yasawas and put beacons around the reefs, because it is 24 hours a day and people are now even arriving in Fiji at night and want to go by boat from Nadi straight to their resorts. It can be very dangerous and I have been in a boat that hit a reef which is quite visible, but I think a beacon and proper charting will help in that part of Fiji. Can I ask the honourable Minister to take this on and make it happen as soon as possible?



HON. P. TIKODUADUA (Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Rural and Maritime Development).- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for that issue that he has raised and I can assure you the Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji are on it, and it is part of the work that they will do in that particular area. Obviously, as I said, we want to get to every place sooner rather than later and the safety of the travelling public is always paramount so our commitment is in that area and I am going to take it up when we break from this particular meeting.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you very much honourable Minister, on that note, it is time we break for refreshment and we will return at 11.40 a.m., to continue with the questions and I remind honourable Members that lunch will be provided as well.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.20 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.45 a.m.

Qantas Shareholding in Fiji Airways  
(Question No. 28/2014)

HON. S. KARAVAKI asked the Government upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Civil Aviation explain the status of the Qantas shareholding in Fiji Airways?

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

As you know, Madam Speaker, in the response to the Budget, I addressed some of these issues, but I think it is an opportune time to lay the entire details pertaining to Qantas in its shareholding in Fiji Airways now on the floor.

Madam Speaker, Qantas acquired about 17.5 per cent of Air Pacific then in 1971. The shareholding was then increased during the *Soqosoqo Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT) Government days in 1998 to 46 per cent, where the then government had approached Qantas to buy further shares into some would say the ailing Fiji Air Pacific Limited.

Unfortunately, however, Madam Speaker, when the then Government had approached Qantas to buy those shares, Qantas actually bought those shares on a number of conditions and those conditions meant that Qantas had veto powers as I highlighted last week on 19 areas of operations of Air Pacific. In other words, even though they own 46 per cent, you had to have their agreement before you could move on any of these areas. It is important for me to highlight these areas:

- (a) Any adoption by the Director of the annual operating budget in any variation to the annual operating budget Qantas had veto powers.
- (b) Qantas had veto powers on the delegation of any powers of the directors to a director of any committee of directors.
- (c) Any capital operating or other expenditure capital disposals incurrence of debt, Qantas approval needed to be sought; even though they own 46 per cent only and the Fijian Government, the Fijian people own 51 per cent.
- (d) The entry by the company into any major commercial or joint venture agreement, merger take over or business acquisition.
- (e) The disposal for value by the company material operating rights including slots or routine licences which is a key component of the business of running an airline.
- (f) The issues of shares or options in respect of shares.
- (g) The grant of any mortgage, charge or other security interest over the asset of the company.

- (h) Any proposal to cease to carry on or sell or dispose of the company's principal business or a substantial part of the principal business or to wind up the company.
- (i) Any major variations to air services schedules.
- (j) Ceasing to use any slots that are given.
- (k) Commencing of any new routes, so they decide where Air Pacific could fly to.
- (l) The application for listing or quotation of any shares in the company on any stock exchange market.
- (m) The adoption of material variation by the Directors of the Dividend Policy (they decided how much dividend would be paid).
- (n) The leasing of any assets to/from a third party in excess of a delegation.
- (o) The appointment of the Chairman and any Deputy Chairman (Even though the Fijian Government could put more directors, they would tell you who would be the Chairman and who would be the Deputy Chairman).
- (p) The appointment and remuneration of the Managing Director (they decided that).
- (q) The approval of all corporate policies of the company, including any treasury policy, financial delegation policy or ethics policy.
- (r) Any decision to institute the fair and legal proceedings involving parties other than a member of an associated body corporate or a member outside of a delegation.
- (s) Any new employee initiative scheme, not contemplated by delegation (in other words, as we have now profit-sharing, they would decide whether you have profit-sharing or not).

