

TUESDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 2015

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

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present except the honourable Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday 9th February, 2015 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

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I welcome all of you to today's sitting. I also extend a warm welcome to all of you joining us in the public gallery, and those watching proceedings on television, the internet, as well as listening on the radio. Like I had mentioned yesterday, this is your Parliament and we are grateful for your interest in today's proceedings.

QUESTIONS AND REPLIES

Oral Questions

Indigenous Institutions – UNDRIP
(Question No. 08/2015)

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

Would the honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications explain the future directions of indigenous institutions complying with Articles 4 and 5 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), as outlined in the Government's Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2009-2014.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question raised by the honourable Member and I thank him for his question.

Madam Speaker, this question needs some contextualisation. The reason I say that is that we need to firstly understand two things – you have the Roadmap for Democracy

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Madam Speaker, I refer to the question just raised which was originally supposed to be asked to the honourable Prime Minister. My question was filed in compliance with Standing Order 41 where the Business Committee agreed to the question. However, Madam Speaker, yesterday a senior Minister of the Government approached me twice asking for his agreement to have the Attorney-General answer on behalf of the Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs.

This morning, after seeing the Order Paper, I called the Secretary-General to protest this unauthorised move. This is outrageous, Madam Speaker, and is inconsistent with Section 6 (b) of the Constitution which calls for officers of Parliament to serve and secure the honour and dignity of Parliament, and see my rights and privilege as a member.

Madam Speaker, I want to know; who authorised the insertion of honourable Attorney-General's (A. Sayed-Khaiyum) name as the Minister to answer the question raised by my colleague which was filed in compliance with Standing Orders and directed to the honourable Prime Minister? Why was such change made outside of the Business Committee and after informal approaches from the other side were refused?

Madam Speaker, this is extraordinary. The question relates to indigenous rights and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs in Fiji must surely answer this question.

HON. A. VADEI.- Tell them! Tell them!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, *iTaukei* Affairs is not one of the areas of responsibility that the honourable Attorney-General has jurisdiction over, according to his appointment details in the Gazette, as gazetted in number 34. So, why is he answering the question?

Madam Speaker, I want the honourable Prime Minister to answer and not the honourable Attorney-General. If this question is raised to the Attorney-General, then it is supposed to be raised with the Attorney-General but this is the portfolio held by the honourable Prime Minister.

HON. A. VADEI.- Shame!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- If the honourable Prime Minister cannot answer the question raised, then he should stand up and say so, and resign his portfolio.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, if you will remember the Business Committee meeting we had last Sunday, the question was directed to the Minister for Lands.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No, it is *iTaukei* Affairs and not Lands.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J. V. BAINIMARAMA.- No, no, the same

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- That is wrong!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J. V. BAINIMARAMA.- See, you got it all wrong.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- The indigenous is yours.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, we're not talking about that.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J. V. BAINIMARAMA.- No, we're not talking about that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Just hear him out!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- It was directed to the Minister for Lands.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No, it wasn't.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Yes, it was.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Can we please listen to the honourable Prime Minister?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Please, get your act right. You listen!

We thought it should be directed to the person who is responsible for

HON. N. NAWAIKU.A- Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Hey, I'm still

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Under the Standing Orders, once a point of order is raised, it requires a ruling first before anyone can stand up, so we await the ruling of Madam Speaker.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- She has made her ruling.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- We're still awaiting her ruling.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- She has made her ruling..

MADAM SPEAKER.- I've allowed the honourable Prime Minister to speak first before I give my ruling.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You haven't informed us.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Prime Minister, you take the floor, after which I will give my ruling.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- There you go! It makes sense, doesn't it?

(Laughter)

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Let me start again. On Sunday last, when we sat in the Business Committee meeting, that question was directed to our Minister for Lands. She raised that with us when we sat and we said; 'Maybe we should direct it to the person who is responsible to answer this question.'

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- The Indigenous Affairs.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- This has got nothing to do with Indigenous Affairs. I know where those two honourable Members are going. I have already been there.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- It's indigenous issues.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Order, please!

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections)

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- From 2006!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- No, no!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Stop your obsession!

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- The *coup*!

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- We can talk about *coups* until the cows come home, you will never get there. It is because of the *coups* that I conducted, that you are sitting here.

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections)

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I want you to remember that.

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections)

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

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You, Biman, lowest percentage of votes NFP in your leadership – remember that!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Alright Biman! You cannot even tell the difference between 1 and 3.6, so keep quiet!

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You are intellectually challenged, You, Biman!

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Order! I'm losing my voice here.

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections)

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Who conducted the *coup*?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Thank you, honourable Prime Minister, you may continue.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Sometime ago, Madam Speaker, I said that the honourable Member who raised this question has no vision for Fiji. I said that clearly. He certainly does not have a vision for the *iTaukei*, and that is where this question is going. This is heading in that direction. What he wants to do....

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- That is your interpretation. What is your vision?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.-... is to take the indigenous population back 100 years. It is very simple.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- What is the point?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- It is very simple. If you read the question, excuse me! Hold on! If you read the question, it says, "Would the Minister explain the future direction of indigenous institutions..."

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Institutions, not land.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order!

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

MADAM SPEAKER.- I am trying to get information to make my ruling.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.-... complying with Articles 4 and 5 of the United National Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People as outlined in the Government's Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development. Who is the Minister for that?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- *I Taukei* Affairs!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- See! You should go and read your books, as the honourable Attorney-General has been saying all along...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- If you have not answered, just answer. If you can't, vacate the portfolio.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ... you have not been reading your Constitution. But the wonderful thing about this Parliament now is that, even though you hated the Constitution from the beginning, you have now read the Constitution many times over.

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- You're breaking your own Constitution.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, the Minister that looks after the Government's Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development from 2009-2014 is the Minister for National Planning.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That was long time ago.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- So, you wait!

MADAM SPEAKER.- I must remind honourable Members to be careful of your statements. You need to uphold the integrity of this Parliament, and there should be no personal attack on any other Member.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- You wait and listen to the explanation that is going to be given to you by the honourable Attorney-General.

MADAM SPEAKER.- At this juncture, I would like to bring to the attention of the honourable Members' attention that pursuant to the Speaker's additional powers under Standing Order 20, I have redirected Question No. 8/2015 listed in today's Order Paper to be answered by the honourable Attorney-General. The reason being, the question will be best answered by the honourable Attorney-General given that there are legal aspects surrounding the nature of the question.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for his question. There are two critical aspects to this question; one of them is the Government's Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development which was issued by the Ministry of National Planning years ago. I have the document here with me and I am quite happy to share it with the honourable Members on the other side. It is also available publicly.

This document, Madam Speaker, talks about indigenous institutions *vis-a-vis* this particular document, and that is to strengthen them, and the way to strengthen them, as this document sets out is to bring about good governance and accountability in those institutions...

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... and I refer, Madam Speaker, to page 26 of this document and I quote:

“...application of principles such as accountability, transparency, equity, consensus orientation, participation, effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness. Giving greater attention to good governance issues should be a top priority in respect of all institutions that are part of the indigenous Fijian administration. This includes inter alia the adherence to a framework for good corporate governance, including a code of conduct, customised

guidelines for provincial councils, strategic planning involving the setting up of published performance targets; participative dialogue processes with stakeholders...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- You are taking over our resources!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It's not yours!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.-

“... adoption of more participative and responsive business practices involving regular consultation with clients on the expectations and on what the institutions have in fact achieved; proper auditing of accounts; proper management of, and accounting for, expenditure; and appointment of staff on merit with the focus given to development of sound human resource management practices.”

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- You're the last person to talk about merit.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections!)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Page 29, read it! Would you like a copy, I can table this, Madam Speaker.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Table it!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I can table this, Madam Speaker. You can read it. It will be tabled. Let me answer the question.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- It's been there for the last many years. You haven't changed it!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Let me answer the question!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That's not the point!

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! If you have a supplementary question, you can ask a supplementary question later.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the question is, what is the future direction of the indigenous institutions as outlined in this document? It is vis-à-vis this document. Now, let me get to the Convention as that is the crux of what they are asking for.

Now, as the learned lawyers on the other side would know, there is a difference between a Convention and a Declaration, and let me read it out to you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- We know.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, let me read it out, because the whole purpose of this question and answer session is to inform the House, and when you inform the House, you are informing the members of the public also. Unfortunately, there is a lot of uninformed people in this House.

(Laughter)

So, Madam Speaker, what they are referring to is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Let me quote directly from the website, and I can give you the portal to this; URL address. It says, and I quote:

“The term declaration is used for various international instruments. International Human Rights Declarations are not legally binding. The term is often deliberately chosen to indicate that the parties do not intend to create binding obligations but merely want to declare certain aspirations.”

That is what a declaration means.

A Convention on the other hand, Madam Speaker is a formal agreement between States. The generic term “convention” is thus synonymous with the generic term “treaty”. I know the honourable Member in the events of 2000 was drafting the treaty.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I went there, and what did they say, you are in breach of Human Rights.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The conventions are normally used for participation by the international community as a whole or by a large number of States. That is the difference. Madam Speaker, here we have a question that is fundamentally premised on the notion that here is a legally binding document.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- You are avoiding the indigenous issue.

HON. A. SAYED- KHAIYUM.- Therefore this document needs to be in compliance to that. However, Madam Speaker, I will tell you what is legally binding and is in compliance and does give those rights and that is, this document - the Fijian Constitution.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- That is your Constitution.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You need to read the Fijian Constitution. The Fijian Constitution recognises the indigenous people or the *itaukei*, the ownership of the *itaukei* lands, their unique culture, customs, tradition and language.

There is another indigenous group, Madam Speaker, in this country and they are the Rotumans. We recognise them - from the island of Rotuma, their ownership of the Rotuman land, their unique culture, customs, tradition and language. Let me go on to enunciate furthermore the other provision in the Constitution that recognises, for example, no unfair discrimination on the basis of one's culture. It recognises the proviso to the equality provisions and safe to the extent necessary and without infringing the rights of freedom set out in any other section or chapter gives effect to the communal ownership of *itaukei*, Rotumans and Banabana lands, an access to marine resources or the bestowing of *itaukei*, Rotumans and Banabanas chiefly title or rank. It recognises that and it says that if this is in any way in contravention with the equality provision, it will be allowed. That is the fundamental safeguard in respect of what they are referring to under Articles 4 and 5.

What does Articles 4 and 5 mean? It talks about the various institutions if they have been developed. Yes, in Fiji, we do have various institutions that have been developed.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Controlled by the Government.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- For example, Madam Speaker, they relate to such as provincial councils, the appointment of *turaga-ni-koro*, all those aspects are talked about. The question is, vis-a-vis; this document. Now, the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs will advertise for positions, ask for audited accounts and ask for compliance with various standards. People are being appointed on merit. This is in compliance with the various recommendations that have been put together under this document.

Madam Speaker, one can categorically state that the Constitution goes over and above, a document that is not legally binding but we have made it legally binding. For example, the returning of the *itaukei lands*, if it is not used any longer by the State, it must be returned to the *itaukei* landowners. We never had this provision before, Madam Speaker.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- It was there before.

HON. A. SAYED- KHAIYUM.- We never had it before, not the returning of land. You do not know that. If that was the case, why do we have Domain still under Crown Land? Why do we have that? Why was Momi converted to *itaukei* freehold land under you when you were in the Lands Department?

Madam Speaker, there are other ways that we have strengthening of institutions. For example, there is a demarcation of unsurveyed *itaukei* land. There is a survey that demarcated boundaries taking place. There is a demarcation of village boundaries and cultural mapping exercise taking place. There is a computerisation of VKB that is taking place to ensure that everyone who is supposed to be in it is in it and there is no dispute. There is a dispute resolution machinery on the traditional titles and fisheries. There are awareness programmes, *itaukei* lands and fisheries tribunal and the setting up of the Natural Resource Owners Committee. A number of initiatives have taken place under the Bainimarama Government and will continue to do so, under this with this as the guidance.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. First, I think it is necessary to bring us right back to the issue. The issue is the undertaking by this Government by its National Report to Geneva. I will read the undertaking - Fiji supports the UNDRIP and the deliverables are well governed indigenous institutions that effectively execute their own in accordance with clauses 4 and 5.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Your question, please?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is the undertaking and the difference between Convention and Declaration. Fiji is legally bound under ILO 169. It is bound to protect customary institution. It is bound to make it independent. It is bound especially to seek their prior and informed consent. Now, let me translate that. I am not going to speak in Fijian. I am translating....

HON. A.SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What is the supplementary question?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- *Vei keda na itaukei, na kena i balebale qo. E tabu vua na matanitu me dodoka na ligana...*

MADAM SPEAKER.- Excuse me. Order, order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I am only translating, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I am sure you are very well versed with the English language, please keep to your speech in English.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Very well. The question is; given that undertaking, given the ILO Convention, which is legally bound, Fiji is legally bound to protect customary institutions, seek independence and most important of all, get prior informed consent. Does that future direction measure include amendments to the regulation that had terminated the GCC, amendments to the Native Land Trust Act that had removed from the native owners...

MADAM SPEAKER.- What is your question, please?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- My question is, does that measure include amendments to these Decrees that have taken away our rights, our right to control our land and our right to independently decide on our customary institutions? That is my question.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the honourable Member's supplementary question demonstrates once again that they are so confused.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You are confused.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Let me finish. He talks about the ILO Convention 169. What is the question? The question is not the ILO Convention 169. The question is Articles 4 and 5 of the UNDRIP, which is different to the ILO Convention. If he wants to ask a question on the ILO Convention, he needs to bring a substantive question on that. He is not answering a substantive question, he needs to bring a substantive question. The honourable Member is not saying anything, he knows that I am right. He is looking at me with intensity because the question was on the UNDRIP, which is different from ILO 169. You know that honourable Member.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is all I want to know.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, you can ask a substantive question on that.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- May I ask a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I thank the honourable and learned Attorney-General for his answer. He has really encompassed a lot of areas, including the returning of *itaukei* land when the government is no longer using it.

Can I ask the honourable and learned Attorney-General to inform this House, and the Constitution falls short of this, to return the land that was used by the Government and no longer used by the Government now, to be returned to the *itaukei*. For example, all the land from the bridge at the Rewa Dairy onwards, they were all *itaukei* land but the Government at the time took that land to be used for those that came as labourers in the sugar cane field. That land till now still remains Crown Land. Why did they not provide a provision in the Constitution to ensure that those land must be returned to the *itaukei*?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for his question, it gives me the opportunity to once again clarify. Even when we became Independent in 1970 they did not revert that land to *itaukei* landowners. Why? Because of the issue of the passing of titles because most of those lands were mortgaged to banks.

