

# PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



## PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

### DAILY HANSARD

**FRIDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2018**

[CORRECTED COPY]

# CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
Minutes ... ..	1045
Communications from the Chair ... ..	1045-1046
Questions ... ..	1046-1067
 <i><u>Oral Questions</u></i>	
1. <i>Q/No. 100/2018 Progress on Construction of eCentre Cable Landing</i>	
2. <i>Q/No. 101/2018 Traffic Jam</i>	
3. <i>Q/No. 102/2018 Economic Benefits of Wairabetia Economic Zone</i>	
4. <i>Q/No. 103/2018 Smoke Emission from Steel Mill at Lakena</i>	
5. <i>Q/No. 104/2018 BTECH Programme</i>	
6. <i>Q/No. 105/2018 Upgrade – Municipal Councils</i>	
7. <i>Q/No. 106/2018 Grant for Infield Drainage for Sugarcane Farms</i>	
 <i><u>Written Questions</u></i>	
1. <i>Q/No. 108/2018 Numbers of Fijians Engaged in Peacekeeping Missions</i>	
2. <i>Q/No. 109/2018 Number of Registered Valuers and Surveyors in Fiji</i>	
Adjournment Motions ... ..	1067-1081
1. <i>Review of the Media Industry (Amendment) Act 2015</i>	
2. <i>Select Committee – ADM Plans and Strategies in Fiji</i>	
End of Week’s Statement ... ..	1081-1085
1. <i>Challenges faced by Tertiary Students in Fiji</i>	
Adjournment ... ..	1085-1086

## **FRIDAY, 16TH MARCH, 2018**

The Parliament met at 9.35 a.m., pursuant to adjournment.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

### **PRESENT**

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services, the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs; the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport, the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, the Honourable M.M.A. Dean and the Honourable S.V. Radrodro.

### **MINUTES**

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 15th March, 2018 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

#### Welcome

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to the final day of the March sitting of Parliament. I also welcome members of the public joining us in the gallery, and particularly I welcome again the Honourable Speaker from the Cook Islands; thank you again for your presence this morning.

I welcome those watching proceedings on television, internet and listening to the radio. Thank you for taking interest in your Parliament

#### Parliamentary Business on Fridays

Honourable Members, we are all aware that Parliamentary business on Fridays ends at 12.30 p.m., and on most occasions the number of businesses lapse due to the lack of time. In view of this, the Business Committee had agreed to amend the timing of the motions for debate where the mover of the motion will be allocated 10 minutes to open the debate, 10 minutes will be allocated for the contributions and 5 minutes will be allocated for the right of reply.

Honourable Members will also note that there will be no tea adjournment. I have been advised that the Honourable Prem Singh had withdrawn his End-of-Week Statement as listed in today's Order Paper.

Additionally, I am to inform the Honourable Members that I received notification of an urgent oral question from Honourable Prem Singh this morning. I have had a look at the question and ruled that the question is not of an urgent character and relates to a matter of public importance, therefore it does not qualify as an urgent question under Standing Order 43(1). The question is disallowed.

Honourable Members, please, be reminded that an urgent question would be a question on the issue that has to do with life and death of our citizens. Only those qualify as an urgent question, and the question that was posed had to do with the person and not of national interest.

### Birthday Wishes

Finally, let me acknowledge and wish the Honourable Joweli Cawaki a Happy Birthday and many Happy Returns of the day!

(Applause)

## **QUESTIONS**

### Oral Questions

#### Progress on Construction of eCentre Cable Landing Station (Question No. 100/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister please elaborate on the progress of the construction of the eCentre cable landing station in Savusavu and the benefits for Vanua Levu?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, the *Tui Samoa* Cable is a submarine cable that comes from Samoa to land in Vatuwaqa, to connect Samoa to the Southern Cross Cable. The laying of the cable, in fact, comes between Taveuni and Vanua Levu. So the Fijian Government actually saw it as an opportunity to build-up height out of that *Tui Samoa* Cable to land on Vanua Levu.

