

## **WEDNESDAY, 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2015**

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

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

### **PRESENT**

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

### **MINUTES**

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of the Parliament held on Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2015, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

#### Acknowledgement of Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER.- It is most encouraging to see so many guests in the public gallery today, and I would like to warmly welcome the Nadi Women's Council. I am truly delighted with the interest shown by the various women's groups in our Parliament, and indeed the wider democratic process.

I also acknowledge the Year 8 students and teachers from the International Secondary School, who are here in Suva.

Furthermore, I welcome students from the University of the South Pacific who are observing the Parliamentary sitting as part of their Politics Unit. As I had mentioned yesterday, we had students from the same class attending during the March sitting.

I trust that the proceedings today will prove useful and informative to both groups of students, and I am encouraged that educators at all levels understand the importance of Parliament as an institution, and its vital role in any democracy. I wish you all the best in your studies.

I warmly welcome all of you joining us in the public gallery and those watching proceedings on television, internet and on the radio. Thank you for taking interest in your Parliament.

### The Population Message

Fiji has been a regional leader in numerous initiatives. On 1st March, 2007, the *Fiji Times* reported Fiji as the first Pacific island nation to incorporate comprehensive sexuality education, otherwise referred to as the “Family Life Education”, in the secondary school curriculum.

Comprehensive sexuality education enables our students to get a broader understanding of adolescence. They are given life skills to complement information, both the physical and emotional changes they may be experiencing.

Through the technical assistance of the United Nations Population Fund, the curriculum is reviewed continuously to ensure our children receive correct and timely adolescent health information. With timely and correct information, we can reduce adolescent pregnancy and correlating reduction in maternal mortality. Thank you

### **PRESENTATION OF REPORTS**

MADAM SPEAKER.- I am advised that no Committee Reports will be presented today.

### **QUESTIONS AND REPLIES**

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to withdraw Question No. 84 of 2015.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The question is withdrawn.

We will move on to the second question and now will give the floor to the Hon Nanovo to ask his question

Hon Ratu S. Nanovo: thank you Madam Speaker, I rise to ask the Question number 85 of 2015 under my name and the question is directed to the Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communication

HON. RATU S. NANOVO asked the Government, upon notice:  
(Question No. 85/2015)

The question Madam Speaker regarding the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC) is currently been headed by Deputy Commission as per its Organisation Chart and its Promulgation Decree number 11 of 2007. Who is then the Commissioner and what is he or she or her status at the moment. Thank you Madam Speaker

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, prior to my reply to the question by the honourable Member, I would also like to welcome the ladies from Nadi for their visit to Parliament this morning.

Madam Speaker, I would like to refer the honourable Member to the Constitution. Section 115 (2) which establishes the FICAC, and in that Madam Speaker you'll see that the it says:

“The Commission shall consist of a Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and such other officers as may be appointed by law.”

It then sets out the authority, functions and responsibility of the Commission.

Then Section 115(5) states:

“The powers of the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner may be exercised by him or her personally, his or her delegate, or through other persons acting on his or her instructions.”

Section 115 (6) also states:

“In the performance of its functions or the exercise of his authority and powers, the Commission shall be independent and shall not be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority, except by a court of law or as otherwise prescribed by written law.”

Also, Section 115 (7) states:

“In exercising its powers and performing its functions and duties, the Commission shall be guided by the standards established under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.”

Furthermore, Section 115 (10) states:

“The Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner shall have the authority to appoint, remove and discipline all staff (including administrative staff) in the Commission.

Section 115 (11) states:

“The Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner have the authority to determine all matters pertaining to the employment of all staff in the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption.”

And Section 115 (12) states:

“The Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner shall be entitled to such remuneration as determined by the President.”

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Who is the Commissioner?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I also refer the honourable Member to the Promulgation that established FICAC. In that, it talks about the office of the Commissioner, it talks about the Deputy Commissioner. The reason why I am highlighting this, is because to demonstrate that in the absence of a Commissioner, which the Commission does not have a Commissioner at the moment, we all know that. So, why are you asking the question?