Madam Speaker, by the Crown at that time, which the other side was singing praises of, yesterday. The issue is this, the reality on the ground is that this Constitution provides that no land in future, if the Crown leases *iTaukei* land and if, for example, it says that we need to lease this land even for public purpose, say to build a sewerage treatment plant on some land and 10 years later, the Crown no longer requires that land because they built another sewerage treatment plant somewhere else or a water treatment plant, whatever the case may be, that Government must give back that land. It cannot, for example, tear down the sewerage treatment plant and put Government buildings or houses, because it was initially used or initially when they wanted the land it was to build that sewerage treatment plant.

So if there is going to be a change in purpose, then Government must give back that land to the landowners. We never had such a provision, Madam Speaker. To answer that question for the honourable Member, you cannot go back in time because it will upset the entire land ownership system in Fiji.

Today, Madam Speaker, we were the very few countries, apart from some of the other smaller Pacific Island countries where 91 per cent of all the land in Fiji is *iTaukei* land. Through colonisation many other countries have been raped and pillaged and ravaged, their indigenous people were systematically killed off. Their lands were arbitrarily alienated. If one looks at South America, North America, Indian sub-continent, Africa and many other countries, this is where this declaration comes from and the Honourable Member sitting behind Honourable Lalabalavu knows very well the historical basis of these declarations. That is the genesis of these declarations. So to answer specifically the question, Honourable Member, it is because we could not go back in time to ensure security of title. But going forward, Madam Speaker, that will be the case.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I thank the honourable and learned Attorney-General for answering the question this morning. The question was a very simple one; what is the future direction of indigenous institutions in complying with Articles 4 and 5 despite it being a declaration, it does not have any legal binding effect on the State yet. Articles 4 and 5 talks about autonomous. The current Fijian administration is a semi-autonomous body existing within the Westminster model of government. The recent development in Fiji, the proposal to change the flag, the removal of Queen's Birthday from the calendar and the removal of the Queen's portrait from the currency – does the Government have any plans to also declare the Fijian Affairs or *iTaukei* Affairs to be an autonomous body? In regards to that, if not, why not? In regards to proprietary rights, which is still under the hands of the State, is there any plan by the State to totally delink these institutions to be at the control and administration of the *vanua*?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I tried to explain to the honourable Members on the other side the background to these declarations. As I said, they are merely declarations, they are not conventions. The background to these declarations and the rationale behind it. Madam Speaker, if they also read the UNDRIP and the Preamble, they will also note that UNDRIP says that they should not be in any way to undermine the State. They need to read the declaration, Madam Speaker. In terms of autonomous institutions, there is a certain level of autonomy that these institutions have. But it is within the ambit of the State. What they are proposing, Madam Speaker, where they are going with this, they are looking at a two-State system.

Let me again give them the historic of this. When we have countries like Canada, when we have tribes like the Inuits who are completely decimated, their vast areas of waste snow lands where no one lives. That is their traditional grounds, they have what they call territorial autonomy over those areas. So in those areas where no one else lives, apart from the Inuits, for example, they apply their tribal rules, but I can also point out to them, Madam Speaker, various case laws – the case of Sandra Lovelace, note

it down, honourable Member. The case of Sandra Lovelace where even though tribal rules were applied in that area, a disgruntled female member of that tribe tried to seek recourse under the Canadian Bill of Rights, under their Constitution.

HON. N. NAWAKULA.- That is not the only case.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There are other cases of course, but I am citing what I am citing. The point is this, it works within the State. They have asked the question, *vis-a-vis* the roadmap to democracy. So, in terms of strengthening these institutions, we are saying the strengthening of these institutions and the autonomy and indeed the credibility of the institutions comes about when you have accountability. We need people who are appointed on merit where there is a system of accountability to the very people they are supposed to serve.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. Thank you for the lengthy explanation. The roadmap they are talking about is for 2009 to 2014. What I would like to ask is, if there is any benchmark or key result area that they have achieved in this roadmap and if there is an additional roadmap from 2015 moving forward.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for this very good question. The honourable Member may have heard that when we had the budget consultations which we had sent invitations to the honourable Leader of the Opposition and the honourable leader of the National Federation Party and they were not there. Madam Speaker, what we had said at that forum and what we made an announcement later on that we would be putting in place a development plan for the whole of Fiji.

As you know, Madam Speaker, we used to have 5-year development plans for Fiji prior to the first *coup* in 1987 and I know some honourable Members on the other side sympathise with the 1987 *coup*. The fact is we want to bring back the development plan which will supersede this and in bringing back the development plan, this is on public record, we have said it in the media. In developing the new development plan, we will of course be carrying out an assessment of what has been achieved so far. So that answers the first part of this question.

The second part of the question, I had answered first.

Josefa Bilitaki
(Question No. 09/2015)

HON. S.R. KARAVAKI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister confirm to the House whether military officers were involved in the Josefa Bilitaki beating, and if so, who have the orders and whether they will be charged and disciplined?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA (Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration).- Madam Speaker, I rise to answer and thank the question posed by the honourable Karavaki as there had been misinformation about the incident, especially in the blogs, and I wish to correct that today.

On 26th September, 2014, Josefa Bilitaki was arrested by Police for allegedly sending indecent and annoying text message through his telephone to the honourable Prime Minister. The Police sent the file to the Director of Public Prosecution to review the evidence and make a decision on whether any charges

should be laid. The DPP concluded that there is insufficient evidence of any criminal wrongdoing by Mr. Bilitaki and, therefore, there will be no further action.

On 7th October, 2014, the Police received a formal complaint from Mr. Bilitaki that he had been assaulted by some men he took to be military officers or police, and that he had been unlawfully detained by Police on 26th September, 2014. The Police again sent the file to DPP to review the evidence and make a decision on whether any charges should be laid.

Madam Speaker, the DPP has reviewed all evidences, including that from the medical doctor who examined Mr Bilitaki when he was first admitted to the hospital complaining he felt unwell. Also note, that there was no beating conducted.

The DPP concluded that there was insufficient evidence to proceed to Court on a charge of assault, and therefore, there will be no further action.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I am sorry to say that we do not believe you, honourable Minister. There is a quotation here from the Doctor which says Mr Bilitaki's daughter said four army officers appeared at her father's house on Friday but you denied that. You are entitled to protect your own, you are entitled to protect the Military. I can give you the names but I will give you the benefit of the doubt.

The point is, this has arisen out of the concern by the public of unlawful beatings. So my question is, what measures will you put in place to ensure that none of this happens again, even by Police or the Military or by the Correctional Officers?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- I thank the honourable Member for the question and the fault that the team made was that, there was no warrant and the investigation is now being conducted by the Police in regards to that. There was no warrant given to them for the arrest.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, this is a phase or rather a situation that needs to be corrected on a national level. There is fear amongst our people that they can be beaten up, whether it is true or not, we do not know. But there is fear and you cannot ignore that, it is there. The honourable Minister should conduct a public relations exercise across the country and tell people that we have the Military, we have nice people there, and they will not beat you up. Right now, there is fear among them, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED- KHAIYUM.- What is question, honourable Member?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I think there should be a public relations. We live in a community and that is what we are getting, there is fear amongst the people about our military officers. There should be some public relations exercise, to assure them this is not happening. Are you going to conduct a public relations exercise to take away the fear of our people, the fear of the man in uniforms?

HON. CAPT.T.L. NATUVA.- I thank the honourable Member, however, during my inaugural my speech, I mentioned that there is a reform within the Military and also a reform in the Police and at the moment, there is a demarcation of responsibility to make sure that the Police do what they are supposed to do and the Military, what they are supposed to do for the country. So until and unless we have that reform which should be completed in the middle of this year, then we can present it to Parliament.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- *Vinaka.*

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Does the Ministry of Defence know or probably I will refrain and ask why there was no complaint lodged with the Police Department at the time that Bilitaki was apprehended and taken by force from his house in the night of 26th September, 2014.

Why was there no police complaint filed because, Madam Speaker, the Police would not act on anything except if they have received a complaint. But this is a case where no complaint was filed and that is why Mr Bilitaki was released. May I ask the honourable Minister to explain why there was no police complaint and why the Police or Military officers involved did not take Mr Bilitaki from his home when there was no police complaint filed?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- I thank the honourable Member for the question. This case is going deeper and I think I have to refer back to the Police and come back to you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the answer to the question will be tabled again by the Minister of Defence, once he has looked at the report.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- And also Madam Speaker...

MADAM SPEAKER.- Is that another supplementary question?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, may I also ask the honourable Minister to ensure that his phone is released to him because it has not been returned to him until now.

HON. CDR S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, can I ask a supplementary question? Can I ask the honourable Minister if he is responsible for the daily operations of the Police and the Military?

MADAM SPEAKER.- I am sorry, point of order. We cannot have a member from the same party asking the Minister a supplementary question, the question should be asked by the Opposition.

HON. A. SAIYED-KHAIYUM.- No.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- That is her ruling.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- That is her ruling.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I have made my ruling.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Madam has ruled, no more.

HON. A. SAIYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, just a clarification.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Ruling is made, what clarification?

HON. A. SAIYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, for those of us who are not familiar with this ruling, yesterday there was a question allowed by the Minister for Lands or the Minister for Social Welfare and from what we understood that Ministers were not allowed to ask questions but backbenchers can ask questions from either side but not Ministers...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Just for today only.

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.-...Madam Speaker, not now but perhaps, we can get some clarification for the future for that.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I know that there was a mistake made by me, by allowing a Minister to ask a supplementary question to another Minister but thank you for the clarification, so it is only Ministers. In that case, I will allow the honourable Member to ask his supplementary question.

HON. CDR S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Is the honourable Minister for Defence responsible for the daily operations of the Police and the Military?

HON. CAPT.T.L. NATUVA.- The daily operations of the Police or the Military are conducted by the respective heads of department. In the Police, the operation is conducted by them and I have nothing to do with it. Even the recruiting of personnel into the Police or the Military have nothing to do with me. They have a policy to follow and I only act on the policies.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- *Vinaka!*

New Citizenships (excluding dual citizenship)
for the Period 2007-2014
(Question No. 10/2015)

HON. A. VADEI asked the Government upon notice:

Would the honourable Minister inform Parliament how many new citizenships (excluding dual citizenship) in total, were granted from 2007 to 2014, and what was their country of origin?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA (Minister for Immigration, National Security and Defence).- Madam Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition and honourable Members, I hope everyone has calmed down now.

Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Vadei for his question. This is yet another example of misguided information on the blogs that had been ongoing, even prior to the General Elections last September. It was alleged in the blogs that Government had granted citizenship to approximately 10,000 Chinese nationals between 2007 and 2014, which is totally false. I was campaigning in Naitasiri, and this was what I got.

Madam Speaker, this question will require answers in statistical form. However, very briefly, the answers to the question will require two different laws of citizenship - the 1997 Constitution and the Citizenship Decree, 2009. Under both laws, citizenship may be acquired under the following categories: by birth, by registration and by naturalisation. The major difference between the two laws are the provision of dual, multiple citizenship and the age of the child has been reduced from 21 to 18. The difference is a part of the provision of the Citizenship Decree, 2009.

As asked by the honourable Vadei, the number of new citizenships approved within the period 2007-2014, totalled 5,736 individuals, from 60 different countries, including 1,321 children of Fiji

citizens who were born abroad and classified as stateless. From those 536 individuals, 1,532 are former Fiji citizens now on dual citizenships and 569 through naturalisation. Naturalisation are those individuals who have work permits and have resided in Fiji for over five years, qualifying them to receive Fiji citizenship.

With the given figures, that those in stateless category maintain the highest number of application granted through the period, followed by New Zealand, Australia and USA, had the highest number of applications from 2009 onwards, followed by China, Canada and India. These were steady flows highlighted while other countries have figures fluctuated from 2009 to 2014. Again, the above illustrates that more applied after the Dual Citizenship laws came into effect. If you want the breakdown of the 60 countries, I can give it to you but to the honourable Member, later on.

New Primary and Secondary School Teachers – Recruitment of
(Question No. 11/2015)

HON. B. LAL asked the Government upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister inform the Parliament how many new primary and secondary school teachers have been or will be recruited by the Ministry of Education this year and, how will they be selected?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts).- Madam Speaker, I want to thank the honourable Member, my colleague for asking this question.

Madam Speaker, in the 2015 Budget, the honourable Minister of Finance allocated \$7 million for primary and secondary schools who graduated. Madam Speaker, we noted the number of secondary school teachers who graduated over the last decade, or so and were unable to get jobs in our education system.

Madam Speaker, the numbers are as follows. We recruited a total of 653 new teachers this year, of that figure, 318 were for secondary schools and 335 were for primary schools. The teachers appointed graduated in these years: one was unemployed since 1993, one was unemployed since 1998, one was unemployed since 1997; six were unemployed since 2006; one was employed since 2007, three were unemployed since 2009 and 10 who were unemployed since 2011, 86 were unemployed since 2012, 12 were unemployed since 2013 and 321 who graduated last year were looking for jobs and 202 from this year's January graduation. Madam Speaker, this takes us to a total of 653 were recruited through to the education system and again, 318 in the secondary and 335 were distributed in our primary schools throughout Fiji.

Madam Speaker, as I have mentioned earlier on, these teachers are entering into the real life teaching for the first and they were taken in at ED9A level, at the salary of \$12,360. All these teachers are given a three-year renewal contract, however, their performance will be evaluated after Term 2, and following good performance, they will be promoted to ED8A, with a salary of \$16,610 and the following year, and after two weeks of training, all graduates will be promoted ED8D with the salary of \$23,000.

Madam Speaker, given that we took teachers up till 2014, all teachers who were teacher trained, who graduated and their qualification was recognised by the Teacher Training Teachers Board, whether they were from FNU, USP, Corpus Christi or Fulton, all those were taken in, all those who graduated after 2014, this included 321.

Madam Speaker, for the January lot, given that we only had slot for 302, but the number of students were more than that, we recruited based on the best grades. Madam Speaker, what we want now is to have the brightest and best minds teaching our students and therefore, instead of adopting any other variable, we looked at the grades, so based on the grade point average, GPA, these 202 teachers were selected out of over 400 teachers who graduated from January 9th.