As you know, Madam Speaker, we talked about this in Parliament before and budgetary allocations have been made to that effect where funding has been provided by the World Bank and on 16<sup>th</sup> December, we are happy to announce that the actual cable landed in Savusavu. The pipe was built in Savusavu and was completed roundabout 3.30 p.m., as we had to do it very very quickly.

Of course, prior to that, Madam Speaker, and even post that, some of the works are still carrying on, but we had to carry out a massive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) because the cable actually comes through the reef area to land in Savusavu. The cable actually has landed in the Airport vicinity and currently, Madam Speaker, we are actually building the actual fabricated eCentre building where the cable will be actually housed.

Madam Speaker, the connectivity of Vanua Levu and indeed, Taveuni, has essentially depended on microwave links from Viti Levu, so your microwave links, the microwave will carry the signal and it goes from one microwave to the other until it reaches its final destination.

Microwave signal does not carry very well over water so therefore, when you actually have microwave linkages from Viti Levu to Vanua Levu, the speed is lost and indeed the capacity is actually lost.

What will actually happen now, once this eCentre Building is built by the end of April, which will then mean all the Telecom companies can use the submarine connectivity to connect to the rest of Vanua Levu and Taveuni, you will actually see at least a 100 percent increase in both the speed and the capacity for the users in Vanua Levu and Taveuni and the surrounding areas because the microwave link will actually be from the cable site itself, as opposed to microwaving all the way from Viti Levu.

Madam Speaker, this obviously presents enormous opportunities for the people living in Vanua Levu, Taveuni and the surrounding areas because suddenly, their ability to get what we call “4G” will actually, in fact become “True 4G”. At the moment, it is not true 4G, there is a lot of fall-out to ensure that those people who live in Vanua Levu will actually testify to that, so the speed will increase, the capacity will increase. It also means that we can have opportunities in the ICT sector in Vanua Levu.

Madam Speaker, it will further increase once we have what we call “terrestrial laying of cables” from Savusavu to Labasa. We see that currently taking place around Viti Levu. Terrestrial cabling of course means that the speed will further increase because the back end or the backbone becomes a lot more stable. So, Madam Speaker, this is the current works, as you know and as stated in Parliament, before that we have built this at a cost of around about US\$5.9 million, which is funded through the Government, of course, through the World Bank and improves their capacity in Vanua Levu.

Madam Speaker, we went through the procurement system as dictated by the World Bank, and carried out by the Geo-Tech studies, Environmental Impact Assessments being carried out and we have international providers of not just the eCentre building but also the actual cables.

One of the interesting things that we have also done, Madam Speaker, we have built the capacity within the system itself to have a redundancy line. So, as we know, we talked about redundancy for example, we do not have redundancy with FEA from connecting Monasavu to Vuda, this will also have the capacity to build a redundancy line and we can do that in the next few years’ time. So, if one falls off, the other will pick-up and as I said, it will present also opportunities for people in Vanua Levu. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu.

HON. RATU. N.T. LALABALAVU.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Acting Prime Minister for his reply. Again, coming from Vanua Levu, we are so happy to be hearing these kinds of developments touching the very people and the places where we hail from. Now we have heard that this is going to get a 100 percent increase in 4G et cetera, to the businesses and it will generate huge income as well for the Government. The question that I would like to raise, Madam Speaker, is, can the Honourable Minister explain, has there been any consideration at all, given to the plight of the *qoliqoli* owners after hearing that now we have the cables and the house, this is going to be housed to take care of the ones that are part of the cable, but has there been any consideration for the plight of the *qoliqoli* owners?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Attorney-General?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out. It is simply a cable that comes under the water in the sea to Vatuwaqa and we build a pipe out of that. Any necessary payments to anyone, any EIA have all been carried out.

The cable actually lands on the land in the AFL area, which is where they will build the eCentre building, where the cable will actually be housed. There is absolutely no impact on the fishing ability of the people in that area. We have a cable going to Vatuwaqa; it does not affect the ability of people to go and fish and it does not affect the ability of people to travel over water in that area.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Nawaikula?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. This matter has been announced before, even in the budget; could you inform the House as well as the nation when we expect this to be completed so that we can have improved service in the areas?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Attorney-General?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sure, Madam Speaker. As highlighted, the cable has landed, Honourable Nawaikula in Savusavu, and the eCentre building is currently being fabricated in Sweden, that is what you call a “modular eCentre building” which means that you can also add on other parts of the building should the need arise on the capacity is required. The anticipated arrival date of the modular building is the end of April 2018 and then we should thereafter very quickly have the cable up and running.