The reason why I am highlighting that is to demonstrate, Madam Speaker, that the functions of FICAC still continue. The function of FICAC still continue. It in no way, the absence of the Commissioner hinders the functioning of FICAC. So as all honourable Members on the other side know, there is no Commissioner. The Commissioner is to be appointed by His Excellency the President. Like all independent Commission bodies, they are always appointed by His Excellency the President and that will happen in due course.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his answer to the question. My supplementary question is, in the absence of the Commissioner, who does the Deputy Commissioner report to, and which Ministry does FICAC come under?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Again, Madam Speaker, I refer the honourable Member to the Promulgation and also the Constitution. The Deputy Commissioner reports to the President, His Excellency the President.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Oh, Oh!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Liar! Liar!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, calling someone a liar is against the Standing Orders. It is against the Standing Orders. Can he prove that I am a liar?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You are out of order my friend!

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! Who said the word 'liar'?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Could you withdraw that word. Withdraw the use of that word?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- You withdraw?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM – Stand up.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- A point of order, Madam Speaker. Many speeches from the other side of the House refer to lies by this side of the House. In future, Madam Speaker, under the powers that you have under the Standing Orders, I ask you to ask them to withdraw those statements as well unless they can prove in this august House, those lies.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I did not hear the word 'lies' used.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Written speeches, Madam Speaker. Given here.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Can we restrict this debate to what is happening right now and do not bring back what has happened in the past? I did hear the word 'liar' used right now, but I was not able to identify who said it.

Also, please refer to the rules of the Standing Orders that when you speak you are to the Speaker, you need to stand and speak. So, I would like the honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca to stand and apologise, for the use of the word 'liar'. To withdraw the use of the word liar.

I will have no comments to what I had just said, please can you just withdraw the word, and we will continue.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Chair, Madam Speaker, I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you very much. The honourable Attorney-General, you may continue.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, as I was saying, the Deputy Commissioner reports to His Excellency the President. Nowhere does FICAC report to the Attorney-General as they are alluding to, and if I can also refer them to the Constitution, which they have not read obviously. Section 115(9) says, and I quote:

“The Commission shall provide regular updates and advice to the Attorney-General on any matter relating to its functions and responsibilities.”

I also, Madam Speaker, refer them to Section 5 of the Promulgation that says, and I quote:

“The Commissioner may seek the assistance and input of the Attorney-General.”

Madam Speaker, the words “may seek the input”. It’s their discretion. It’s their discretion. It’s their discretion.

So Madam Speaker, to answer the question, they report to His Excellency the President, they report of FICAC is, in fact, presented to His Excellency the President. In fact, when there is any remuneration claims, et cetera, it has to be approved by His Excellency the President. Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Supplementary Question, the Honourable Mosese Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, now that we know that FICAC reports to His Excellency the President.

HON. S. PATEL.- Question?

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

When you say; “Mosese Bulitavu and the State”, it means that the State is the people, it’s not the Government of the day.

HON. S. PATEL.- What is your question?

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

HON. P. KUMAR.- When it’s going to come?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Listen! I am coming to that, allow me. What are you asking me for, allow me to ask.

The Honourable Attorney-General has also mentioned that he gives advice to FICAC in regards to their roles and functions. In regards to cases where FICAC has completed investigation to be

sanctioned to court, do they seek legal opinion too from the Attorney-General in regards to cases to be prosecuted?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Absolutely not, Madam Speaker. I know there is a vested interest from the other side of the House at the moment...

(Chorus of interjections)

... but the point is, Madam Speaker ...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- What are you implying?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ....we do not tell them who to prosecute...

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- It's not prosecution, it's investigation!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ...we do not give them any advice on what is the law, what is the assessment, what is the evidence - absolutely zero. And if they read the FICAC Annual Report, they would also find that out. If they read the law, if they read the Constitution, they would also find out. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I will now give the floor to the honourable Semesa Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, Subsection (11) of section 115the Constitution says that,

“The Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner have the authority to determine all matters pertaining to the employment of all staff in the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption....”