Madam Speaker, this was the criteria based on which this year's graduates were chosen out of over 400 who graduated. Again back to the answer, 653 new teachers were recruited into our education system this year, contrary to what was erroneously reported in one of the *dailies* yesterday.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU,- A Supplementary question, Madam Speaker. The honourable Minister has said that "only the brightest will be recruited", what will happen to those who fall within the minimum standard of GPA set by the Ministry?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, those whose GPAs are very low, those C grades, et cetera will have to take units, et cetera. So if someone gets a "C grade", it means that he does not have 50 per cent of the knowledge and it will be very difficult for that person to go and teach in the classroom when he does not have 50 per cent of the knowledge. So what we are recommending is that, for those whose GPAs are low should go back and upgrade themselves, get better grades and become eligible to compete with the brightest minds and get a slot in the labour market.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; the honourable Minister said that only the brightest will be recruited. So what will happen to those who do not have the GPA, who are below the minimum standards set by the Ministry? Will they be recruited or be absorbed within the Ministry?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, those whose GPA is very low – the 'C' graders, et cetera, they will have to upgrade themselves. What that means is that, when someone gets a 'C' grade, it means that that person does not have 50 per cent of the knowledge. Madam Speaker, it will be very difficult for that person to go and teach in the classroom when a person does not have 50 per cent of knowledge. Therefore, we recommend that all those who's GPAs are low, they should go back and upgrade themselves. Get better grades and therefore, be eligible to compete with the brightest minds and get a slot in the labour market.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, teaching is indeed a noble profession and we are all products of our teachers. I would like to ask a supplementary question to the Minister; how can you build the confidence of teachers since you have taken on board these new recruits, and most importantly, those who are being employed at the moment?

Madam Speaker, as highlighted in the television last night, an officer was being paid an annual salary of \$23,000 and suddenly she was told that her remuneration is \$12,000. One would imagine the commitments in her life and the repercussions of the decision made.

Also, most importantly, if one goes to Marela House, one will see teachers lining up there. They are being paid half salary from the Second Pay until Pay Four, and are yet to be paid because of the administrative blunder of the TRB regulation that has been changed. How can they provide for their families, having no pay for these last three pays that was due to them? I would like to ask the honourable Minister; how can you instil confidence in the teachers, especially those that you are recruiting, so that this administrative blunder does not happen again?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, there were a couple of parts to the honourable Member's question. In the first part, the honourable Member referred to the person who was on television last night, saying that her salary was reduced which was incorrect. Unfortunately, some of the media do run with this kind of erroneous information without clarifying with us.

Madam Speaker, she was a temporary teacher or relieving teacher, therefore, she did not have a three-year renewal contract. She is now fortunate to get a three-year renewal contract. Secondly, if we had gone by GPA and given everyone a \$23,000 salary, and if we were to recruit about 300 not 653, she would have been the first one not permitted to get into the system because her GPA was very low. I do not want to reveal the details of her GPA here, but it was very low. When I asked her for her GPA, she said; "I am satisfied with your response".

Madam Speaker, the second part of the honourable Member's question was about the confidence in teachers, given that the pay is low. Madam Speaker, in 1993, this person was sitting at home earning nothing. He/she now has a renewal contract. In 1997, the person was sitting at home, what was that Government doing at that time? In 1998, one person was sitting at home getting zero dollars. In 2006, six people graduated from the university with zero dollars. What were they doing?

Madam Speaker, 653 houses have now brightened up because someone got a formal job, earning a continued stream of income.

The other part of the question that the honourable Member raised was about the delay in salary payment. There was no delay, Madam Speaker. The school started on Monday, 19th January, 2015, they started work and on Thursday, they received their first pay. No employer in the world will pay you within two days. There are certain processes to be followed. The person has to go and report to the school. Then the school will write a report and say; "Yes, this person has reported." Now, the second pay, which was last week, they were supposed to provide certain information, including their teacher registration number. All those teachers who did not provide full information, we could not enter their data. Despite that, we prepared manual cheques for them on Thursday, Friday and Saturday to accommodate them. So, incorrect data should not be provided in this Chamber, Madam Speaker.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A supplementary question; does all these explanation mean that all those who graduated last year, will be absorbed into the education system?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- All those who graduated up until 31st December, 2014, if they are teacher-trained, they get the job and if they are not, for some reason, come and see us.

Indian Agricultural Sector
(Question No. 12/2015)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Agriculture, after your recent trip to India, inform us as to what can be learnt and the benefits gained from the Indian agricultural sector?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU (Minister for Agriculture, Rural & Maritime Development and National Disaster Management).- Madam Speaker, Sir, I rise to respond to the question asked by the honourable Member and I thank him for the question.

Madam Speaker, I was invited to India to attend the 51st Asia Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) Ministerial Meeting in Kochi, Kerala, India from 2nd to 5th February, 2015. However, it provided an opportunity for us to strengthen our relations with the Indian Government as well, following the visit by His Excellency the Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi in November 2014.

The answer to the question raised by the honourable Member on the lessons learnt and benefits gained, Madam Speaker, India is one of the countries that is highly recommended that we, particularly developing countries, need to get access to particularly with the services and technology that they provide. There are few key areas under Rural Transformation:

- (i) **The Promotion of Diversification and Resilience:** This is important for Fiji, for farmers particularly. I know there are a few farmers on the other side as well. We need to come away from mono-cropping and solo-cropping. We need to diversify in order to maximise the income of the farmers. If we need to entice farmers to stay, and utilise the land that we have, then farming has to be profitable. It is a business, it is a profession, and therefore we need to look at the diversification programmes for our farmers. And within the emerging issue of climate change, we need to be resilient as well, and this is something that we can learn from, from what the Government of India is doing.
- (ii) **Aggressive Agricultural Research for Agriculture Development:** Madam Speaker, and honourable Members, are to be driven by aggressive market research, and most importantly agricultural research for development as well. This is an area that India is doing very well in, particularly in terms of new genetic materials to give us high yields, crop resilience and most importantly the diversification programmes. So for us, although we lack research capacity, but this is our strategic friend, our strategic partner. Through networking, we can achieve more through the aggressive research that the Indian Government is currently undertaking.
- (iii) **Smallholder and Subsistence Farmer Concept:** This is one beauty about India and it is very relevant to Fiji as well, Madam Speaker. The fact of the matter for agriculture in Fiji, although we have a few semi-commercial and commercial farmers, but the majority of our farmers are smallholder farmers and subsistence farmers. Some see that as a weakness, but there are opportunities and potentials within that arrangement as well, and India is one of the countries that does this very well. Through the smallholder farmers' concept, through clusters, they make very good arrangements from the farmer level, right through to the market.

I am thankful, Madam Speaker, that the honourable Minister for Trade and Commerce was also in India, in between his meetings and he accompanied me to the meetings with the Rural Development Minister and the Agriculture Minister, and this is very important particularly when we are to arrange markets for our farmers.

- (iv) **New Technology and Technology Transfer:** I have talked about research and development, Madam Speaker, but research needs to be transferred to our farmers, and India does that very well. Again, in terms of genetics, good husbandry practices, new formulas, machineries and mechanisation, this needs to be transferred quickly to our farmers.
- (v) **Production and Marketing Plans:** I have talked about SMEs, Madam Speaker. Farming is a business, we need to have markets, and market driven approaches to agriculture. It is not agriculture for the sake of doing agriculture. They are into agriculture when there is a market, and this is something that India does very well.

- (vi) Capacity Building: Particularly for our people, we lack capacities in Fiji, that is a fact. That is the reality. And for us, not only through ITEC as we are in the process of negotiating MOUs with our partner ministries in India, hopefully we will not only gain through ITEC, which is under the External Affairs Trade, but we will also be accessing training for our people, particularly in the respective programmes provided by the Ministries.

Our exchange programmes as well, Madam Speaker, we need our people to be exposed to the new technologies, new environment, and at the same time we hope that we can also get highly qualified expertise to come and assist us as well in Fiji.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, what can we learn from India? Product Development and Value Addition: In Fiji, there is a lot of wastage, but in India they minimise their wastage through value addition and product development. I think those are few key areas which the Agriculture Ministry and of course Rural Development can benefit as well, from the good practices in the good Government of India.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker. First of all, I must commend the honourable Minister for a very educational and thought-provoking information that he has just shared with us. We would have preferred if that could come by way of a Ministerial Statement rather than a question raised from their own side.

The State of Kerala is well renowned for its Coconut Industry, coconut products and coconut by-products. The question that I would like to raise, Madam Speaker is, having said what you have just said honourable Minister, what plans do we have in getting the Coconut Industry back on its feet again, especially from the trip that you have just made to India, especially to the State of Kerala?

Secondly, on the issue of the Dairy Industry, India is renowned for the great number of cattle it has, their Corporative Dairy is one of the best in the world, and what plans do you also have for that? I understand that the Ambassador of New Zealand, during the Treaty of Waitangi function had mentioned about going to New Zealand and sharing with us on the dairy aspects of the Industry. That is the additional question. What plans do we now have for the future in terms of invigorating the Copra Industry, as well as the Dairy Industry?

HON. LT COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- I wish to thank honourable Ratu Lalabavu for the questions raised.

Madam Speaker, in today's Order Paper, I will be last in the Ministerial Statements as well, for the information of the honourable Member, and this is where I will perhaps elaborate more and specifically to the main reason why I was in India, that is the Coconut Industry meeting. I will shed some light onto the future of the Coconut Industry in Fiji and I know, again, about 120,000 families in Fiji rely on this commodity, and why it is so important to Fiji.

On the issue of dairy, Madam Speaker, yes we are pursuing a few avenues. In fact, last year, when I attended a Rural Development Meeting in India, I visited the National Dairy Research Institute in Haryana, a few kilometres away from New Delhi. I have mentioned about MOUs, Madam Speaker, that will also be covered again in my Ministerial Statement. Hopefully, once the MOU has been endorsed by the Indian authorities, we will also bring the experts from Gujarat Province who are experts in the smaller dairy industries.

But, we already have a plan, Madam Speaker about the Dairy Industry. I mentioned in my Budget Address last year, that we have developed a Policy Paper for Agriculture, now we are going into the Industry plans. There will be a plan for the Dairy Industry, there will be a plan for the Coconut Industry, there will be a plan for beef, for livestock, these will all be covered specifically under those plans. But let me assure this august House that dairy is in one of our top priority list, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I thank the honourable Minister for his informative address this morning on agriculture, and I like the idea of rural transformation. What kind of assistance do you have in your Ministry, in terms of cash grant, agricultural equipment and tools, and maybe some other kinds of assistance that could be given to rural dwellers, particularly to rural women and youths, and also the small time roadside market vendors to be able to help them in economic empowerment towards poverty alleviation?

Secondly, in terms of training,...

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- The question that has been asked is irrelevant to the subject matter of the initial question. Supplementary questions are targeted to the original answer and we are not talking about farming aid or anything in the answer that I heard.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, can I ask my supplementary question or maybe reword it.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Your point of order is taken, please reword and you are allowed only one question.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I picked up on rural transformation and those were the words from the honourable Minister for Agriculture. How can you actualise the rural transformation? That was the question because you will need assistance to be able to actualise that rural transformation. That is the question that I had already asked and the only addition was; how can you train? Can you take a group of women and a group of youth to India to go and learn like the programme on solar energy? Maybe you can negotiate with the Indian Government to strengthen our partnership.

HON. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, on the programme, particularly with the assistance that we provide to women and youths, again it is clearly specified in the budget allocation for the Ministry for Agriculture. There is specific allocation for women, the cottage industry's allocation - \$500,000. We have been allocating this, particularly to those that are into virgin oil and other cottage industries. It is specifically for our women, otherwise everyone qualifies under the existing programme. For training, training is available locally as well because it costs money. When we get the expertise here then we will be organising training, but we also have trainers available in Fiji as well.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I thank the honourable Minister for sharing with us what he had observed in India. He is always articulate, always passionate and a wonderful Minister to have.

Madam Speaker, the question is, the success of the India rural transformation. I am a simple villager, I live in my village and I see a lot of wastage in our manpower and land. The only support system that I believe worked in Fiji was the sugar; CSR, SPSM, FSC, the way they supported the farmers from the ground level. I still see that as missing today and one that we really need to move forward or perhaps, the honourable Minister can tell us what is there in India that could be replicated here, to energise our people and give them the support that they need.

HON. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you for the question, honourable Gavoka. If I could answer the question raised by the honourable Member and this is a challenge to honourable Members of this House. For any programme to be sustainable, for any programme to be viable, it takes people. We can have the best processes, we can have the best systems, we can have the best technology but if people have the wrong attitude, programmes will continue to fail. This is one of the biggest challenges that we have in Fiji. Our attitude must change. Attitudes must change. That requires good, strong, visionary leadership as well, if we need to organise our people better. I have been in the Ministry of Rural Development for the last seven years, development to be sustainable takes people and we need to change the attitudes of the people.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- That is wonderful, Madam Speaker, but a support system is very important. Like I said, I live in the village, there is no support system for our people to be productive. I only saw this during SPSM, FSC, they have their contracts, they did all the work, they worked well and they produced.

Today, Madam Speaker, that support system needs to be established; attitude is fine but attitude has to be supported by a system that works. I would like to see how they do it in India. What kind of support system was there to support them?

In Nadroga, Madam Speaker, one Department of Agriculture covering Namatakula to Yako, we are talking about a huge area and the support system needs to be strengthened. I just want to see how do they do it in India.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- You should be the last person to talk about India.

(Laughter)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I am generally interested in how the support system in India works that can be replicated in Fiji. That is basically what I want to hear, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you very much, I have been very generous in allowing your second supplementary question but I will ask the honourable Minister to include that in his Ministerial Statement.

Outbound Indian Tourism Market
(Question No. 13/2015)

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

Would the honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism inform this House, from his recent trip to India, how can and how will the outbound Indian tourism market affect the Fijian Tourism Industry?

HON. F. S. KOYA (Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism).- Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the honourable Member for the question.

Madam Speaker, the question asked is quite easy to answer in one word but I will expand and the word is “positively”. If you put this into context, Madam Speaker, Fiji’s annual visitor arrival reached about 692,630 last year, which is an increase of 5.3 per cent over the same period in 2013. Of that, the Indian visitor number, despite being small, compared to our traditional market of Australia and New

Zealand has grown by 8.2 per cent in 2014. As compared to 2013, this number has been steadily increasing over the last four years or so. In fact in 2014, it increased by 67 per cent compared to 2010.