What that means is that, it is up to the Telecom providers when they will start using it. So you have your Vodafones, your Digicels, your TFLs that can actually make use of that to provide services from there onwards.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Samuela Vunivalu.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Thank you Madam Speaker. Supplementary question. Can the Honourable Minister inform the House as to the economic benefits to the people of Vanua Levu and how it fits into the National Development Plan?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. It fits in very well with the National Development Plan. Of course, as we have said that digital era can, of course, not just be the great equaliser but also the great dis-equaliser if we do not connect everyone. So, in a way you can argue and say that all the people of Vanua Levu are not on a level playing field because the speeds and capacities that the people in Viti Levu enjoy is not necessarily enjoyed by the people in Vanua Levu and in Taveuni.

This of course will mean they will be on that level play field now. In fact, it will be further enhanced once the terrestrial cable has been put in place from Savusavu to Labasa. Of course, one of the great equalisers is the *Walesi* TV there. So, every reception, every signal, every channel and every station that people in Viti Levu get, people enjoy everywhere in Fiji now; both terrestrial and of course satellite means, Madam Speaker.

So, in terms of economic opportunities, it is also good for individual citizens, school children to access internet services which does not become a chore, schools will actually now be geared up in getting more computers, et cetera, more accessibility to internet and more access to knowledge and information. Of course, for individual entertainment, people use the internet for various types of

services, including social media. The politicians of course can use social media again to spread their information or misinformation in Vanua Levu.

Madam Speaker, of course, on the other side too, it is good for businesses in Vanua Levu and Taveuni, giving them connectivity and the other point, of course, Madam Speaker, which we are very keen on is to help establish ICT businesses in Vanua Levu. Madam Speaker, as you know Vanua Levu and Taveuni and those parts of Fiji including Lomaiviti, Lau and Kadavu are all tax free zones, tax free regions. So, we would rather have ICT companies go and set up shop in Vanua Levu to provide economic opportunity for the young people in Vanua Levu, who of course we now have FNU in Vanua Levu, we have USP in Vanua Levu, they have those where tertiary qualifications can be obtained, they can also get jobs in Vanua Levu too. Real estate as we know is also lot more attractive in terms of its pricing in Vanua Levu, as opposed to Viti Levu, the main city areas in Viti Levu so it becomes a good business proposition for them too and we create employment. We get more people to stay back in Vanua Levu and hopefully also get people from Viti Levu migrate into Vanua Levu also, not just a one way traffic. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, to recognise our sovereignty of Fiji, the name of the cable I understand is *Tui Samoa*. Why do you call it *Tui Samoa* when it comes into the jurisdiction of Fiji? You call it *Tui Samoa* outside our jurisdiction, when it comes to Fiji you call it *Tui Viti*. Why *Tui Samoa*? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, again the Honourable Member may have misheard me. The cable that comes from Samoa to Vatuwaqa is called *Tui Samoa*, that is the Samoan cable. It is like Air Caledonia flying into Fiji, we cannot change the name just because it reaches Fijian airspace.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, *Tui Samoa* cable is coming from Samoa to Vatuwaqa and what we are doing, we are not even paying for it. What we are doing, if *Tui Samoa* cable is here, okay this is *Tui Samoa* cable and we are building a pipe out of the *Tui Samoa* cable.