My question, Madam Speaker, is; why is it from the date this Commission was established til now, there is still no Commissioner but we have a Deputy Commissioner, and this Section seems to portray Madam Speaker that both should be in place to provide the functions that is stipulated under Section 115, in particular to subsection 11?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, it does not say that both of them have to be present for that function to be carried out. It says either or essentially, that is what it implies.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- There is no `or` in here but `and`.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the word “and” can also mean ‘either one’. It is a question of interpretation.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Oh, oh!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So, Madam Speaker, “and” does not mean that both of them have to be there.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- They should be there!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Of course, we want to ideally have a Commissioner, Madam Speaker, and the fact is, we had approached someone to be a Commissioner in 2008 but they had then subsequently withdrew. It is also very critical to ensure, Madam Speaker, to not have a Commissioner

for the sake of having a Commissioner. We need to have a Commissioner who will actually adhere to the standards that have been set.

Madam Speaker, let me also say Fiji voluntarily, after the ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), which we did not have any reservations to any of the provisions, voluntarily, voluntarily, Madam Speaker, asked to be part of the Appeal Review Programme. So, over the past three years or so, we have been reviewed every year by visiting countries. The last country that visited us was the United States, France, we've had Bangladesh, we've had another European country from Serbia, and other countries that actually come and assess our compliance with UNCAC because the other side seems to intimate that somehow or the other, some wrongdoings are going on.

We have received a clean bill of health by independent assessors and through a voluntary system. In fact, so much so, that Fiji is now part of a Review Programme ...

(Chorus of interjections)

... that has gone offshore to review in East Timor and various other places.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Answer the question!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I have answered the question. The question has been answered, Madam Speaker, that you do not need a Commissioner for that function to be carried out.

(Chorus of interjections)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I will allow your last question.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The functions of FICAC as listed in the Constitution, it says that it has limited areas of responsibility. Can the honourable Minister advise this House and assure this House if someone comes tomorrow and reports against any Member of the Government or Opposition, will it be taken as priority and also, how different is this jurisdiction for this report to be reported to the Police?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I think the honourable Member does not know the meaning of "independence."

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Oh, oh!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I cannot give assurance. It is like him asking me; will the Police prosecute Mr. XYZ? I cannot say that, it is up to the Police. It is up to the DPP's Office. In the same way, it is up to FICAC. If any complaints are lodged with FICAC, they assess it and then they carry out their own assessment. They are independent bodies, Madam Speaker, so there is no way I can give that assurance to him.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The question has been adequately answered. We will move on to the next question.

FSC Annual General Meeting and Annual Reports  
(Question No. 86/2015)

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

Thank you Madam Speaker, I rise to ask Question 86 for 2015 to the honourable Prime Minister, Minister for –Taukei Affairs and Sugar Industry. Would the Honourable Prime Minister inform this Parliament, when will the Fiji Sugar Corporation hold its Annual General Meeting and release the Annual Reports for 2012, 2013 and 2014, as announced by the FSC Executive Chairman, Abdul Khan through FBC News on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2015?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA (Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs and Sugar).- Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question posed by the Honourable Member.

I think the Chairman has made it quite clear to the media that the Fiji Sugar Corporation will hold its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2015, when the Annual Reports for 2012, 2013, 2014 will be released. These Annual Reports, Madam Speaker, will of course contain the audited accounts for the past three years. Thank you

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, supplementary question. Could the Honourable Prime Minister inform this House when this AGM is held and would the Government move to acquire minority shareholders to become the 100 per cent owners of FSC?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is not a supplementary question.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- That is relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER.- The question merely asked when the AGM is going to take place, and also whether the Annual Reports will be submitted. That question has been answered. That is a question that could be submitted to the Parliament at a later date.

There being no other supplementary question, we will move on to the next question, and, I will give the floor to honourable Samuela Vunivalu.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Madam Speaker. Before I ask this question, I also want to say *vinaka vakalevu* to all of my voters: Mrs. Ramesh and Advisory Councillors, thank you for coming today.

Pacific Health Ministers' Meeting, Yanuca Island  
(Question No. 87/2015)

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

Would the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform the House, what was the outcome of the Public Health Ministers' Meeting held on Yanuca Island from the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> April, this year?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Madam Speaker, the Pacific Health Ministers' Meeting was held on that particular day, and this was a great meeting because it was revisiting the initial Pacific Health Ministers' Meeting that was held in the same venue 20 years ago.

One of the major outcomes of this particular Pacific Health Ministers' Meeting is that the vision that was encapsulated 20 years ago is something that the Pacific Health Ministers have seen as something that we will continue to have, and that is the vision of "Healthy Islands." I think that is something that we can all subscribe to.