Madam Speaker, what this essentially means, with the shareholding of Qantas, even though they own 46 per cent, they have effective control over the national airline of Fiji. So, what it meant, Madam Speaker, is that, when we went out to negotiate Air Services Agreements (ASA) and as you would know, stemming from the Chicago Convention that pertains to ASA, we were in fact in derogation of the ASA because ASA says that, "National airline is the airline that you have effective control over". So, by us saying that Air Pacific is a national airline, we were in fact, lying because the Fijian Government, the Fijian people, did not have effective control.

What is the point of saying 51 per cent when we do not have effective control? As a result of which (and based on the Chicago Convention and the ASA) we introduced the new law called the Civil Aviation Ownership and Control National Airlines Decree in 2012. The Decree essentially gave effective control to the majority shareholder of Air Pacific now Fiji Airways to the Fijian Government because it owns 51 per cent of Fiji Airways.

Madam Speaker, Just a bit of history, as you know, Qantas has been in a lot of financial strife. They are also trying to sell off their shares to the Fijian Government. Under the Shareholders Agreement, it says that, "When a party wants to sell their shares, they make an offer to sell". The other shareholders have pre-emptive rights. In other words, they have to offer it to the other party first. So,

what Qantas did a few years ago, rather than making us an offer, they made a proposal, and I will tell you the difference between the offer and the proposal because under the Shareholders Agreement, if you make an offer and the other side agrees to buy the shares but does not agree on the price, then the Shareholders Agreement has a number of mechanisms which you need to go through.

They wanted to sell their shares in Fiji Airways at a ridiculous sum, I think at that time, for about \$80 million, when Air Pacific had made a number of significant losses but they did not make an offer because if they had made an offer, we would have said, “Yes”. If we had agreed on that and did not agree with the share price, then the shareholders Agreement says, “If one party offers and the other one wants to buy, if they do not have agreement on the price, you go to a third party, get a valuation done and whatever price the third party gives as the value of the shares, is the price that must be sold at and bought at”. They knew that, so they tried to get all technical announcements that we are making, not an offer, but are making a proposal.

In the meantime, when the effective control of the Airline was shifted to the rightful majority shareholder, they boycotted attending board meetings of Fiji Airways. So, we said, “You must come along”. They said, “We don’t want to come”. They still own the shares, they still receive the dividends and in the meantime, Fiji Airways is making a lot more money than it ever did before.

We still have a code share with Qantas, which is all working fine at the commercial level. However, there are many things that we have discovered, Madam Speaker. When Qantas, who had effective control over Fiji Airways or Air Pacific at that time, for example, arranged insurance for the claims that we had, (we went through Qantas and – guess what - when we actually went off on our own and got the insurance) we found the insurance premiums to be a lot more cheaper. We found out that Qantas was, in fact, putting a margin on the services it was providing to Air Pacific Limited, even though they were shareholders. We were previously a little subservient about it and said, “Qantas you do whatever you want to do. We will just sit back and let you be the boss.”

Madam Speaker, to answer the question to the honourable Member, the shareholding is as it stands; we own 51 per cent and they own 46 per cent of Fiji Airways Limited.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. The answer we got from the honourable Minister is that, Qantas as is today, a tarsealed shareholder. I believe that is the way it is. However, let me take us back into time, if I may.

Madam Speaker, at one time, Air Pacific was technically insolvent – bankrupt. The Government of Fiji invited Qantas to come and save the Airline and they did it to the extent that they underwrote our losses to a certain degree. When they did that, like everyone else, they asked for certain conditions which the honourable Minister has highlighted today, which is fair.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- *Nona momo.*

(Laughter)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order, order! I think the background information is important.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- For Qantas to underwrite the losses to save the Airline, they demanded, they asked for certain conditions. I believe, Madam Speaker, the only answer was that, for all these major decisions, all we wanted was a two-third from the Board, not control, but the two-third to agree on any major items as has been highlighted.

Madam Speaker, in aviation at that time, a lot of the third-world countries were operating airlines with questionable safety records. Indeed, out of Africa, airlines could not fly in Europe because they were branded as the “flying coffins”. Qantas gave us the respectability in safety, as you know the movie, “*Brain Maker, Qantas Never Crashes*”.