As part of the trip to India, Madam Speaker, we have been able to create a new relation with the world renowned luxury tourism operator, Connie Travel, who worked with Tourism Fiji on a brochure about Fiji, we have been able to bring in new markets such as Chennai in India and are working on possible flights, either direct or code sharing with Fiji Airways.

Madam Speaker, a detailed response to this question will be part of my Ministerial Statement later.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I thank the honourable Minister for his comments on his visit to India but we would like to have some quantum on the number of visitors to India. He spoke about percentage, as we say in Nadroga, you cannot bank percentage. You have to give us some figures, what is the figure from India, Madam Speaker? While we are on it, how much money is spent in India relative to the budget of Tourism Fiji; the segmentation, what kind of visitors are we getting from India; the honeymooners, couples and the regional representations; where do they come from; Mumbai, Kerala, Delhi. I think the House will be interested in information like that.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, the numbers given to me by Tourism Fiji, the visitors number from India totalled 3,000 and there was an increase in percentage wise, as I said earlier on.

In terms of the market, Tourism Fiji does not concentrate on one particular segment on one particular part of the country. We sell to India the destination Fiji as a place where they can get married, a place which gives them adventure tourism, we found in our travels that there is quite a large percentage of Indian travellers who are interested in adventure tourism in Fiji. We have honeymooners who are quite happy to come into Fiji. The only difficulty we have is the issue of connectivity which I am dealing with at the moment. So there is a large interest but it is across the board. As a matter of fact, if I could just give you a specific example. We have a very young Indian population with a lot of money and they are quite interested in our diving sector, so that is just one area but there is also the issue of them getting married. There is a great deal of connectivity that exists between India and Fiji and they like the fact that they can come here, be comfortable and get married at the same time.

All of those things, Madam Speaker, will be addressed in my Ministerial Statement, I will also add with the facts and figures that the honourable Member is asking for.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, that brings to the end the item on the Agenda on the questions. We will now break for tea and resume at 11.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.07 a.m.

The House resumed at 11.40 a.m.

Written Question

New Public Service Vehicles
(Question No. 14/2015)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister inform the House on the following:

- i) Total number of new public service vehicle (including for buses, taxis) registrations submitted to LTA from 2007 to 2014 (by year) for approval; and
- ii) Of this number, what was the total number of new public service vehicle registrations approved by the LTA from 2007 to 2014 (by year)?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that I invoke the provision of Standing Order 45(3) and that I will table the answers to this question in due course within the time allowable under the Standing Orders.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I must thank you all for the very vibrant session we had this morning.

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

MADAM SPEAKER.- The honourable Ministers have informed me that they wish to make Ministerial Statements under Standing Order 40. Each Minister may speak up to 20 minutes and I will then invite the Leader of the Opposition or her representative and the Leader of the National Federation Party to speak on the statement for no more than five minutes each. There will be no other debates.

Christmas Island Veterans

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, my statement today would be on the Christmas Island veterans or the payment of some outstanding money to the Christmas Island veterans.

However, I would like to make a couple of comments about the debate we had earlier on. I know that the other side of the House do not like this, but I compare this august House to the military establishment. When one walks through the main door, nobody gives two hoots about your title or supposedly blue blood. On your way out then you can pick up your “Ratu” and “Adi” titles as you leave. This establishment, as I see it, is something along that line.

It is very insulting to hear one of our Member being insulted by someone from the other side with an *iTaukei* insult as “*kaisi*”. This is not good practice and it does not augur well in line with the relationship that we want to establish here and the people of Fiji. Perhaps, we should have a mirror outside the door so that when we walk in, we take a look at ourselves first, and if one sees blue or royal blood running through their veins, then perhaps they have the right in calling another a “*kaisi*”. If not, perhaps you can do something by looking at yourself in the mirror and doing something about your posture. That is my advice this morning to stop the insults within this House, as it does not augur well.

I am pleased to rise in Parliament today to discuss another historic occasion in the life of our nation, which we celebrated just a couple of weeks ago – the special payment Government has made to the veterans of Britain's nuclear testing on Christmas Island.

This was a very special moment for me as I presented them with cheques, both personally and as Prime Minister and one that I will remember forever as one of the highlights of my time in office. Because, Madam Speaker, my Government has righted a historic wrong, we have drawn a line under a painful episode in our history, we have brought justice to a brave and proud group of Fijians to whom a great injustice was done.

Madam Speaker, the story is well known to many, but it is worth repeating on the floor of this House because of the hardship that these men, our fathers, uncles, grandfathers and fellow Fijians went through in service to a Colonial agenda. We honour them by remembering their story.

It is well known story, in 1958, a total of 278 Fijian servicemen were sent to take part in the British nuclear test programme at Christmas Island, in what was then the Gilbert Islands and is now called Kiribati.

Madam Speaker, the backdrop for this operation was the international struggle between the East and West for military dominance that was going on at that time called the Cold War. Each side was determined to win the race to develop the most destructive weapons the world had ever seen. Not content with the terrifying destruction caused by the two atomic bombs dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the Great Powers wanted to build bombs that could cause even more destruction.

Madam Speaker, for us in the Pacific, this arms race has left a terrible and horrible legacy. It has had terrible consequences in our region. We bear many of the scars from this unfortunate chapter in the world's history.

For us in Fiji, Madam Speaker, our most personal scars are from one episode in particular, and that is *Operation Grapple*. In a series of tests in and around Christmas Island in 1957 and 1958, the British successfully tested the world's first thermonuclear device – a hydrogen bomb capable of much more destruction than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan.

The 278 Fijian soldiers who took part in *Operation Grapple* witnessed these explosions first hand. From the decks of a British aircraft carrier called the HMS Warrior, they were present when the biggest devices went off. But even before the devastating effects of radiation exposure were fully known, it was clear to the men present that something was wrong. As explained before, Madam Speaker, our own men were not measured for radiation at the time, but a pilot who flew through one of the mushroom clouds soon afterwards received a dose of radiation equivalent to more than 12,700 x-rays. And our men were, as I understand, wearing t-shirts and shorts. Before long, Madam Speaker, the horrible effects of the radiation began to make themselves known. Some men reported hair loss and bleeding gums. Others developed skin diseases and blood disorders and yet, others were diagnosed with leukaemia and other illnesses.

Of course, our veterans were not only the people affected. Thousands of British, Australian and New Zealand servicemen, scientists and construction workers were also exposed.

We have seen the suffering that they have gone through in the lives of our own men, and we have seen the struggle that they have faced to win the justice they deserve because our men have gone through it too.

The legal battle for recognition and compensation from the British Government has involved many twists and turns over the years.

In 2009, a High Court Judge in Britain noted that many of the veterans were men in their 70s and that delay would make the trial even more difficult because the group was slowly dying out. He also recognised what we know in Fiji to be true - that veterans' call is for justice as much as it is for compensation. Although the judge went on to rule that the claimants could bring their case against the British Government, this small victory quickly stalled. Because to this day, Britain has refused to pay compensation to anyone despite successive surveys that have shown veterans suffering from a range of terrible ailments. Britain says too much time has passed since these events and that was the reason of the stalling in payments.

Madam Speaker, a small ray of hope appeared last year when the British Prime Minister, David Cameron finally acknowledged this moral challenge and said that the issue will be revisited. As I've said, Madam Speaker, and we talked about it on this side of the House, we could not continue to wait for Britain to do the right thing.

As far as Fiji is concerned, it is too late, too much time has passed already and time is not on our side. Too many have gone to the grave without seeing justice done and the ranks of the survivors are rapidly diminishing. We have got statistics that out of the 278 Fijian soldiers and Navy Personnel, only 70 remain with us today. Madam Speaker, if we had waited for the politicians and the bureaucrats in London to get their act together, it might well have been too late. Those who remain deserve justice and Fiji as a nation is determined for them to finally get it.

We need to erase this blight in our history and we need to lift the burden on our conscience. That's why my government decided to intervene and award these survivors a modest token of what we can afford, to finally acknowledge the great injustice that was done to them almost six decades ago. What they went through was not their fault, but we felt a responsibility to our fellow Fijians that could not be ignored.

Madam Speaker, we know that this can never make up for the decades of suffering, but we hope it will go some way towards improving the quality of these men's lives in their twilight years, along with those of their families.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government does not turn its back on any Fijian...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Hear! hear!

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- ...especially those who have suffered an injustice. On this side of the House, we are proud to be part of a Government that is committed to giving substantive justice to every person. and in this case, we are proud to honour and recognise these men for their service to our nation. We salute them for their courage and persistence over the many years, to get justice for themselves and their comrades who are no longer with us, those who have passed into history without seeing justice done.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report that news of our decision has already travelled around the world, especially to Britain where veterans are still locked in a bitter legal battle to win the same recognition we have now given our veterans. The announcement by the FijiFirst Government was reported in many of Britain's top media outlets, bringing this issue back into the spotlight where it belongs.

Madam Speaker, we cannot allow the voices pleading for justice to be silenced as they pass into history. Our Fijian veterans and their comrades from other countries are living testaments to this terrible chapter of history.

Madam Speaker, history records that not only the British, but other colonial powers such as the United States and France used the Pacific to test weapons of mass destruction. The French continued nuclear testing in the Pacific as late as 1996 through its test program in French Polynesia.

Madam Speaker, I repeat the call that I made two weeks ago, never again.

Nuclear testing is a form of madness that we must never again accept. Our people in the Pacific are suffering and we must never again allow this weapon of destruction to be repeated in the Pacific. Never again should we let our beautiful environment be the playground for destructive and terrible weapons such as that was tested in Christmas Island in 1958. And so we call on the industrialised nations to join with us in our commitment to make the Pacific nuclear free.

Madam Speaker, Fiji will always be on the side of those nations pressing for the dismantling of the world's nuclear arsenals and to finally draw a line under the era that our nuclear veterans witnessed for themselves.

Madam Speaker, I call on all Members of this august House to join me in thanking these men for their services and for their perseverance and patience and I am sure that at times, it felt like all hope was lost. That they would never receive the recognition they deserve. It has taken too long and these men have endured much suffering through the years. But, Madam Speaker, unlike past Fijian and British Governments, we did not let the matter rest. Justice has finally been served and for that we can all be proud as a nation

Madam Speaker, with those words, I conclude my statement. Thank you for giving me the floor and your attention. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you honourable, Prime Minister. Before I give the floor to the honourable Leader of the Opposition or her representative, I am disturbed that words which I did not hear that are unparliamentary are being dished out in this august House and I am sure, that we are all here to keep this House a respectable place. And that words used in this House are respectable, so that people who voted us here know that we do have the respect in this august House. With those words, I will now ask the honourable Leader of the Opposition or a representative, to reply to the statement and I give you the floor.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, I think this is one of the few times that I would agree with the honourable Prime Minister, and on this occasion, any assistance that has been given to those that are alluded to, be honoured and to be acknowledged for their sacrifice.

These veterans have had much sufferings, agonies and difficulties, where justice was required and given. This is not a party issue, it is a national issue. Those of us from the Opposition party, we agree

with the move that the honourable Prime Minister has made, in acknowledging them and using the budget from the government in terms of assisting those that have given their lives, they have dedicated it and they have lived in dignified silence all this time and so we would like to thank the honourable Prime Minister.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I now invite the Leader of the National Federation Party or his representative.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, we also agree with the honourable Prime Minister on this and we endorse all his sentiments on the substantive matter.

Madam Speaker, I would like to touch very briefly on the other part of the honourable Prime Minister presentation and your direction from the Chair. I do agree that this is a House of equals and we were all elected here and if you want respect, you must also give it.

Madam Speaker, to use the words of the honourable and learned Attorney-General, we have to contextualise what went on this morning. If we are told to keep quiet and owe our allegiance to something that is not, then do not expect us to sit here like doormats and say 'yes, my Lord', we do not, Madam Speaker, we are all equal, I agree. This is not a military institution, Madam Speaker, the Military is beneath this House.

(Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, we will now move on to the next Ministerial Statement and I now invite the honourable Minister for Immigration, National Security and Defence to have the floor.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to thank you for the opportunity to state in this noble House Government's intention to redeploy RFMF troops to the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Re-deployment of RFMF Troops to the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to thank you for the opportunity to state to this august Parliament, Government's intentions to re-deploy RFMF troops to the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Madam Speaker, the deteriorating security situation in Syria in August 2014 saw the kidnapping of 45 Fijian peacekeepers during the escalation of clashes between the Syrian Arab Armed Forces (SAAF) and Anti-Government Armed Elements (AGAE), resulting in the withdrawal of UNDOF Forces from within the Syrian side (Bravo) to the Israeli side (Alpha) of the Area of Separation (AOS). The relocation has resulted in the reorganisation of UNDOF.

Madam Speaker, the reorganisation has assigned 146 Fijian troops to provide the United Nations (UN) with an opportunity to boost the strength of UNIFIL. Due process to the Fiji Government was made and Government willing accepted the invitation by the UN. The 146 Fijian troops will be employed in UNIFIL, in a Multi Task Force Protection Unit (MTFPU) role until UNDPKO makes a definite decision regarding the future of UNDOF. This unit will be called the Fijian Light Infantry (Fijian Company). The Fijian Company would be a dedicated Force Protection Unit in a static and dynamic way, conducting operational tasks such as fixed compound protection, convoy escorts, construction of Blue Line barrels and other Force Protection activities in accordance with UNIFIL Rules of Engagement

(ROE), Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) and other related UNIFIL policies. In addition, the deployment provides a strategic reserve to the UNDOF, as they will be redeploying to UNDOF when the situation permits.

Madam Speaker, Fiji was invited by the UNDPKO, to conduct a Fact Finding Mission to UNDOF and UNIFIL, to gather first-hand information from the mission on the integration of the Fijian company and the mission support that is available for the deployment.

Madam Speaker, the deployment from UNDOF to UNIFIL would be supported by the United Nations for self-sustainment and major equipment, less weapons and ammunition. The troops would be travelling with their own personal equipment, crew served weapons and unit line ammunition. This arrangement will be for an initial period of six months. Any long-term support will be formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Fiji and the United Nations.

As the development would be drawn from the existing First Battalion Fiji Infantry Regiment structure in UNDOF, it would be funded by the approved budgetary provisions within Head 49. There are no additional funding requirements for this deployment. Therefore, Madam Speaker, the total budgetary implication for UNIFIL is estimated to be \$14,230,280.00, which will be sourced from the existing 2015 RFMF budgetary provisions for UNDOF.