This Vision of Healthy Islands, we are talking about is healthy islands in which children are nurtured, not only in body but also in mind, where we have environments that invite learning and leisure, where people can work and age with dignity, and where there is an ecological balance as a source of pride, in which the oceans which sustain us is protected.

Some of the major discussions that took place in that regional meeting was one that there was an appreciation that there has been some progress in infectious disease control in the Pacific. There has been some good progress in this area, especially the reductions in areas like chronic Hepatitis B infection rates, especially among young children, and the maintenance of polio-free status. That has been a great achievement in our Pacific Islands.

It has been noticed across the islands, there has been improvements in child-survival across the regions, and also reported improvements in life expectancy. Although the gains has not been consistent across all countries, but I think the thing that is worrying is that the rate of progress in the Pacific is not as high as the rate of progress in other parts of the world.

In the meeting, we have recognised that the Pacific is facing mounting health challenges with our increasing and ageing populations.

We have noticed the emergence of new diseases, such as *Chikungunya*. We have three cases recently in Fiji, and while other diseases that we have had in the past such as tuberculosis, measles and diarrhoea, continue to threaten us.

There has been a lot of discussions on the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), and the impact it is having. Our rates of NCDs in the Pacific are amongst the highest in the world, and we have also had a lot of discussions on the real and potential impacts of climate variability, variations on health and how these presents a challenge to all of us. If there is one thing that we have all agreed, is for health in the Pacific, “business as usual” is no longer acceptable, and as a result of this, we will be taking up the concerns of the Pacific to the World Health Assembly that will be held later on this month, in which I will be speaking on behalf of the Pacific Island Nations.

That, Madam Speaker, is a brief outline of some of the discussions that transpired at the Pacific Health Ministers’ Meeting.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I was pausing a little, whether you were wanting to ask a supplementary question or going elsewhere. But, I think I will give the floor to you.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you. Madam Speaker, can the honourable Minister for Health explain the Ministry’s immediate plans to implement the Yanuca Outcomes in terms of reducing the alarming death rate of 77 per cent, as captured in the May issue of the *Islands Business*

*Magazine*, under the NCD, especially when the motion to include medicines for NCD patients in the free-medicine list, to avoid or control the premature deaths under NCD has not been supported. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Radrodro for her question. I think the important thing to take note about NCDs is that it is not about fixing the problem afterwards, it is about changing the way people make decisions on their lives. The emphasis has to be preventive, and these concerns have been put into the Annual Corporate Plan that we have for the Ministry.

We have a Wellness Policy and Wellness Unit that goes out and advocates. We have put in a Wellness bus, that for instance goes out and screens people. So, there are programmes in place to address this. It is not something that can be done overnight, addressing NCDs is something that requires a whole of a government, and whole of society approach because it is about changing the way people think, about what they breath, about what they eat, whether they exercise or not. That is the ultimate solution to it. It is not going to be in medicines, it is about all of us deciding to make that change, and convincing. That is something that we have in our plans. It is part of our ACP, and it is part of our strategic plan that we are on the verge of completing this month. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplementary question. I would like to thank the honourable Minister for his statement, and very prominent in his statement is the alarming rate of NCDs that we have in the countries in the Pacific, in particular, Fiji. The question is, whether the honourable Minister understands, and if he does, whether he had advised the Government that the very milk it is providing to all school children, especially primary school children, is one of the main contributor, the main cause of Type A Diabetes? Whether he knows that, and whether he has advised the Government? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank you for your supplementary question, but I would remind the honourable Member to be more respectful in the words that you use, particularly when you are directing it personally to a Minister. However, the question is clear and I will give the floor to the honourable Minister for Health.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- Point of order, Madam Speaker.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- This is for health, not land.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- The question is an inference.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is a point of order!

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! When a point of order is being made, I expect you all to be quiet in the House, particularly for a point of order. Let us listen to this point of order, honourable Minister.

HON. M. VUNIWAQA.- A point of order, Madam Speaker under Standing Order 44(6), the question contains an inference. The honourable Member needs to provide statistical data to support the supplementary question.

*(Chorus of interjections)*

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order! I am having problem in hearing the honourable Minister. I will ask him to provide a written answer to that question.