This part is not called *Tui Samoa*, the part that is ours is not called *Tui Samoa*, only the Samoan part is called *Tui Samoa*.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- Last question, Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, just a supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. P. SINGH.- I know the e-cabling will benefit people of Vanua Levu and Taveuni in particular, as alluded to by the Honourable Attorney-General, my question is, how would the maritime islands benefit, and which ones around the coast?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, again the maritime islands other than Taveuni and Vanua Levu will also benefit because the cable now lands in Savusavu. So, to build a microwave link from Savusavu, say for example to another island, say Laucala island or Qamea

or anywhere close to it or Vanua Balavu, the distance that the signal will travel will be shorter from Savusavu to say Laucala or Qamea as opposed to it coming from Viti Levu and bouncing off different islands but will eventually get to Vanua Balavu. This will be a shorter distance, to travel shorter distance over water. So therefore the signal will be stronger, therefore the capacity will be much bigger.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

Traffic Jam  
(Question No. 101/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister update this House how the Fiji Roads Authority is working to ease or reduce traffic jams caused on our roads everyday due to continuing road works?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Acting Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Madam Speaker, we have obviously seen quite a lot of road works being carried out but I assume the Honourable Member is talking the Suva/Nausori corridor around the Suva area because a lot of work has been carried out around many of the roundabouts, as we know that we need to consolidate the roundabouts. Of course many of the roundabouts are now completed for example the one down in Grantham Road, the one down at the Market behind Asco Motors, that has been completed and of course the one at the Nabua roundabout at the Mitsubishi Motors which are almost completed.

Some of these of course has been disrupted, Madam Speaker, there is continuous efforts by FRA to try and reduce or minimise the amount of disruption to traffic. Of course there will always be some but the idea to minimise it. So there have been a number of practices that have been adopted, lanes to be cleared at peak times, contractors have been told not to undertake any road work during peak times. You may see at the moment because of the failure of the road surface in particular in front of the Rewa Street/Ratu Mara junction, a lot of works have been carried out at night. That is the type of preventative measures are being carried out. The idea is also not to dig up both sides of the road, in particular, when we have four lanes, you dig up only one side of the road, Madam Speaker, and of course at all times, to ensure that there are alternative routes that are available to minimise the disruption to traffic road.

Madam Speaker, but the reality of course is that once these works are completed, you will have a very smooth flow of traffic and indeed a much smoother road to actually travel on, and not get those sort of potholes approach to this aging infrastructure that we do have, in particular around Suva, where many of these roads were tarsealed back in the 1950s or so.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Naiwaikula?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Before I ask my supplementary question I wish to say “shame on you”.to the Honourable Minister for doing what he did to Marist Brothers High School.

HON. SPEAKER.- You withdraw that statement. You should not have any personal attack on any other Honourable Member.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- For doing what he did to Marist Brothers High School.



HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sit down.

HON. SPEAKER.- I have not heard you withdraw that statement?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I withdraw it.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Taking them to ransom, demanding they remove their Principal before you pay their money.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- He is still going on about it.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- This is different.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- He still talking about Marist.

HON. OPP. MEMBER.- Hear him out.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I have removed that part of the question where I say “shame on you” that is taken out.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It has got nothing to do with the substantive question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Personal attack has been removed.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Maybe you can answer that too. Why did you do it? Because I think you are too arrogant, you too bright you cannot listen to other views and on roads, can you consider...

HON. SPEAKER.- That is a personal attack. Sorry, I have to terminate your question right now. You are not obeying the ruling that has been made. You continue to make personal attacks and you had withdrawn the first personal attack and yet you made it again, so I am terminating your question. I now give the floor to Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, I do not have any questions.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Parmod Chand, sorry.

HON. P. CHAND.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Acting Minister for his answer. Traffic congestion is a serious problem and together with road works, it is also the narrow roads. I would like to ask the Honourable Acting Minister if he can consider in Labasa from Vulovi to the Labasa Town, from Tuatua to Labasa Town to have some passing lanes constructed so that during peak seasons like cane harvesting, logging trucks when they are too slow, they can go on the side passing lane and the other vehicles can continue to move freely

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you . Honourable Acting Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member raises issues about expanding the road network system to ease traffic which is obviously what he is talking about is passing lanes in particular when you are inclines, that is when you are going up-hill. Of course

that has been a feature of the FRA's projected works, of course it requires funding to do that which they want to cut, Madam Speaker, but the fact of the matter is there is not a real need. Of course in many places, not just in Vanua Levu but other parts of Fiji because as we have seen as highlighted in Parliament over the past week and a half or nearly two weeks the number of cars, trucks and buses have all increased in Fiji. It puts additional pressure and of course we need to be able to constantly upgrade our roads, constantly look at bypasses, constantly looking additional lanes to ensure that the flow of traffic is actually eased. So, of course, many of that will be in the works, Honourable Member and that will be carried out too. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni, you have the floor.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- I ask a supplementary question. Thank Honourable Minister for the explanation.