Our tourism industry today, without Qantas would have collapsed, with the support of Air Pacific. I understand where they are coming from in terms of gaining control, but my question is this; with the way we are going about intending to sell off our national assets and we are trapped with overseas suitors, what comfort are you going to provide for them, as they will remember what you did to Qantas? That to me is critical at this point.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I am a bit concerned about supplementary questions being prefaced by very long statements, however, the point is this, the shareholding of Qantas has not changed. We have not taken away the shares, we have not nationalised the Airline. There is a very important difference in civil aviation as those people who are aware of what happens in Civil Aviation, know that Civil Aviation plays a very critical role. In Fiji, bulk of the tourists that come to Fiji come by airline, probably about 90 per cent, if not more come by an airline. Imagine, Madam Speaker, if we were to let go of the national airline, we would be left to the whims of all other carriers. The West Indies is a classic example, where their Open Skies Policy stated, “You can all come into West Indies through different paths, Jamaica, et cetera”. The national airline closed down within six to nine months.

In order to protect the tourism industry that contributes now nearly 34 per cent towards our GDP, we, as a country, need to have effective control over our national airline. We did not, in any way, undermine the share value. In fact, we have enhanced the share value of Qantas in Fiji Airways because Fiji Airways are now doing really well.

Madam Speaker, yes, of course, at times when people come in and provide assistance, it does not mean that we are forever indebted to them at the expense of the country. There are many things during the British times they have done. Does that mean we continue to remain a British colony - of course not.

In respect of the civil aviation industry, I think it is very critical to ensure that Fiji Airways remains a very strong company. Also, it is very, very critical to ensure that we have a very long-term standing relationship with Qantas on a code sharing basis. We still talk to them, we still negotiate, we still have code sharing with them and on a commercial basis the relationship is beautiful.

Madam Speaker, I think that probably answers the question entirely.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Can the honourable Minister explain why the Fiji Government did not simply write back to Qantas and invite them to make an offer? This is based on the answer given that the reason why the Fiji Government did not accept their proposal, so to speak, because it was a proposal and not an offer, and they would have accepted it if it was an offer.

The question is; why did the Fiji Government not simply write back to Qantas and say “Look you are making a proposal, why did you not make us an offer because we are here, prepared to purchase your shares?” That is the question, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker. We did. In fact, we wrote to them several times and we did say to them “please make an offer” but they continued not to make an offer. We did write to them.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Third supplementary question.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Madam Speaker, can the honourable Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Aviation explain to the Parliament as to what sort of succession plan does he have now, given the comments that he made that one of the twelve or so reasons why they were not happy with Qantas was that they were always determined as to who was going to be in the executive position? What sort of succession plan do they have now, simply because there have been a lot of changes as well in the position of Chief Executive for Fiji Airways, lately?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the question is not relevant to the substantive question. The question is about the status of Qantas shareholding in Fiji Airways. As you know, part of the question in the supplementary question was something that was brought before the Business Committee, and in fact, it was brought to the floor of this Chamber and that had been ruled out of order because that was an opinion that was cast.

We are quite happy to answer questions regarding succession planning if it is cast in the right light and in the substantive form.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Madam Speaker, why I raised that question is because the honourable Minister had indicated that one of the reasons why they did not like Qantas was that they were given a kind of a leeway as to the appointment of the Chief Executive position. That is the reason why I raised the supplementary question as to what sort of succession plan do they now have, given that the latest Chief Executive Officer has resigned as well?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I raised it in the context of their ability to veto the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). It is the appointment of the CEO that is the context in which I raised it. I had said, “Here, you have a company that owns 46 per cent of the company, that has a say as to who will become the Chief Executive Officer (and that was the offensive part of these veto powers). Now, you have the majority shareholder, which is the Fijian Government and therefore, the Fijian people have a say in the appointment of the CEO.” That is the context in which I had raised it.

Full Extent of Recently Signed Agreements with the  
Governments of India and China  
(Question No. 29/2014)

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to withdraw this question.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Question No. 29 of 2014 has been withdrawn.