I will now give the floor to the honourable Bilitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, in regards to new diseases. What preventative measures are in place or programmes that will allow consultants in the hospital to have a proper research on diseases that arrive in the hospital. They normal arrive at the later stages of a disease. What can be done to make our public aware that they should visit our hospital. What kind of enforcements that could be put in place by the Ministry, to allow our citizens to have their normal checks when diseases are at the very initial stages to visit our hospitals. What programmes can be in place?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I think that is a very good question and I think it is something that we should take upon ourselves. We need to go out there and tell people to report. There are so many cases that are reported that people turn up to hospitals where they are in advance stages. We, as Members of Parliament, need to make sure that we take this message out.

Within the Ministry of Health, we already have a structure that does that. We have divisional hospitals, sub-divisional hospitals, we have divided Fiji into zones and there are zone nurses that go out and propagate this message. We have teams that go out and carry out the screening, to identify those that have a propensity to have the disease. But I think it is something that we all need to be involved with as politicians, to make sure that we spread the message. I hope that the people in the gallery here are listening also, pass on the message, do turn up at your health centres, do get screened and if there are problems, we will try to address them early. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, supplementary question.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, there are three Ministers on that side and I would suggest that they reconcile their positions. The honourable Minister for Education has stopped fizzy drinks being consumed in school. The honourable Minister for Youth and Sports welcomed a sponsorship by Coca Cola for four years and the honourable Minister for Health is horrified about the extent of NCDs. Can the three honourable Ministers reconcile this, Madam Speaker, because it all comes out of this concern for health in the Pacific?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I do not think that is a question. We are totally reconciled, we know exactly what we are doing.

*(Laughter)*

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, now the Members of the House need to reconcile so we can move on.

*(Laughter)*

(Question 88/2015)

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

Could the honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism inform this House how will the Fijian Tourism Expo benefit the Government and the economy at large?

HON. F.S. KOYA (Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism).- Madam Speaker, I rise to answer the question by the honourable Member. But before I do, I must take advantage of the jovial mood today.

On behalf of myself, the honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations (Brig-General J. K. Konrote), the honourable Samuela Vunivalu and the honourable Jilila Nalibu Kumar, I would like to say congratulations to Natabua and Jasper Williams. We are all former students of Natabua and Jasper Williams respectively. Unfortunately, we do not number too many, but we hold our own.

May I also take this opportunity to say welcome to the lovely ladies from the West.

Madam Speaker, this year's Fijian Tourism Expo (FTE) will be held from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of June at the Sheraton Convention Centre in Denarau, Nadi, organised by Tourism Fiji in conjunction with my Ministry, Madam Speaker. The Expo will deliver a uniquely Fijian tourism experience for international buyers of the tourism projects and product.

Madam Speaker, by way of background, the Tourism Expo was previously run by an external non-profit organisation known as the "*Bula* Fiji Tourism Exchange" and was organised to bring together tourism operators in the region to showcase their products and services. Fiji withdrew its participation due to a number of reasons, one of which was to provide an equal opportunity, Madam Speaker, for all players in the Fijian Tourism industry are to participate.

The Fijian Government in 2013, Madam Speaker, to create an event for Fijians by Fijians and focused on Fiji. Hence the genesis of Fijian Tourism Expo in 2014.

Madam Speaker, following the success of the inaugural Fiji FTE in 2014, where a total of 423 delegates attended. The event is said to be bigger and better this year. A total of 461 participants have registered this year and 292 of them Madam Speaker, are local operators, selling their Fijian products and services and a 169 international buyers and media partners.

The Expo has been designed to be affordable and accessible for both major stakeholders and smaller niche operators. The tourism industry exhibitors attending this event will conduct 40 odd interviews or business appointments throughout the three day period, which basically amounts to about 11,000 of meetings or with the duration of the Expo with selected international buyers and media partners, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this event was the culmination of the Bainimarama's Government vision of creating equal opportunity for all Fijians. The programme has been tailored to cater for the needs of all service providers, big and small and effectively promote Fiji as a tourist destination to the world.

Also, Madam Speaker, contrary to the rumours that the Fijian Tourism Industry is struggling or on a decline, I wish to inform this Hon House that last year, we recorded the highest number of visitor arrivals ever in Fijian history, which was 692,630 visitors, and the first quarter...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Listen , you never did it at 692,000.