For me I come from Lami and almost every day we have an accident. My home helper takes about two hours to get in from where she lives to home and another two hours to go back. So that is four hours of unproductive time for an employee. For me coming here also, delay all the time I got to get up now at 6 o'clock in the morning ready to be here by 8.30 a.m. because of the accidents.

My question and I hear your explanation to the alternatives but this has been happening now for long time. Is there any way that you can also encourage the insurance people because when an accident takes place, they takes so long to clear the blockage so that they could easily measure and then move it. Is there anywhere this can be reduced in time for productivity?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, there are two elements to that question. The second one being that about the clearance of an accident site; how quickly that can be done; whether it involves insurance companies or police officers. I am sure there has a lot of work being done in that respect and I am sure the Commissioner of Police would be able to tell us, give us more information in respect of some new methodologies they may use in terms of measuring distances from the curve to the accident site, et cetera. There are new ways of doing that. Of course, now the photographic evidence is being used in a lot of places too and indeed it has been allowed in Court to be used. So, that I am sure that is work in process.

The other aspect that the Honourable Member talked about is precisely what we have been saying, is that they needs to be a monumental upgrade of roads in Fiji. I am glad the Opposition is finely seeing the sense in that, what we have been saying. Lami is an enormous bottleneck right from the cement factory all the way down through to Suva. Now it needs to be four lanes. Honourable Member, I am sure you will appreciate to four lane the road from that bridge of the cement factory all the way up to the roundabout here at Reservoir Road or just because that, at the bridge, will require the changing of at least three bridges to four lanes means rebuilding four new bridges.

It means putting the cables all underground, it will also require acquisition of land through compulsory acquisition because it is not wide enough. We will actually have to go in and buy a little bit of people's properties to be able to get the four lanes and not just four-laning, you need some areas with a fifth lane for turning off, in your particular your right turns when you are coming down from Lami to Suva. So that requires a lot of money, it requires a lot of planning. Madam Speaker, that is of course one of the projects people looked at the work plan of what FRA has been suggesting for the past three years, we are looking at the four laning from Lami at least to the bridge. We are also looking at the four laning, for example, of Nadi to Lautoka. These are very critical bottleneck areas where it does cause accidents, where a lot more are people are travelling, for example, as you would identify, a lot of people now work in Suva but travel from Navua every day. A lot of people

who work in Nadi travel from Lautoka every day. All of this is in the pipeline, Madam Speaker, but we need of course to address areas like the roundabouts in Nabua and Grantham Road. There are critical areas in Nabua, a lot more traffic there and as you know we also have four-lane road all the way upto Nausori Bridge where an enormous amount of people live. Thank you Madam.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Dulakiverata, your last question.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply. Talking about the Suva-Nausori corridor, I do not believe what the Honourable Minister had said when the road rear alignment is completed there will be a smooth run. That has to be seen, Madam Speaker, because there has been a big increase in the number of traffic. My question is does the Government have any plans to extend the Koronivia Road and construct a coastal road towards Suva to ease the traffic jam? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Before we answer the question, please Honourable Member when you leave home apply for multiple visa so that you are free to be here all the time and not have your mobile ringing.

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the four-laning of the road actually presents enormous opportunities. As we have said I think in Parliament and most certainly outside Parliament what we have said is that once you have the four-laning of the roads, we also are given the opportunity to be able to have what we call dedicated bus lanes. We have seen in other metropolitans cities around the world in Auckland and Sydney that you can in fact have between a particular period or number of hours you can say from 6.30am or 6 am in the morning until 9 am in the morning you have a dedicated bus lane all the way for example from Nausori, because now there will be four lanes all the way up to Suva. This means we will be encouraging more people to take the bus. It is a logical behaviour is required and a logical policy formulation.