Madam Speaker, Government has already approved the deployment and signing of the MOU with the UN. The deployment of the advance party will be conducted on 15th February, 2015 and the main body of troops will be deployed two weeks later.

Madam Speaker, this deployment to UNIFIL is envisaged to augment the following strategic benefits:

- (a) Global profile: Fiji is viewed as a peacekeeping superpower. Our participation in PKO has lifted our global profile, resulting in invitations to chair and participate in various UN and International programmes and events; for example G77, plus China, Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), et cetera.
- (b) Enhancing our international relations: Our relationship with the 193 UN-member countries continues to grow including our Formal Diplomatic Relations with non-UN member countries and the Non-Aligned Movement members.
- (c) Political leverage: Our participation has given us political leverage at the global, international and regional levels.
- (d) Economic returns to the nation: Since 2004, records have been confirmed through the Ministry of Finance Budget Book – 2015 of \$91,450.10, to return to Fiji through PKO.
- (e) Employment: Since our first deployment in 1978, there has been a surge in employment in the RFMF, Police and the Corrections Service. Servicemen on return have established small businesses that offer further opportunities for employment to the unemployed.
- (f) Poverty reduction: Most of the people we recruited come from poor rural communities. Their participation in PKO has allowed them to lift their living standards and also impacted on their families and the society as a whole.

- (g) Enhances national capacities: The exposure to a multinational environment has widened their scope of understanding of not only conflict resolution, but education and understanding of some international issues and trends like IP development, importance of culture, national interest, gender issues, human rights and international law. This has developed the professional knowledge and outlook of our servicemen and women.
- (h) Our national security: Our participation in PKO has generated a lot of friends for Fiji. This has led us to the policy of “Friends to all and enemies to none.”
- (i) Increases individual wealth: It is evident that personnel returning from PKO are investing in land, farms, vehicles, real estate and equipment for personal and entrepreneurial purposes.
- (j) Contributes to building better societies and communities: The development of our servicemen and women in the international environment has developed them to become better people in their communities and society as a whole.

Madam Speaker, the proposed deployment of 146 troops from UNDOF to UNIFIL indicates the legitimacy, credibility and reliance that the United Nations has on Fiji when other member States are reluctant to provide troops amidst operational uncertainty and imminent danger.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, Fiji’s commitment should be steadfast. The strategic and economic benefits will continue to grow. Our political leverage as a result of our commitment will grow. We are a superpower in peacekeeping. We are a good global citizen. Let us continue this way. We are sure that there is more to come in our perseverance through peacekeeping operations.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to comment and to say how grateful we are from this side of Parliament for the explanation on the engagement of our peacekeeping troops abroad. What we want for all of us to understand is that, since 1978 the humongous assistance the Military has done for the economy, and also the reputation that it has all around the world. I thank you that the Government continues to pursue and engage itself in the international world of peacekeeping.

I have to thank you also for the explanations that you have done on UNDOF, the result of the movements from points B to A, on the Israeli side, and what our people are doing in terms of providing intelligence and information to the Headquarters in New York, and also in rounding up what is best in peacekeeping around that war torn area.

Some questions were raised to your good self, honourable Minister with regards to UNDOF and UNIFIL, and we know that in due course, you will provide those answers.

There are some cases that I would like to raise which, of course, is non-political but since 1979 and 1980, I think all of us, including those on the other side will understand, the struggle of soldiers forming a peacekeeping union or association to actually seek Government’s assistance for the payment of something they call “outstanding”, and all of us had our own answers to that. The good honourable Prime Minister was with us about three years ago in Lautoka and he also explained members of the Fiji Ex-Servicemen League in the Western Division his side of the story but it never ended there. It continues to flow.

Last Christmas, there was a big invite extended to all Ex-Servicemen to go and fundraise with them in their pursuance to see whether there is something at the end of the tunnel, like Christmas Island veterans, would there be anything for them. Maybe, I would ask the honourable Minister to come up with a definite position of Government in regards to that, rather than the association itself pulling monies from members and actually using it as if there is nothing ahead of them.

As I have stated, I think the whole of Fiji appreciates the contribution of the Military and peacekeeping missions abroad but a request, if you can kindly present to this Parliament; what is the definite position of Government in relation to what the Peacekeeping Association have been in years, struggle to achieve?

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I want to thank the honourable Minister for his very detailed statement on the role of our Military, especially around the world, in peacekeeping duties. I think it was rightly pointed out, the global profile that Fiji has as a result of our participation in the peacekeeping operations around the world, and I was also heartened by the fact that the honourable Minister talked about the benefits of peacekeeping operations for Fiji, for our nation and for their families.

Madam Speaker, I remember some time back, we as part of a study which looked at the economic benefits of Military spending and the conclusion we arrived at was that, there was potential, I mean, a realised benefit to the overall economy for Fiji. So, I endorse his comments on that.

I also take heart from his statement, Madam Speaker, and I think that the Military is going to operate within its budget and the Minister quite rightly pointed out that the allocation for the 2015 budget is appropriate and any allocation for peacekeeping will take into account the budgetary allocation for the Military.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable Minister for his statement.

HON. BRIG. GEN. (RET'D) J.K. KONROTE.- Madam Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen; I rise before this august Chamber to make a parliamentary statement about the increase in the National Minimum Wage.

Madam Speaker, the Constitution guarantees every Fijian the right to economic participation, a just minimum wage, social security and fair employment practices which include humane treatment in the workplace and proper working conditions. These are basic fundamental rights which this Bainimarama-led Government is fully committed in upholding for all workers' rights throughout Fiji, especially for the lowly paid workers and often marginalised sector of our workforce while at the same time, ensuring that business continue to succeed and the national economy grows.

Madam Speaker, to ensure that all workers enjoy the right to a just minimum wage as required under Section 33 of the Constitution, the Ministry conducted a very comprehensive national survey in 2013 under the expert guidance of Dr. Mahendra Reddy (now the honourable Minister for Education). After thoroughly analysing the results, a NMW of \$2.32 now was recommended, an increase of about 60 per cent of the median wage which was consistent with international best practices. This proposed rate was then presented to all stakeholders in a nationwide consultation process, in order to gauge its viability. The outcome of the national negotiations confirmed that the Small Micro Enterprises (SMEs) were not in a position to honour and afford the increase. Consequently, after further consultations, it

was agreed to raise the NMW to about \$2.00 per hour, and that the next increase would be pegged at \$2.32 per hour.

Madam Speaker, these proposals were supported and endorsed by most stakeholders and Cabinet, in its Decision No. 27 of 29th February, 2014, approved Fiji's first NMW threshold at \$2.00 per hour. The payment of this NMW was made effective from 1st March, 2014 by virtue of the Employment Relations (National Minimum Wage) Regulations 2014, which was gazetted under Legal Notice No. 11 of 28th February, 2014.

Madam Speaker, by enacting this Employment Relations (National Minimum Wage) Regulations 2014, the Bainimarama-led Government had, for the first time in Fiji's history, benchmarked a minimum wage threshold, and at the same time, taken a major and significant step towards attaining a national goal of reducing poverty to a negligible level by 2015/2016.

Further to this, Madam Speaker, it conducted a nationwide Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) which revealed that the poverty level in Fiji had fallen from 35 per cent in 2002 to 31 per cent in 2008. Since then, Government had continued to adopt initiatives and poverty alleviation strategies to further reduce poverty amongst the remaining 31 per cent within society.

Madam Speaker, with the introduction of the NMW of \$2 per hour on 1st March, 2014, the Bainimarama Government had made the first genuine effort by any government, to raise the standard of living of about 100,000 workers and their families nationwide. Most of those workers were being paid an average of about \$50 to \$60 per week prior to the implementation of the NMW Regulations 2014.

Madam Speaker, following the enactment of the NMW Regulations 2014, the average weekly take-home pay of these workers increased to about \$90 to \$96, an increase of approximately 63 per cent to 74 per cent.

Madam Speaker, for the past five years, the Fijian national economy was maintained at a commendable and stable annual growth rate of about 3.2 per cent, with the growth rate for 2013 revised up to 4.6 per cent and we were told yesterday by the honourable Minister of Finance that for last year, it was revised downwards 3.8 per cent. With this sustained and stable economic growth rate, it is considered fair and prudent that all Fijians enjoy and are rewarded fairly for their hard work, particularly our lowly paid workers.

In this regard, Madam Speaker, it is my pleasant duty before this august Parliament, in keeping with its promise, that was contained in the FijiFirst Manifesto, the honourable Prime Minister and Cabinet has approved the second proposal to increase the national minimum wage from \$2 to \$2.32 per hour, effective from 1st July, 2015. These two national minimum wage settings were adopted, using properly benchmarked international standards and practices.

Madam Speaker, Government's key objective of imposing a National Minimum Wage Policy is to protect and assist the most vulnerable within Fiji's workforce, most of whom are non-union members and do not have bargaining powers to ensure that their interests are safeguarded, but more importantly, they are fairly remunerated for their hard work.

Madam Speaker, increasing the national minimum wage from \$2 to \$2.32 per hour (with a 45 or 48 hour per week) would result in a corresponding increase in the take home pay of these 100,000 workers, whose average pay of \$90-\$96 range to \$104.40 to \$111.36 per week.

The significant increase in pay for our workers represents a major positive step in Government's overall efforts in alleviating poverty and improving social justice by providing free tuition, free text books, free bus fares, increased pension, and other social benefit payments.

Madam Speaker, the implementation of the National Minimum Wage Policy is testimony of the Bainimarama-led Government's commitment to according social justice and improving the lot of the lowly paid members of our workforce who comprise a very significant section of our labour force. These are the workers who had unfortunately, for too long, fallen victims to the vagaries of the market, but more importantly, to a lack of genuine concern and political will on the part of past administrations.

Madam Speaker, the Bainimarama-led Government is fully committed to doing what is right for these workers, and helping all Fijians in order that they continue to reap the fruits of their labour and enjoy life in a just and fair society.

Madam Speaker, Government has promised, and as always, it will deliver. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Where is that music coming from?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There! Front row!

MADAM SPEAKER.- I will now ask the Leader of the Opposition for a response from their side.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the statement currently being delivered by the honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations. Based on what the honourable Minister has just said, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government for all the initiatives that they have made to improve the employment situation in Fiji. We do understand that there are a few areas of which to tackle, in order to improve the employment situation in Fiji.

First, as we have discussed yesterday, the first issue is on the seasonal workers, and the second, the Volunteer Scheme, and now, the Minimum Wage Rate. For the first two that I have mentioned, it is already in place right now.

On the Volunteer Scheme, we have witnessed that a number of our retired teachers have been sent to Nauru, the Marshall Islands, whereby creating employment for our people, as well as the seasonal workers, we are looking forward to seeing the 30 pioneers that will be going to New Zealand very shortly.

On those two issues, Madam Speaker, we would request if Government can look for some more avenues on those two Schemes, so that more people can be engaged. We understand that for the seasonal workers, New Zealand has come on board, so fast on that area, and we do hope that Australia will come out with open hands to also take our workers from Fiji in relation to that area.

As we recall, in one of our sittings last year, on the \$2 for Minimum Wage Rate, we were advised that about 30,000 of our people were still unemployed, and 12,000 of those are graduates. We hope that with the increase that had been approved last week, from \$2 to \$2.32, which is equivalent to a 16 per cent increase, the Government is hoping to increase the workforce, and as I remember correctly, they are targeting around 100,000 this year. Maybe, as you can see and what has happened so far, the figure may be too much at this point in time. But we are pleased the Government could at least achieve 25 per cent of that figure in employing or absorbing the 30,000 workers, that is an achievement in itself.

Madam Speaker, on the new increase, as you have already heard, the net take home pay, that would be around \$96 for each family, and if the VAT component was reduced from 15 per cent to 10 per cent, maybe they can slightly enjoy the increase because the 15 per cent VAT that this portion of the population will also be part and parcel in paying, in meeting their cost of daily living out of the 16 per cent increase, then we are just left with the one per cent net profit, which boils down to not much in monetary terms.

We do hope that Government will look into that. At least they have started from somewhere and we look forward to at least absorb the 30,000 unemployed from last year, rather than the 100,000 that we are targeting this year. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Member. I will now give the floor to the representative from the National Federation Party.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to contribute to the Ministerial Statement and I thank the honourable Minister for his deliberations.

At least we have set the standard, which is fine, and we accept that, and I believe that this side of the Chamber has continuously in the last two sittings made it very clear that increasing that minimum wage rates will result from negotiations, and this time round as the honourable Minister had earlier explained, that it took them quite a while negotiations were in place, the cost of living continue to rise. This is not something that we should lay on our laurels, but we should continue to pursue minimum wages according to inflation and the cost of living that is around us.

Madam Speaker, the single business commodity think the business community generate a lot of employment, and these businesses need to be part of the negotiations. I urge the honourable Minister to urgently convene the Tripartite Forum. This should be an ongoing exercise. We have some remarkable developments on that, just to complement what you do, and with that initiative comes, as you rightly observe that almost 100,000 workers will benefit from this scheme. I would advise that these 100,000 and other workers, their social rights be looked into, particularly in light of what we have under the Employment and Relations Act and other decrees that are in place, so that only certain minimum wage is not the priority, but their rights to organise, their rights to collectively bargain, these must be entrenched in the negotiations.

Madam Speaker, the micro management of the economy is one of the concerns which I hope that the Ministry will understand because the transaction costs of small businesses have really gone up. So in order to pay for the workers, we must look at reducing these costs or defraying them somehow, and as I said, it is a low wage - \$2.32 to be paid on a 44 hour basis which is \$106, you take away FNPF, 15 per cent VAT, and you will be left with \$76. So this is the reality of the situation, and I hope that the honourable Minister will look into it and hopefully give it a holistic approach.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank the honourable Member for his response, it is now lunch hour and I would like to advise the members of the Business Committee that there will be a meeting in 10 minutes time and I will meet you in the Committee room.

We will now adjourn for lunch and resume at 2.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.34 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.30 p.m.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I welcome you back to this afternoon session and we will continue where we left off in the morning and I now invite the honourable Minister for Education to take the floor.

Discontinuation of Scaling of Marks for Years 12 and 13

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I have today, chosen to speak on the logic and reasoning behind Cabinet's decision to discontinue scaling of marks for Years 12 and 13 external exams.