... of 2015, has yet again broken the record of last year by recording a 7.4 per cent increase of a 143,447 visitors compared to the same period in 2014.

Madam Speaker, events such as the Fijian Tourism Expo play a significant contributing role towards the increase in those visitor arrivals. It is the only such event that provides an open opportunity to market Fiji as the tourism destination.

Madam Speaker, the Expo will also be enhanced by concurrent events showcasing the niche products that we have, networking functions and an exhibition of authentic Fijian arts and crafts and the Fijian made and Fijian crafted village. And I also take this opportunity to thank the Minister sitting beside me, Madam Speaker, who has worked in conjunction with us to ensure that this is run successfully.

The Fijian made and Fijian crafted village provides an opportunity to link tourism industry players with the authentic crafters and art designs that we possess in this country, hence creating new business opportunities for the small and micro enterprises.

Madam Speaker, with the Fijian Government's continued support of initiative such as the Fijian Tourism Expo, I believe we will enable this vibrant industry to create more economic activity and employment for our people. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, honourable Balmindar Singh.

HON. B. SINGH.- What is the Government's investment into this event?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, the hosting of this event of an international calibre does not come cheap. The Fijian Government, through our marketing arm, Tourism Fiji has set aside a budget of \$300,000 for four events, but the benefits accrued are much larger and the impact on the Fijian economy is much greater.

Part of this budget will facilitate the organisation of the FTE obviously, however, it is also intended that this budget will also cater for other incentives in the key niche markets. There has also been overwhelming support from the private sector and I take my hat off to the private sector for having faith in this government.

Madam Speaker, a total of 18 sponsors have come on board this year to support the FTE in cash and in kind. My Ministry is determined to ensure the growth and sustainability of this event for our tourism industry. It is basically envisioned within a short space of time, it will become a self-sustaining event driven by the tourism industry.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, I will now give the floor to the honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, at the outset, I just ask the Government to stop bragging about tourism visitor arrivals until there is a million visitors because they should have reached it by now or very close to it.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear! Hear!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- And if they can't do it, Madam Speaker, if they ask us, we can do it for them.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, let me just do a bit of background to this Tourism Expo. It used to be called the "Bula Fiji Tourism Exchange" and we used to give 20 per cent of the space to our South Pacific neighbours; because from PNG to French Polynesia, we are more than half of tourism. We used to think of them, and we were creating a hub by becoming a hub, we strengthened the Fiji products.

Madam Speaker, can I ask the honourable Minister, have we given up our position as the hub of the Pacific?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, most definitely not.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, I will now give the floor to the honourable Sanjit Patel.

HON. S. PATEL.- Madam Speaker, before I ask this question, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the ladies from Nadi, my home town. For most of them, this is their first trip to Parliament.

Madam Speaker, my question is to the honourable Minister. What were the benefits realised as a result of last year's inaugural event?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, last year's event was actually a tremendous success. It was about 140 odd international buyers of tourism products and 150 exhibitors selling in Fiji. The event provides obviously increased visibility in both the traditional and non-traditional markets. The buyers are more aware of the products that Fiji has to offer. In terms of the success of the inaugural expo, Madam Speaker, is evident in the increase visitor arrivals from last year to this year. The total arrivals of 692,630 in the total foreign income, again, I hope they are listening, the total foreign income is \$1.405 billion and it was more than what was forecasted. So, it is actually a success, Madam Speaker.

Whilst I am standing, Madam Speaker, it is not about the million visitors, it is about the yield.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will now move on to our sixth oral question and I invite the honourable Alivereti Nabulivou to have the floor.

Recognised Seasonal Employer Work Scheme  
(Question No. 89/2015)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations inform this House on work conditions of our workers in New Zealand under the Recognised Seasonal Employer Work Scheme?

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) J.K. KONROTE (Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations).- Madam Speaker, I rise before this august House to answer the question posed to me by the honourable Nabulivou about the conditions of our workers who are now working in New Zealand under the Recognised Seasonal Employer Work Scheme.