Why have we reduced, Madam Speaker, the duty on buses? In the Budget last year we said any bus company that does gross revenue of less than particular (I think) \$1.5 million gross turnover does not pay any duty. They get their buses duty free we get more people to use the buses. A lot of people in Fiji for example, Madam Speaker, I wish the Honourable Member would stay back for this answer when he asked the question because I wanted to tell him about the arterial road along the coastal lines. It is all swamp area and imagine the cost.

Madam Speaker, the reality is a lot people in Fiji because they are a lawyer or an accountant or wear suits they will not ever catch the bus. They will catch a taxi or they will have their own car, but the same people will catch the bus in Sydney or Auckland or catch the ferry or the train. We need to be able to ensure that the quality of buses are good; people will feel okay when we do not have tarpaulin, "If I get on the bus I will get wet because it has no tarpaulin." We need to improve the quality of the buses, we need to improve the quality of the roads to have the four-laning of the roads. Of course, coupled with that if I live in Davuilevu of course the four lane road is not in Davuilevu but I need to be able to come from my house to the main road where I can park my car and catch the bus on the dedicated bus line, go to work, come back quickly I get into my car and go back home. As people do overseas, Madam Speaker, they drive from their suburb to the railway station, park their car at the railway station, jump in the train then go to work come back from the train, then catch their car or take their car back home. That is the similar type of planning that we are doing, Madam Speaker. Of course they all need to follow each other to get in the buses, we getting the four lanes done. We will be having dedicated what we call satellite car parking area where people can converge in one area catch the bus, and get to work really quickly within ½ an hour or 20 minutes and then of

course we not only reduce our carbon footprint but also reduce the stress that people have to face travelling for 1 ½ hours.

Honourable Member talks about building a coastal road which will mean clearing up mangroves, what about the impact of the mangroves that they have been talking about. Most of the coastal area all the way from Suva, Madam Speaker, everyone knows who have been around the coastal area has mangroves, it is swampy land also. Imagine the cost of driving piles in that area trying to find hard road to stabilise it.

Madam Speaker, these are some superfluous kind of suggestions. It also will have a huge impact on the environment in that area. These are the kind of consideration that need to be taken into account, Madam Speaker. We obviously assessed all of this and the best way, of course, is that we need to be able to get the four lane roads, get dedicated bus lanes making it easier for people to catch those buses and make the buses attractive for them to catch the bus, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Mataiasi Niumataiwalu to ask his question.

Economic Benefits of Wairabetia Economic Zone  
(Question No. 102/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources inform the House on the possible economic benefits of the Wairabetia Economic Zone to the Western Division?

HON. F.S. KOYA (Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources).- I thank the Honourable Member for his question. Madam Speaker, modern economic zones such as the Wairabetia Economic Zone is essentially a manufacturing and services established to promote exports and attract investments. The Zone is literally a one-stop shop containing all the supporting infrastructure and utilities to attract high quality targeted investments in the ICT, manufacturing and other services based industry.

The Zone, Madam Speaker, will contribute towards positioning Fiji as a services and manufacturing hub in the region and extend economic base of the Western Division in Fiji. It is similar to the Kalabu Tax Free Zone and it will create higher employment in the Division due to the proposed location, Madam Speaker, being near a large potential labour force of between 10,000 to 15,000 odd people. Many of these are graduates from the three nearby universities, the Zone is also within close proximity as I had mentioned earlier this week (I think) to the international airport and sea port with good access to electricity, telecommunications and water infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, the Zone will focus on a wide range of employment generating sectors and will target companies in a number of different sectors. This will include light to medium manufacturing, information and communication technology operations, warehousing and logistic businesses. This will be supported obviously as I have mentioned earlier too with a world class shopping complex together with other tourism centric services that will provide a unique lifestyle development for the Western Division. The shopping complex will obviously be a game changer and will truly modernise the retail experience accommodating international brands and shopping chains that are currently not available in Fiji. It will have adequate parking space and other activity-based operations that will target the interest of international visitors in particular, whilst creating a numerous peripheral services that require skill or unskilled or semi-skilled labours.