Essential National Industries (Employment) Decree  
(Question No. 30/2014)

HON. P. SINGH asked the Government, upon notice:

Would the honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations inform the Parliament whether the Essential National Industries (Employment)

Decree be reviewed, amended or repealed in conformity to International Labour Organisation conventions that Fiji has ratified; if yes, when; if not, why not?

HON. MAJ. GEN. (Ret'd) J.K. KONROTE (Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations).- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable Prem Singh for the question.

Madam Speaker, on 12<sup>th</sup> November this year, a Fijian Government delegation attended the 322<sup>nd</sup> session of the International Labour Organisation governing body meeting, which was held in Geneva, Switzerland. At the governing body meeting, the Fijian Government undertook that we would, and I say again, "that we would" through frank and sincere tripartite dialogue, in a spirit of genuine respect and good faith, progressively review all existing labour laws to ensure compatibility with the Constitution, whilst at the same time ensuring that the economic well-being of Fiji continues to be protected and enhanced.

We also stated that in reviewing the existing labour laws, the Fijian Government shall work closely with international organisations, such as the ILO, and shall invite them to be part of the review process.

Madam Speaker, any such reviews will also include consideration of the recommendations of the Employment Relations Advisory Board, comprising of the tripartite partners. The Fijian Government also undertook to put the recommendations arising out of such a review to Parliament, for its necessary approval and adoption in accordance with Parliamentary Standing Orders. This was well received by both the workers and the employers' organisations.

Madam Speaker, on that note, the Fijian Government has prepared a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to be made available to the other tripartite partners, the employers and the workers organisations for consideration and endorsement in good faith.

This MOU is a means to advance better labour relations in Fiji. The proposed MOU includes the review of labour laws and practices, and an undertaking that any review will be done in conformity with the Constitution and that the Fijian Government will work very closely with ILO, and invite them to be part of the review process.

Madam Speaker, the recommendations arising out of this review process will then be submitted to this Parliamentary body for its approval and adoption. The Fijian Government affirms to this Parliamentary body the same commitment made to the international community at the governing body meeting to progressively review, and I say again, "to progressively review" existing labour laws. However, we cannot give a definite time frame because this will take time, following consultations and negotiations. We can state though that we intend to begin the review process as soon as possible.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I thank the honourable Minister for his very good answer and the assurance that the Essential National Industries Decree, together with other provisions and issues, will be reviewed.

Can the honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations then inform Parliament that the agreements rendered void by the Essential National Industries Decree would be renegotiated as part of the review process?

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (Ret'd) J.K. KONROTE.- Madam Speaker, the question posed by the honourable Member will require me to consult my staff and then inform this august Chamber of the response accordingly.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I understand from the honourable Minister's answer to my question that it will be done through a tripartite forum. May I ask the honourable Minister, how far has the Government gone to establishing a tripartite forum?

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (Ret'd) J.K. KONROTE.- Madam Speaker, to answer his question, it is not very far because as I have said, we are going to continue negotiations and dialogue, and that will be done. I will come back and report accordingly to this august Parliament.

MADAM SPEAKER.- There being no other supplementary question, we will now move on to the last oral question, and I invite the honourable Ratu Nanovo to have the floor.

HON. RATU S. NANOVO.- Madam Speaker, just before I proceed to the question under my name this morning, can I take this opportunity to thank the honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Transport for providing the answers to the questions that I had asked this Parliament yesterday.

Salary Payments - Government Ministers and Assistant Ministers  
(Question No. 31/2014)

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

Can the honourable Minister of Finance please confirm or deny that the Ministry of Finance is now directly disbursing salary payments for all Government Ministers and Assistant Ministers?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Minister of Finance).- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for this question. Yes, I can confirm that the Ministers and Assistant Ministers are getting their salary payments directly disbursed by the Ministry of Finance.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Members and that brings to an end the Question time.

The Parliament is now adjourned until 9.30 tomorrow morning and may you have a restful night.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.15 p.m.