Madam Speaker, following the ratification and the signing of the MOU at the end of last year, we now have the first 24 personnel under the pilot scheme, who are now in New Zealand working and hopefully the last six will join them in about two weeks' time. The first 12 departed our shores in February, they are now working for the Pick Hawke's Bay Incorporated Limited Apple Farm in Hawke's Bay. The second group left in March and are working for EastPack Limited Kiwi Fruit Farm in Bay of Plenty and the last six will go down to the South Island and they will be working in grape farm in Nelson.

Madam Speaker, these personnel have signed a contract with the New Zealand employers to work in New Zealand for about six to seven months. The first lot is due to come back around September. How much are they being paid? We have negotiated with the employers and the New Zealand Government that our workers are not going to be paid anything less than the national minimum wage for New Zealand.

For the information of the House, the average worker is going to be paid nothing less than \$NZ14.50 per hour. They are going to work for about 40 hours each week and hopefully they will earn between \$400 to \$500 a week. By the end of their sixth or seventh month, hopefully these workers should return to Fiji after having saved about \$NZ12,000, which is equivalent to about \$FJD18,000. That is a lot of money to earn within six months.

The conditions of their employment, under the agreement, the employers are duty bound to provide them with the best accommodation that is available, they are to look after their health and they are to provide them with any assistance that they will require. The workers are covered under the New Zealand Accident and Compensation Act, in other words, if they do get injured, they will be looked after and repatriated immediately and god forbid. The conditions under which they work, they are coming towards the winter months and they are going to be provided with warm clothing and other specialist equipment that they will require.

For the information of the House, the reports that we received back from New Zealand are all favourable and it speaks very highly of our workers. They are very popular within the communities that they work with. They are good ambassadors for Fiji and they are doing well. That goes to show that the selection process and criteria that we set are working in our favour, and for the information of the House, we look forward to sending more people by the end of this pilot scheme.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- I thank the honourable Minister for that answer and he referred to the minimum wage in New Zealand. I ask the honourable Minister, what plans does he and his Ministry have to get the minimum wage in this country to at least half of that?

MADAM SPEAKER.- I am afraid the question is not related to our workers who are working in New Zealand.

The next supplementary question will be by the honourable Mosese Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the honourable Minister for his replies in regards to the conditions of our workers in New Zealand. He talked about the wages and also the other things that the employer will provide; clothing and accommodation.

My question, Madam Speaker, if one of these Fiji citizens in New Zealand is injured or dies at work, what laws will apply; is it the New Zealand law?

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Already answered.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Is it already answered? But they are working in one of the companies there, what are the rules that would be involved in their repatriation?

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) J.K. KONROTE.- Madam Speaker, I will attempt to answer the first question from the honourable Draunidalo. I do not think we can compare our economy to that of New Zealand in terms of wages.

Going back to the other question, our workers are covered under the Workmen's Compensation Act of New Zealand so if something does happen to any of our workers, they will be looked after. *Vinaka.*

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, as mentioned, there are 24 already there and six are going to go. The opportunity to work in New Zealand has generated a lot of excitement and interest throughout the country and we are encouraged by the statement of the honourable Minister that they are looking to send more of our people to go and work.

My question is, whether the New Zealand Government is in a position to give us more places to go and work there rather than what he said that Fiji was thinking of increasing the numbers, without that proposition coming from the New Zealand government. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. BRIG-GENERAL (RET'D) J.K. KONROTE.- Madam Speaker, I will attempt to answer the supplementary question from the honourable Member. The answer is dependent really on the performance of our 30 pilot workers and judging from what we have received from the New Zealand Government and the employers, they are very happy with the performance of our people, so hopefully at the end of the pilot scheme (which is about six months), we look forward to being able to send more people down to New Zealand. Hopefully, the door will open wider then.

At the moment, for the information of the House, we are targeting the rural communities, we have been asked what about the urban centres, hopefully when we can send more people down to New Zealand, we will look at our urban youth and unemployed in the urban centres. *Vinaka.*

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, That brings us to the end of the oral questions.



Written Questions

FRCA Revenue from Super Yachts  
(Question No. 90/2015)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to table the written question under my name No. 90/2015. This is directed to the honourable Attorney-General and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for this question. I will table my answer at a later date, as provided for under Standing Orders 45(3).

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

The Question time is over and that brings us to the end of our sitting today. I thank you all very much for your contributions.

The House is now stands adjourned to 9.30 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 10.28 a.m.