Madam Speaker, to ensure that proper planning and commercial viability of the project, a thorough market assessment was done for the economic zone by the International Finance Corporation for this particular project. The assessment involved a survey and interviews with prominent local and international investors to gauge their views on the types of facilities as well as demand for such a project. Now the findings, Madam Speaker, of the assessment highlighted the need for more readily available infrastructure in Fiji to setup ICT, manufacturing, logistics warehouse type investments and potential for high end shopping, which was a key demand indicated by this particular investors.

Madam Speaker it is a vision of the Fiji First Government to ensure that we have high developments in the Western Division as we do for the Northern Division for inclusive and resilient growth and development. The project will result in numerous other economic benefits for the Western Division and for Fiji as a whole, Madam Speaker.

The Nadi-Lautoka corridor provides for the success factors necessary to ensure successful outcomes for the projects by learning from the experience from Kalabu Tax Free Zone, and once completed Madam Speaker, will provide valuable support to the adjacent tourism industry and including ancillary businesses. It will also act as a catalyst for increasing participation of our local MSMEs in the global value chain. Some of the examples of the ancillary businesses, Madam Speaker that will directly benefit from the economic zone includes transportation, cleaning, catering, laundry, education and health.

Madam Speaker, this provides a valuable opportunity for our locals to participate in this important project. Moreover, Madam Speaker, it will increase the competitiveness of the manufacturing base in the Western Division, and increase its scope to supply both domestic and international markets and as per the IFC Market Assessment Report, the manufacturing of sugar and sugar confectionary from the current base of sugar molasses has shown potential in terms of demand in the Pacific Islands sub-region. Furthermore, the high value added wood mahogany products, where wood actually have significant demand in export markets like the United States, and as such Fiji's prospects Madam Speaker, in becoming a manufacturing hub for the region will be considerably strengthened by this economic zone.

Other areas of interest, Madam Speaker, with the market potential for growth are processing and preserving the fish, the manufacture of paper products in pharmaceuticals, medicinal and most of botanical products and using unique Fijian grown inputs, and I am talking about our refined oils from coconut copra and processing and preserving of specific fruits. Some of them mentioned by the Honourable Minister for Agriculture are vegetables and spices, we are talking about ginger, we talking about turmeric. Madam Speaker, just as a short note you know Fiji produces some of the best ginger in the world, some of the most powerful ginger in the world, Madam Speaker, if it is organically grown have high quality sourcing in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I wish to re-emphasise the economic zone that lead to significant economic activity and benefits to the Western Division and the project will drive Fiji into a world's plus shopping ICT and other services resorting in more quality investments and tourist to our shores. Now, this project will strengthen the economic base of the Western Division which has been susceptible, Madam Speaker, to adverse weather conditions and in fact in the past and it will also contribute to controlling the urban drift which is prevalent in the Western Division. I thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niko Nawaikula?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, because it is manufacturing industrial warehouse, why did you not locate it inland, as opposed to this very beautiful entrance to Lautoka?

It is always an eyesore going there. Did you look at other alternatives before you selected this location?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. F. S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, the choice was made very carefully for a couple of reasons, firstly because of it being between the two ports, as I mentioned the sea port and the airport. Now, in terms of transportation if we are looking at the way they were actually doing this, it makes sense that it is close to the main road. Madam Speaker, without him seeing or knowing what the plans are, he suddenly decides that it is going to be an eyesore. Why is it an eyesore? I really cannot understand, Madam Speaker, he has not even seen the plans yet.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- He knows nothing.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- He knows absolutely zero, nothing, Madam Speaker about this project. Once again he plucked something out of thin air and decided he is going to call it an eyesore. Let me tell you something Sir, on this side of the House we do not produce eyesores. Thank you very much Madam Speaker, I think he is just a shot in the dark and trying to make some kind of comments to get some political gain from somewhere. But a very informed choice was made, a very informed choice and might I remind you and you may hear this was done also in consultation with the IFC and that was the best spot.

HON. OPP. MEMBER.- (Inaudible interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I think lack of ideas on the other side.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Jilila Kumar?