Madam Speaker, in doing so, I wish to provide a background to scaling of marks, the relevance of it to the current education system and the impact it has had on student performance to-date, and the measures we have adopted to raise student performance in the absence of scaling of marks for Years 12 and 13.

Madam Speaker, scaling is a mathematical process, where students' final marks are adjusted to achieve a desired result, should the desired result not be achieved via the raw scores, the original marks.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education uses the ATLAS software known as "Assessment of Teaching and Administration System", to scale marks up till now. In this system, the Ministry provided what should be the overall mean for the total number of subjects that the examination was set for, and what should be the desired distribution of marks.

Madam Speaker, the scaling system was introduced in 1979, when Year 13 formerly known as Fiji Seventh Form Certificate Examination was introduced, and in 1989 for Year 12 exams formerly known as Fiji School Leaving Certificate Examination was introduced, replacing the New Zealand Exam.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry adopted to have a mean of 50 for the Year 12 exam and the mean of 54 marks for Year 13 exams. So, anything below that, it brings up the overall mean to 50 for Year 12 exam, and for Year 13 exam, it was to ensure that on an average, the mean mark for Year 13 subjects should be 54.

Madam Speaker, if scaling was introduced then, because in those days, there was a limited pool of scholarships available for students to vie for, and all students will apply for that limited pool of scholarships. Given that science subjects were more difficult and therefore marks in science were lower than *vis-a-vis* commerce or arts students, without scaling those science, then scholarships would be given to commerce students. It was for those reasons that scaling was introduced so that those arts, science and commerce students would get equal number of scholarships

Madam Speaker, however, over the years, a number of complaints were made to the Ministry and a number of complaints were raised in the media by stakeholders, in particular, parents, that the marks their child has received does not reflect the true achievement of their child should get.

Madam Speaker, tertiary institutions had also raised their concern about scaling asking full disclosure of the formulae of scaling and have argued for its removal.

The Ministry in October, 2014, following my appointment, our senior management group appointed a three-member Committee to examine what can be done, whether the scaling is still relevant, what amendment should be done, and if it should be removed.

Madam Speaker, the three member Committee consists of an economist, Professor Satya Paul (USP), two associate Professors, a Mathematician, Professor Jito Vanualailai and an Educationist, Associate Professor Subhas Chandra. Madam Speaker, the report was received with mixed recommendations. The first report by Professor Satya Paul and Professor Subhas Chandra recommended immediate discontinuation of scaling in order to avoid any further worsening of student performance. The duo contended that Fiji's scaling system continues to perpetuate inefficiency in the teaching of the core and important subjects such as Mathematics and Sciences.

In addition, they argued that scaling is viewed to protect and disguise students' achievements while on the other hand, it does not push any pressure for teaching improvement given that higher than 50 per cent pass rate is guaranteed. The report further noted the double barrack impact through scaling as it passes a significant number of students who otherwise would have failed and failed some of the students who had actually passed as per raw mark.

They noted that scaling disguises the correct stock of knowledge embodied in a student and sends incorrect signals to the market and tertiary institutions. However, the minority report by Dr. Vanualailai cautioned that raw scores should not be used as it would lead to high failure rates by students, particularly those enrolled in science subjects.

Madam Speaker, scaling has done substantial damage to our education system and the graduates who are in the markets. The universities lost confidence in the students who passed our Years 12 and 13 by lower mark margin and thus raised the university entry requirement from 200 to 250 in the best three subjects inclusive of English.

Madam Speaker, one university Vice Chancellor met with my senior management team and argued that they may consider having their own entrance examination over and above the Year 13 examination because they were losing confidence and trust in the students and the marks given to them. Also on 13th October last year, our Ministry organised an industry consultation forum to look at the issues in respect of skilled graduates. In that forum, it was noted amongst other things the quality of graduates, the ability to write properly, the ability to have the acquired attributes and the efficiency of medical skills.

Madam Speaker, we examined the raw marks. With me is the actual scenario. Let us look at the raw mean marks in various core subjects from 2009 to 2014.

Year 12 Raw Subject Means 2009 & 2014

Subject	2009	2014
English	55.6	60.1
Mathematics	28.4	20.7
Biology	43.3	32.3
Chemistry	32.6	32.5
Physics	34.9	43.0
Accounting	49.4	43.3
Economics	43.5	37.6

Madam Speaker, out of the 19 subjects in Year 12, 10 of them the mean mark has been declining over the last six years.

Mean marks means all the students who sat for Accounting that year, what was the mean mark – the average.

Year 13 Raw Subject Means 2009 & 2014

Subject	2009	2014
English	53.5	53.2
Mathematics	33.5	27.0
Biology	27.1	35.0
Chemistry	36.4	26.7
Physics	45.5	38.4
Accounting	56.4	46.0
Economics	55.7	52.7

Madam Speaker, that shows the declining performance of the various subjects by our students over the last six years.

The worse scenario is seen when one looks at the pass rate.

From 2002 the English pass rate actual was 52 per cent. English pass rate in 2014 had gone up by 76 per cent.

Other than English, Mathematics – 18 per cent pass rate in 2002, 7.5% in 2014. 18 per cent of the students who sat for Mathematics, out of all the students who sat for Mathematics in 2002, 18 per cent passed. In 2014, last year, all the students who sat for Mathematics, only 7.5 per cent passed. Last year, after scaling, 52.6 per cent, one can see from 87.5 per cent after scaling, 52.6 per cent passed Mathematics.

Madam Speaker, Biology in 2002, 43 per cent students passed in Year 12. Last year, 16.2 per cent, much worse, after scaling 59.3 per cent. This differential between 16.2 per cent and 59.3 per cent can enter the market. These are the ones who may become doctors.

Madam Speaker, in 2002, 43 per cent passed Chemistry. In 2014, 18 per cent of the students passed Chemistry, after scaling, 60.5 per cent. So scaling took 18 per cent pass rate to 60.5 per cent. Those students may become pharmacists.

Chemistry in 2002, 39 per cent of the students passed. In 2014, 18 per cent, further down and after scaling 60.5 per cent.

Accounting, 56 per cent of the students passed in 2002. In 2014, down to 35.7 per cent, after scaling 57 per cent. These are the students auditing our accounts and working in accounting firms, et cetera.

Economics in 2002, 67 per cent of the students passed, in 2014 21.1 per cent only passed. After scaling, 61.3 per cent.

Madam Speaker, it is this performance in Year 12 that is worrying us. In Year 13 similar results. English in 2002 is 64 per cent passed. However in 2014, 62 per cent passed. Interestingly, after scaling 57.5 per cent passed which means some students who passed after scaling got a fail mark.

Madam Speaker, in Mathematics 44 per cent of the students passed in 2002. In 2014, 15.5 per cent, this is Year 13, after scaling 61.1 per cent.

In Biology in 2002, 35 per cent of the students passed. In 2014, 14.2 per cent of the students passed, after scaling 59 per cent passed.

In Chemistry for Year 13, in 2002, 44 per cent of the students passed. In 2014, only 10 per cent of the students passed and after scaling 58 per cent of the students passed.

Physics in 2002, 59 per cent of the students passed, in 2014 - 28.4 per cent of the students passed.

In Accounting in 2002, 69 per cent of the students passed. In 2014, down to 38.6 per cent, after scaling, 67.4 per cent of the students passed.

In Economics, in 2002, 79 per cent of the students passed, however, in 2014, 54.8 per cent of the students passed.

Madam Speaker, the reason is that students knew that the marks would be scaled in the annual examination if their performance is poor, they do not worry because in any way the final exams marks would scaled upwards. The teachers knew and they did not worry because in anyway the marks would scale upwards. They did not worry about working hard to improve the students' performance. .

Fiji is not new to the removal of scaling of marks. Samoa also removed mark scaling last year and last year was the first year where the results were out and the actual raw marks were utilised. Let me quote from an article in the *Samoa Observer* newspaper published on 31st January where the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Education stated, and I quote:

“The Ministry decided to abandon the scaling system and use raw marks to students. Doing this, he said, has helped us identify the most students that are extremely weak at Mathematics. He insisted on the use of raw marks to assess the real level of learning. Children are to identify where the problem lies and to inform the parents about it. From what the raw marks have exposed, there is a lot of work to be done to improve on the teaching level where the teachers are involved and the learning process as well as where the parents should come in too. Using raw marks has helped us see that this is the area that some students need help with and so we now need to only work on it.”

Madam Speaker, there was no other alternative but to remove or discontinue the scaling of marks, so that will provide a true body of knowledge that a student has and then work on it, to ensure that the students' performance rise. We also need to ensure that the teachers work hard and get to know what was the real output of their teaching.

Madam Speaker, the university should correct, in terms of knowing the structure or the body of knowledge that these students have with their marks. Before, with the scaled marks, their true performance, their true stock of knowledge Madam Speaker, was disguised because that student does not have that level of knowledge, as was demonstrated through the marks that was given to the student.

Madam Speaker, following the removal or the discontinuation of scaling, the Ministry had put in a number of steps, so that over the next eight months we really improve students' performance. We did not remove the scaling in the eleventh hour but rather at the beginning of the year, so that this year, we will work hard or teachers work hard and ensure that the student's performance rises. Those are the measures that we will need to implement, Madam Speaker. We are undertaking a major review of the curriculum, as provided for in the Budget by the Ministry of Finance. There is a separate allocation for review of the curriculum.

In addition to that, we are trying to establish subject specialists in our Curriculum Unit. We want experts in different subject areas. This year, we have started hiring people with Masters, for example, as a Chemistry education officer, that person must have a BSC in Chemistry or Masters in Chemistry. Not like what we have at the moment, where some people have a Bachelor's Degree in a subject area and a Master in Business Administration (MBA). We are getting away from that.

We have also advertised a number of positions such as Curriculum Research Officers, where the graduates with high GPA will support the Education officers, in terms of writing the curriculum.

Madam Speaker, regarding teacher delivery, we have decided to evaluate teachers this year, based on three variables:

- i) We have revised the assessment that the Heads and Principals will do, to assess the teachers' performance by going and making class visits.
- ii) Students will also assess the teachers' performance delivery.
- iii) Pass rate must be utilised and every teachers performance will be based on pass rates, which has 60 per cent weighting, 20 per cent on student assessment and 20 per cent the heads assessment or the HOD or the Principals assessment.

Madam Speaker, as I have alluded to this morning, we have now started to recruit teachers based on GPA. The brightest and best minds we want them to be in the classroom, to teach students, as well as give them the right signal about being the best.

Madam Speaker, as you may have heard, Cabinet also has approved along with the discontinuation of scaling, introduction of exams from Year 6 to Year 13. We had discontinued the exams from Year 6 up to Year 12 and we are bringing it back to provide a guided approach, so that we detect every year what is the true stock of knowledge and what is the state of performance of a student which gives a signal not only to the student but to teachers as well as the parents.

Madam Speaker, that does not mean that students who fail Year 8 or Year 9 will not go up to Year 10.

Madam Speaker, you would also note that we have decided that the exam papers will be prepared by the Curriculum office because previously, the different sets of exams were prepared by different schools, as well as the issue of exam paper leakage, because teachers were preparing the exam papers. So, the teachers will no longer be preparing the exam papers, the exam papers will be prepared by the Curriculum and Exam Department.

Madam Speaker, we have also reduced administrative loads for the teachers, so that they will spend their time on their core business which is teaching, assessment and lesson preparation.

As approved by Cabinet, we have decided to provide more research to rural, maritime and interior schools, so that the facilities there are conducive to providing a proper learning environment.

Madam Speaker, we have also hired on a one year appointment roving head teachers and roving principals, who have proven track records of managing large schools. They will go and audit the performance of the schools and performance of the head teachers or principals and provide an independent report to us, which we will provide to the principals and teachers.

Madam Speaker, in this way, numerous measures have been put in as part of the overall reform of the Education Sector, to ensure that this year, student's performance is raised and the true performance is seen by all stakeholders.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank you for your contribution, honourable Minister for Education and I will now invite the Leader of the Opposition or her representative to respond.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for Education on this particular topic, the scaling of marks that was in place from 2009 and has been removed in 2014. Now, with the raw marks of students and their scaling, there are pros and cons of that and I think that my fellow colleague from the NFP, will dwell more into those details.

In terms of the scaling of marks, that has to do with the exams and with exams, it is the subjects that you teach and the students are there to learn those subjects and the teachers to teach those subjects. So, in terms of what the honourable Minister has told us this afternoon on the scaling of marks, I would like to point out to him that what the schools are desiring from the Ministry of Education is in terms of the four year strategic development plan that he has tasked the schools to produce. We are now into week four of Term One. The Ministry itself has not provided this for the schools, so it is quite difficult for the schools to carry out and to write out their Annual Business Plan, in accordance with what the Ministry of Education desires from their Strategic Plan.

Madam Speaker, in terms of the textbooks that are needed for the students in terms of sitting their exams which will now be based on the raw marks that the honourable Minister has stated up to now, we have been told that the textbooks will be provided in March or by March.

Madam Speaker, what the teachers are facing right now, is the difficulties in terms of trying to teach the students their subject matter without any textbooks. They are using some textbooks from last year, whilst they are waiting for the new textbooks to be provided. The schools in the cities and town areas are very fortunate that they have access to photocopying machines.

What I am concerned about here, Madam Speaker, as I am sure the House is also, is what is happening to the rural, the remote and the maritime schools that do not have access to these machines, in terms of providing the material for teachers to use in their teaching. And up to yesterday, one particular school that was waiting for their textbooks was provided with a package that arrived from the Ministry with five textbooks and the five textbooks were for the Fijian classes that will be using those textbooks. There are four streams and I do not know how they are going to be using one textbook per 32 students, Madam Speaker.

As we speak now, Madam Speaker, there are no more textbooks being provided for English, Maths and Sciences in some schools, although with the Sciences and the Physics for Year 8, they are able to access the syllables on the website. But, Madam Speaker, not all schools have access to websites and to computers and the internet, so that is what I am bringing up here for the information of the honourable

Minister for Education. Madam Speaker, the students need those textbooks, as most of the curriculums have to be completed by Term II.

On the book teaching, which the teachers need for their textbooks, they have to be completed by Term 2. So, if they are to be provided textbooks, hopefully by March, and August is the end of Term, 2, I do not know how they will be covering the whole subject matter in those few weeks. Because Term 3 is devoted to remedial and revision for the exams that will come up and schools are waiting for the dates to be given by the Ministry of Education, as to when these exams will be taking place this year.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I wish I had more time to speak on such an important national issue.

Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for Education for his honest and detailed report on the scaling study that he quite rightly commissioned, and the results have been presented to us in Parliament. What we hear from him, with respect to the performance of our students is a national shame. For the last several years, the statistics that is provided ...

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- 2002.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- ... from 2002 right up to 2014, and the trend in the actual raw mark should be a cause for concern for all of us in this country and all parents sending their kids to high schools. It is not the fault of the honourable Minister for Education, I think he has had great intentions to change that, and I thank him for understanding what was happening with the scaling of marks.

However, let me say this, Madam Speaker, and I said this to the honourable Minister for Education and I think he said it in his maiden speech that education reform is a very difficult issue. It is not about raising duty or changing tax, but looking at lives of generation. I suggest to the honourable Minister that before he embarks on a major reform, to please set out up an Education Commission, to let us understand why children have not done well over the years and the honourable Minister knows very well that there is never a linear relationship. You need to reduce the student-teacher ratio. The thing that he is doing is very good, you need to get good people to do the curriculum and you need to change the curriculum. You need to put in teachers with good GPAs to teach well - those are noble intentions.

Madam Speaker, before we do that, we should find out the causes of what was happening in the schools, with the teachers, what is the nature of the problem, and even if we remove the scaling. There are schools, honourable Minister in areas where you will not be able to put these things and improve students' performance within a year - you will never do that.

Madam Speaker, performance is a long-term relationship. It requires that but what I am saying is, we do not know the real reason as to why students' performance have been so dismal and unless there is a national detailed Education Commission of independent experts to do that. I think we will make a bigger mess of this education system. While the honourable Minister for Education is doing something good, we support him and let him continue with that, but please set up an Education Commission and task them to do that work in three or four months. So give them the resources and find out exactly why; areas where these students come from and which subjects they are not doing well, because if you do not have a detailed study or report, you will be only tinkering, honourable Minister, and in the long term you may not achieve your noble objective, which I commend you. However, let us take a break and breathe a little more and set up the Education Commission because what is happening now is going to make a mess of the education system in this country, if you are not careful. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, first of all, I wish to say something regarding the decorum of this very august Parliament, it is sad to see that this has been compromised. The very thing that makes this Parliament august is its decorum and the manner in which debate takes place. The one thing that should not be compromised is that very decorum.

The comments that were made this morning were absolutely uncalled for, and the honourable Member responsible needs to let go of the obsession with the Military.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Hear, hear.

Vigorous healthy debate is great but derogatory comments are absolutely unnecessary and certainly not honourable.

HON. GOVT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- All Members of this Parliament need to remember that when they got elected they were bestowed with the title “Honourable.” There is a reason for this, as we are required to be honourable in our roles at all times and all prejudices should be left outside the door. Therefore, it is my humble opinion, Madam Speaker, that such a serious breach of decorum calls actually calls for reprimand.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to deliver my first statement for the year. I would like to focus my statement on the efforts of the Fijian Government, to increase Fiji’s presence and recognition in the growing international market such as India, but there is another thing which needs comment and, Madam Speaker, before I start, I wish to declare my support to the honourable Prime Minister’s proposition to change our national flag, and transforming it to reflect a truly modern and independent nation. Madam Speaker, everyone from the Government side of this Chamber stands behind the honourable Prime Minister in the initiative to bring in a new Fijian flag.

We got a lesson in history yesterday, but in British history. We now have a history of our own and we need a truly Fijian flag.

I allude to the statement made by the honourable Member from the Opposition that the Union Jack needs to be maintained in the Fijian flag, mainly because its creation in 1603 was by uniting three nations, that is, England, Ireland and Scotland under the Union of James or the Union Jack and creating a new nation with one flag.

Madam Speaker, this is where we are at, the process of creation – the creation of a bold, new, vibrant and patriotic Fiji. Apart from Fiji, there are only three other independent States maintain the Union Jack on their flags, which are Australia, New Zealand and Tuvalu. And we all know about the rumblings in Australia and New Zealand, we all know about. Just as we are now all Fijians, we will soon be getting a new flag that will be totally Fijian and maybe, just maybe, that might turn the other side of the House into more all-encompassing Fijians that care about all Fijians.

We respect our history and there is a lot to learn from the past, however, in order for us to move forward as a new and stronger nation, we need to let go of the past and bring in change that is representative of who we are – truly Fijians. Therefore, I wish to reiterate my support to the vision that the honourable Prime Minister has for our beloved nation.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is very clear that after the Ministerial Statements was made, the Opposition provided their response, there was no debate on it. The honourable Minister spent a good part of his introduction talking about the flag issue which the honourable Prime Minister had talked about.

MADAM SPEAKER.- The honourable Member has 20 minutes and he is aware of that and whatever he says in the 20 minutes, is his own prerogative.

Marketing Fiji as an Attractive Tourism Destination –
Indian Sub-Continent & Asian Region

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, this Ministerial Statement is to inform this august Chamber of the recent developments during my visit to India, in relation to marketing Fiji as an attractive tourism destination in the Indian Subcontinent and the Asian Region.

Madam Speaker, I am glad to inform the House that last year, the visitor arrival numbers reached a new height of 692,630 which was a 5.3 per cent increase over the same period in 2013 of 657,706. This has been the result of some aggressive marketing and promotion of Fiji in the various markets, especially our non-traditional markets such as Asia. Indian visitor arrival has grown by 8.2 per cent in 2014, as the visitor number reached 3,057 when compared to 2013 when it was 2,826.

Madam Speaker, the four cities that were visited were New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai and they are the areas from where majority of the high-ended Indian travellers are from. We are not able to break down the total Indian visitor numbers by cities or regions, as the old visitor survey done by the Fiji Visitors Bureau is archaic and does not provide that detailed information. Currently, the Fijian Government is in the process of re-vamping and improving that system so that we can have better information. Furthermore, India is central to our plan to expand non-traditional markets and we expect 2015 to be a bumper year, in terms of visitor arrivals and earnings from the Subcontinent.

Madam Speaker, as I had stated in my inaugural address, our strategy is to focus on quality rather than quantity. It is important that we target high quality, high yielding tourists to our shores, in order to derive maximum sustainable results from our precious, finite and delicate tourism resources and infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, it is a well-established fact that tourists from India are amongst the highest spenders, not only in the Fijian market but in most international destinations. On average, an Indian tourist family could spend approximately \$6,000 in a week's stay in Fiji, compared to average spend of \$2,000 by other tourists. Therefore, Madam Speaker, in order to promote Fiji to the Indian traveller, we have, for the past few years, undertaken roadshows in key Indian cities. As I had said earlier, this year, we targeted New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and for the first time, Chennai.

Madam Speaker, this year's roadshow was spearheaded by the Fijian Government, both the Assistant Minister and I, senior officials from the Ministry and Tourism Fiji, and key industry players such as Fiji Airways, accommodation sector and tour operators. This high level of attendance denoted the importance that the Fijian Government now places on the Indian market which was never done before.

The positive response received from the Indian travel and tourism trade partners was an indication of the growing knowledge of Fiji as a tourist destination. For the first time in India, Fiji has now partnered with the world-renowned Swiss-based Kuoni Travel Agency, and this was launched by virtue

of a brochure, together with Tourism Fiji. We will now build on our image in the Indian market with a company that has 60 years of experience in India, and delivers dream holidays to millions of travellers – we are now part of that dream. One wonders why the old Fiji Visitors Bureau did not take notice of China/India sector earlier.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, Fiji is establishing itself as the location for conventions and meetings, especially for the Indian market, a market that is willing to travel far and wide to host and attend conventions and meetings. One of the main hurdle which we faced in these meetings was the need for better flight connectivity between Fiji and India. Our national airline (Fiji Airways) currently flies directly to Hon Kong, however, there is scope to grow the numbers by introducing new flights to other ports such as Singapore (which is a preferred stopover for Indian travellers), Shanghai and maybe, talk about a direct flight to Fiji from India.

At this point, I am pleased to see that the efforts of our tourism stakeholders, namely the Fijian tour operators, who have worked to introduce charter flights between Shanghai and Nadi. In fact, there is one due to come in this weekend. The success of this initiative will provide the impetus for Fiji Airways to work on introducing a new route directly to China. A similar arrangement can be explored for the Indian market.

Madam Speaker, at this point, it is worth noting that new route initiatives have been developed independently and without the involvement of Qantas. We now have strong partnerships developed with prominent travel agents and senior representatives of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), will also help boost arrivals from this emerging market.

Madam Speaker, we must also note that there are synergies that exist and are to be drawn from having a successful film industry and the inflow of tourists and investment, hence the three agencies, namely Tourism Fiji, Film Fiji and Investment Fiji, who will continue to work together in marketing and promotions campaigns to maximise exposure in India. The Fijian Government will continue to provide support and resources to Tourism Fiji in their global marketing of Fiji, and focussing on high yielding and rapidly expanding markets such as India.

Before I conclude my statement with regards to the visit to India, well within the 20 minutes, I wish to also inform this august Chamber that I had an opportunity to collaborate and join efforts with the honourable Minister for Agriculture, as mentioned by him earlier, and together, we met with the Indian Government to discuss the areas of assistance and support for the sector.

Both our Ministries share the objective of raising the quality and supply of our Fijian grown products to furnish the Fijian tourism industry and further increase and multiply the benefits from a sector, which is the backbone of our economy. There is a drive from within the Ministry to fill our hotels and resorts with Fijian grown products, with the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture, and for which I commend the honourable Minister.

Madam Speaker, I assure you that the Fijian Government is fully committed to the vision of the industry as outlined in my maiden speech, which is to position Fiji as the hub of tourism in the Asia Pacific Region, and to grow the industry by 100 per cent in 2020.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to make my statement.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to make commentaries on the presentation made by the honourable Minister. At the outset, the flag issue is very simple – put it on referendum! Very simple, Madam Speaker.

We have children here. In the last sitting, Madam Speaker, school children came on a tour of Parliament. Honourable Dulaki and I met them and they wanted to know what we do, and we spoke and got them some run-down. For example, the flag and they said; “No”. Madam Speaker, let us just put it in a referendum and put this flag to rest.

While we are at it, Madam Speaker, can we ask; our military officers in the Commonwealth, the pips they wear – the Lieutenant, his cross of St. George says; “I die for Christ”. What about our Fiji Military, do they wear the same cross, Madam Speaker?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What are you talking about?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- This is a confused event, Madam Speaker, and they are afraid of the referendum because early in the years, the people of Fiji said, “Listen, we voted you to give us electricity, water, bus fare or whatever, and not saying something big like flag.”

Madam Speaker, keep it short, referendum and it will put all these things to rest.

On tourism, Madam Speaker, I love the commentaries about FVB. I was CEO of FVB, Madam Speaker. If FVB had been in charge with the SDL, the visitor arrivals this year would be 925,000 visitors...

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes. Not 700,000 as the Minister said.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- In your dreams!

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- They messed up in a huge way, having a shortfall of 225,000.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, tourism today is seven months of plenty and five months of famine. With 925,000 to one million visitors, it could be 11 months of plenty and 1 month of famine. With this Government, the famine could continue for a long, long time, Madam Speaker.

(Laughter!)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Your time was long with famine!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, we keep talking about quality over quantity. As I have said before, the quality of the products in Fiji are of a high class. You bring in a million visitors, they will use these high quality products, high yield, there is no issue about the degrading of our yields, as the

other side of the House continues to harp on. This is a grey product, and it has been marketed well from the beginning. I love this talk about new synergies and new that, and FVB did not do it.

Madam Speaker, we have been doing that all this while, and the growth pattern was such that we were going to get a million visitors by 2016. However, this Government, Madam Speaker, I think they will get a million visitors in five or six years' time.

I have said many times, we offered, "Let us sit together. We have the guys who can do it. We put up a good Board together. Do not be afraid, bring in expatriates, we can do it!"

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections!)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I love this talk about Qantas. Qantas in the last six months made \$AUS317 million profit. They are on their way back, and if Qantas had been here with us, Madam Speaker, we would not have had this hike as we have been having with all these airbuses that we have.

Madam Speaker, there is, you can get an airbus A320 from Mojave Desert for about \$30 million, yet here we have paid \$1.1 million for three. It is a disaster that needs to be corrected, Madam Speaker. And, we offer again, please, let us sit together, we can show you how it is done properly, and get our people fully employed, and we will go ahead, Madam Speaker.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- I respond to the honourable Minister's Statement. I will deal briefly in response to the issues that he raised.

On the flag issue, Madam Speaker, the flag is usually a symbol of stability that puts us in our history, for every country. You do not change it like you just wake up in the morning and you feel like you want to have a shower and change, you do not wake up and change a flag, because it signifies instability, which we are already famous for.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Move along! Move along!

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- You did not want to move along.

On the issue of decorum in the House, Madam Speaker, I will refer to one specific incident, but I will not go into detail. From the other side, an honourable Member who really should be the most senior Member of this House made gestures on his return to the Budget Session, and was viewed by us on this side of the House, but we are not cry-babies. That is on the issue of decorum, Madam Speaker. That was by far the worst. We will let it sleep because as we say, Madam Speaker, we are much much bigger and honourable than that.

On the issue of Tourism and Trade, we welcome the allocation of \$23.5 million to the Fiji Visitors Bureau...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Tourism Fiji.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Tourism Fiji. Thank you, honourable Gavoka. However, we are concerned, that tourism numbers have only grown by 43,000 between 2009 and 2013. The peak was in 2011, still a long way from the one million target. Fiji Airways has 468 seats available to

contribute. If Fiji Airways flies twice daily to all of its destinations, still we will not come close to the targeted figure.

Madam Speaker, that is all we wish to say on the issue of tourism, which the honourable Minister left to the end. I will not expand on the other things that he addressed. I am sure common sense will prevail.

51st Asia Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) Ministerial
Meeting - Kochi, Kerala, India

HON. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Leader of the Opposition, the honourable Leader of the National Federation Party, and honourable Members, I once again rise before this august House this afternoon to inform this august House of the recent developments in agriculture and rural development specifically, following my recent visit to India from 25th January-5 February, 2015. I am glad, Madam Speaker that I am speaking on agriculture which will require no referendum hopefully.

(Laughter)

Before I continue with my statement, I wish to respond, as per your ruling this morning, Madam Speaker, on the last question raised by the honourable Gavoka. Of course, there are systems in place in India which we can learn from, particularly in terms of better organising farmers. It is quite meticulously done, particularly at the farm level, whether they have farmers organisations and then at the district level where they have communities, coconut producing societies. For example, in the Coconut Sector, and they have given federations, and of course at the national level as well. So, not only in terms of production, they have very good structures but they have a very efficient system of monitoring as well. Monitoring systems is quite effective, they have what they call 'Vigilance and Monitoring Committees' which again are at the respective levels - farm, district, state and of course at national level. That is probably something that Fiji will need to adopt.

Again, it requires a lot of capacity building, and of course, our preparation particularly for the leadership as well.

Madam Speaker, allow me to personally convey to this august House the best wishes and sincere regards of both the Minister for Rural Development and Minister for Agriculture, the Government and people of India to the people of the Republic of Fiji.

As I did mention this morning, Madam Speaker, in my response to the question raised by the honourable Nabulivou that there were three major reasons in which the Fiji delegation attended the meeting in India. First is to reciprocate an invitation by the Minister for Agriculture of the Government of the Republic of India, the honourable Rodha Mohan Singh and the Executive Director of the Asia Pacific Coconut Community (APCC), Mr. Uron S. Salom, who is from PNG, to attend the 51st Asia Pacific Coconut Community Ministerial Meeting in Kochi, Kerala, India.

Secondly, is to pay a courtesy visit to both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India, as arranged by the Fiji's High Commission Office to India and I wish to acknowledge, the excellent arrangement made by His Excellency, our High Commissioner in New Delhi, Mr. Yogesh Karan for the excellent arrangement made.

Madam Speaker, this meeting was again to progress talks on a number of key bilateral issues that were discussed during the recent successful visit to Fiji by the Prime Minister of India, the honourable Narendra Modi and of course, we have seen a change, particularly in the bureaucracies within New Delhi when it comes to facilitation of meetings with their Fijian counterparts.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, the strengthening of networks with key industry stakeholders, we did visit a few, the national seeds centre, the coconut development board, and of course, the Central Marine Fisheries and Research Institute. Of course, Fiji most of our rural communities, they rely on fish farming and of course, aquaculture as well, and particularly South India they do quite well in as far as aquaculture, mariculture and of course, wild harvest as well, as their form of livelihood. It was an opportunity for us to see how they utilise both traditional knowledge and technology with the new methodology, particularly when it comes to aquaculture and mariculture as well.

Madam Speaker, our first meeting with the Indian Minister for Rural Development, the honourable Birendra Singh, focused on technical assistance and cooperation in the areas of rural development. I also wish to inform the House that currently, the honourable Minister for Rural Development in India is also the chairman for CIRDAP.

CIRDAP, Madam Speaker and honourable Members of the House is the Centre for Integrated Rural Development in the Asia, Pacific region. It was formed in 1979, however, Fiji did not join then. We saw the opportunities in 2009 and Government made the decision to join. There are 15 member countries involved in CIRDAP; Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

The Minister, as I did state, Madam Speaker, for rural development in India is the current Chairman and Fiji is the Vice Chairman. This year, Fiji will be hosting the governing council at the executive committee meeting for CIRDAP in August, as already approved by Cabinet and it provided an opportunity for the Chairman and of course, the Vice Chairman as well to discuss on a few specific issues, particularly in relation to rural development.

On Cooperatives and Small Micro Enterprises, this, Madam Speaker, was one area that I have already talked about in the morning that we had some discussions on. Again, market accessibility for our people is quite important and the market arrangements, particularly at a farmer level, the networking is very well organised in India. This is quite interesting for as India's model of cooperative and market connectivity is vital to enhance Fiji's service delivery in the rural areas.

This also includes, Madam Speaker, something that India has is what they call the Rural Transformation Centres. Rural Transformation Centre is provided by government for the rural people. They have a programme called the provision of urban amenities for the people in the rural areas, for example we have one of the emerging markets now, particularly in the coconut industry is virgin coconut oil. Mostly, our women are involved in virgin coconut oil as we speak. However, some of them do not meet the required standard that the markets required. So it is through the provision of such facilities that can enable them to bring their products into the rural transformation centre. That is where you have the machinery, the expertise, the technology and women or farmers will be assisted so that their products can meet market standard and that is where the collection as well takes place. This is very, very important particularly for our rural people.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, in our discussion with the Minister for Rural Development, one key area that we also discussed was on Rural Statistics and Geographical Information System (GIS).

As you know, this year, we are coming towards the end of the current development goals and we are looking at post 2015 and one of the buzz words in development today is sustainable development.

For sustainable development, Madam Speaker, we need reliable data. We need statistics and that is an area where we are lacking. We know that we are advancing in some areas, however we need to back it up by data, particularly for the Ministry of Agriculture, I have been struggling over the last few months to know exactly what we have in existence. This is why we need reliable data that will also can help us, particularly in the years to come and it comes to agriculture census, if we have this reliable data, it will save us a lot of costs in future if this is available.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, particularly on the importance of this data, it is widely used, particularly with GIS as a planning tool, it is of course, a key strategic tool as well. For those that have it, I know that the Water Authority in Fiji now has GIS facilities and the Fiji Sugar Corporation. We hope that through the assurance by the Indian Government, we will have more people trained on agriculture statistics and rural statistics to help us, particularly in terms of formulation of our policies on rural development and likewise agriculture as well. We are looking at the post 2015 development agenda. That is quite important for us.

I have spoken on capacity building, Madam Speaker, and training. This is a vital area of concern to this Government as we need our officials to be trained to provide impetus and synergies that will enhance their capabilities in their various fields at various institutions. As I did mention this morning, Madam Speaker, ITEC has double allocations for Fiji and that is an opportunity that we need to make use of. I hope not only agriculture or rural development officials will be trained but more of government officials as well.

On that, Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House as well that through the arrangement that we have with the Ministry of Rural Development and of course under CIRDAP assistance, we will soon develop specific Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) for bilateral cooperation. We know that currently we only have that umbrella MOU which we have under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but hopefully, between Ministry to Ministry, we will make use of the facilities that is available with them as well.

In the second meeting, Madam Speaker, the Madam Minister for Agriculture, the honourable Rhoda Mohan Singh, we discussed the issue relating to the existing technical cooperation in the area of agriculture development between the two countries. I will go into the details, Madam Speaker. We need assistance on infrastructure, technology, capacity building, technical expertise, genetic experts, breeders, sheep specialists and other technical assistance on the various areas mentioned earlier. These are the areas the Ministry is targeting to improve and strengthen with India which will bring about increase production and efficiency and of course, service delivery.

Madam Speaker, in terms of the various Memorandums of Understanding between the two Ministries, I would like to inform this august Chamber that the Ministry has already signed the MOU with India, and we are in the process of implementing this. One, is on the development co-operation on agriculture, bilateral co-operation on water resource management and, of course, bilateral co-operation on agriculture research for development with the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).

Madam Speaker, again on the development co-operation on agriculture, similar to rural development, we need to have this MOU between the two ministries so that we can have, apart from the ITEC programmes, direct access to their facility as well.

On the bilateral co-operation on water resource management, this is a critical area for us particularly with the Land and Water Resource Management Division within the Ministry of Agriculture. Water resource management is an issue that Fiji needs to look into seriously.

I say this, Madam Speaker, because in Fiji, we have a lot of rainfall. However, most of this water is not managed properly and that is why during times of drought, we do not have any rain water harvesting policies and a few others. This is why we have problems, particularly faced by the farmers when there are prolonged dry periods, and that is why the bilateral cooperation on water resource management is so important for us.

On research, I talked about it earlier this morning, Madam Speaker. Again research is important for agriculture research and development. If we need a vibrant and cohesive agricultural sector, it needs to be aggressively driven by research and through this, Madam Speaker, we will have their expertise in Fiji and likewise, we will be sending our people to them as well.

Other issues that we have discussed, Madam Speaker, one is on the rootcrops diversification programme. India, for example, they have a billion people to feed and through the policies and strategies they have, I was quite impressed with their Green Policy which was launched a few years back. It is to do with cereals, fruit and vegetables and, of course, root crops. With the Green Revolution, they were able to feed their people well and, of course, at lower cost.

They introduced the White Revolution which is milk. Imported milk is still high. India adopted this White Revolution and they are now one of the biggest producers of dairy products in the world. Likewise, they later introduced the Pink Revolution. This is about livestock. This is about meat, they did not call it Red Revolution, but they called it Pink Revolution. Today, they have an abundance of meat available for their people.

Lately, they launched the Blue Revolution. I have talked about mariculture and aquaculture and, of course, fish farming. This is to do with prawn farming and crab farming. I was accompanied by the Chairman of the Rewa Provincial farming and I am sure he has learnt a lot from what he saw in Kerala, so soon, this will be implemented in the Rewa Delta. Of course, the rice industry as well as horticulture and, of course, animal husbandry.

Madam Speaker, we continued with the discussions on the dairy industry. The MOU was in the process of final endorsement by the authorities in India. Hopefully, when this is endorsed, we will get more assistance from the National Dairy Research Institute and, of course, the farmers' cooperative, particularly on the small dairy farmers concept which we have lately spread into the Western Division and in parts of Naitasiri, Rewa and Tailevu, as well as our small holder dairy farmers.

Madam Speaker, we also visited the International Seed Corporation which is involved in the development of seed research, seed infrastructure, seed production and seed multiplication, seed marketing and seed distribution to farmers.

Of course, there was also a private sector company which was involved in the integrated model of sustainability and livelihood. They focus on the five 'f's which is feed, food, fodder, fertiliser and fuel. These are done through hydroponics and both these enterprises are willing to assist us as well.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, on coconut, the coconut industry has been on the decline for the last decade. In 2008, we were producing about 9,000 tonnes of copra but today, it is down to 3,852 tonnes as of 2013.

There are challenges in the industry, Madam Speaker, and one is the market which is very important because we are producing crude oil and crude oil is the link in terms of price in the market segment that we have. For that, we need to seriously look at the current arrangements that we have. Because we are selling into the Rotterdam market and the Rotterdam market is very much buyer-driven rather than seller-driven and that dictates the prices of copra in Fiji, when the price is low, we also have low prices in Fiji. But let me assure the honourable Ratu Lalabalavu that with the industry plan which will be part of the strategic development plan, we should be able to address the issues.

Once again, Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity and I hope that we will give every support to the Agriculture Sector for the betterment of all our people and of course for Fiji as well.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, I stand to answer to the speech for the honourable Minister for Agriculture, rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management. I acknowledge the deliberations given by the Minister and he brought into the picture the development or the programmes in India. I only wish we could have a copy and paste in Fiji for the reality of the facts on the ground and the ability to be able to manifest that in Fiji. It is a very enlightening and educational speech in what India has achieved, and we give credit to India for offering assistance in all that has been highlighted this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, as for rural and maritime developments, as well as agriculture, we are in a practical position in Fiji, as we know that agriculture and rural developments must address the domestic needs of the people and their capability to address their needs, and to be able to export or return to the economic revenue of the country as we know from the message yesterday by the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji that this can only be sustained by tourism as well as remittances. There is no mention of the agricultural sector or export for the country to be able to depend to a certain extent on the remittances or what is earned by the export sector.

Madam Speaker, we know that as we have heard already, all the implementations on these programmes is to change the mindset or the attitude of the people and attitude to change is based on trust, to be able to trust whatever programme comes into place, especially new ones, and you know that the agricultural sector in Fiji, which is the base of our livelihood in the country, let alone export and the attitude for all these programmes to come, it must be shown to happen or take place so that the people can change their mindset to say that this is the true, this is right. As you know we believe in planting kava, coconut and all has gone down in the years and we hope that these programmes, if it comes in place, it will develop the livelihoods of the people, especially those who live in the rural areas.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to respond to the honourable Minister's statement. I think he is one of the most passionate and someone with a lot of enthusiasm about the Ministry and the agricultural sector that he is in. I thank him very much for that. I think he did a lot of work when he was Divisional Commissioner.

I recognised a very successful visit by the honourable and learned Attorney-General, the honourable Koya and I believe that there is quite a bit to learn from India, in terms of tourism and also India is one of the world's largest democracy and as we move ahead to bring genuine democracy into this country, we can also learn from India as well.

Madam Speaker, just on the very good outline of the issues by the honourable Minister for Agriculture, the agriculture sector is not only important for sustaining livelihoods in the rural areas, but I think it is part of overall strategy of poverty reduction and I appreciate what the honourable Minister is trying to do.

I think he pointed out very clearly three or four areas and again, those are very important for the agriculture sector. He talked about technology which involves research, extension and training and Madam Speaker, Fiji in the `70s and `80s had probably one of the best extension, research and training programmes. In fact, we were almost equivalent to what New Zealand had, and the poor performance of the agriculture sector in this country is a result of the loss of that very important component of research, extension and training, which involves technology.

The other factor, of course, is land and labour. We know that there are difficulties with the kind of labour that we need, especially for non-sugar agriculture crop sector. And here, I would like to ask the honourable Minister for Agriculture to think about the export development fund and perhaps, target those a lot of small scale agriculture which can feed to the major exporter. I think we have some very good agricultural exporters products from this country, and if they can be fed with the support of the small scale operators because that small supply which are holding up the agricultural sector, and which is not allowing farmers, especially small scale to have the right incentive to continue with farming, and to have the link through support from farming development fund through agriculture which can feed to larger exporters, we will create a situation where we will have some very important and good economic results.

The other point I wish to make, and this is a much more macro-economic feature that import substitution strategy, especially in the agricultural sector, is bound to fail. There is a litany of countries with examples around the world where there is import substitution agriculture is bound to fail. We tried to grow potatoes, I was a no-brainer we have a lot of crops which we can invest and I think the honourable Minister is right when he identifies some of the key constraints, he is targeting health from India and we are happy that from this side to lend you support to think through some of those specific areas you can target, like policy intervention. Thank you Madam Speaker.

REFERRAL OF TREATIES

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Speaker, I beg to move:

That the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence reviews the following treaties –

- 1) United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT); and
- 2) Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules for International Carriage by Air, 1999 (Montreal Convention)

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I confirm that the honourable Minister has provided me with the treaties and analysis under Standing Order 30 (2).

[Under Standing Order 30(3), the Treaties will now be committed to the Sector Committee for Foreign Affairs and Defence and that the Committee reports to Parliament by 12th March, 2015]

Honourable Members, that brings to an end the order for today and I thank you all for your presence.

The Parliament is now adjourned until 9.30 a.m. tomorrow

The Parliament adjourned at 3.55 p.m.