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, supplementary question, how will the landowning unit benefit from the establishment of the zone?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the question. Madam Speaker, as in any development undertaken by the Fijian Government, we have insured that the appropriate compensation is given to the landowning units. We have actually carried out consultations with the support of the *iTaukei* Lands Trust Board and the Department of Lands and we are in the process of making payments for the relevant landowning unit to finalise the land acquisition.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the annual rental payments, maybe the honourable Member should listen to this Madam Speaker, the landowning units will directly benefit from employment opportunities in all stages of the project. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the landowning units will also be provided with the necessary support to prepare them for business opportunities that arise from this particular project. These could include, as I said earlier, Madam Speaker, transportation, catering, cleaning and laundry to name a few Madam Speaker. The world is endless with respect to the opportunities that will be available for this particular project.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, towards the sea in Wairabetia there are lots of mangroves, can we be assured that the mangroves will not be destroyed? .

(Honourable Members interject).

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, you are disrupting, please let us hear the Honourable Minister.

HON. F. S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, as I have alluded to earlier with respect to mangroves, the rules that currently apply for mangroves with respect to any citizen wanting to make a foreshore lease application, the same rules apply to Government. We are not just going to willy-nilly destroy the mangroves. As a matter of fact, just for your insight, Sir, I am a staunch believer in mangroves personally, apart from the fact that I am a good Fijian and I want to look after my environment, we will ensure that we will do absolutely everything to protect those mangroves.

Just food for thought, Madam Speaker, I think maybe they should not hear this. The idea is that if there is any development that takes place, eventually we are looking at that and probably we will ask that they incorporate the mangroves within the development rather than destroying them.

At the moment, currently as it stands, we are looking at seven acres of *iTaukei* lease and 33 acres of state foreshore lease, and not all of it has mangroves Madam Speaker. We have chosen a spot where there will be very little mangroves and if it is the case, we will not actually destroy it, it will be incorporated into the project. You should not be afraid that we are actually going to destroy a whole bunch of mangroves. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Alvick Maharaj

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, supplementary question. What are the key sectors the Wairabetia Economic Zone will be focusing on in terms of attracting investment?

HON. F.S KOYA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. Madam Speaker, the key sectors that are immediately being targeted in the zone are manufacturing and logistics and warehousing type investments. These were highlighted as priority sectors by those investors that we were actually serving. Now, as per the market assessment conducted by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and in addition to these targeted areas, there will also be other facilities which will focus, as I said earlier, by world class shopping centres, et cetera. But those ones are the key ones and the Government also, Madam Speaker, we have commissioned an inter-agency taskforce comprising of senior government officials and stakeholders to steer this particular project. The taskforce has been given the responsibility to formulate a set of tailor-made investment incentives that will be designed to attract those high quality projects to be established in the zone.

We are currently in the design phase of the project and I wish the Honourable Nawaikula was here, Madam Speaker. A project manager has been recruited to lead the team of international consultants to design and develop key aspects of the project. It is anticipated that once the design phase of the project is completed, the development of the site would be undertaken by the end of the year.

It is expected that the construction on the site will commence around 2019. Again, as per the five and 20-year National Development Plan, it is important to note that the Wairabetia Economic Zone project is a long-term commitment that is being undertaken by the Fijian Government, which will create gainful employment and sustainable livelihood now and for the future for all Fijians.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I now give the floor to Honourable Kiliraki to ask his question.

Smoke Emission from Steel Mill at Lakena  
(Question No. 103/2018)

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Acting Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport inform the House whether or not he is aware of the smoke emission from a steel mill in Lakena, Nausori, which is causing disturbance and is prone to cause health hazard to the people in the area? If yes, what action has been taken to remedy the matter?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Acting Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Honourable Member for this question.

Madam Speaker, I hope we are talking about the same site because on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March this year, which is only about four days ago, a Ministry of Environment personnel went to the site and confirmed that there were workers on the site undertaking the construction of the actual steel mill. There is no steel mill there yet; they are still building it. How can we have emissions from a steel mill when there is no steel mill there? They are actually constructing the steel mill.

Madam Speaker, but just to inform Parliament, the building consent was given to a company called Gurbachan Singh Steel Mill Limited by the Department of Town and Country Planning on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2015 for the construction at the site in Lakena, Nausori. Once the steel mill is constructed, Honourable Member, through you, Madam Speaker, and prior to the operation, the company will be required under Part 5 of the relevant Act, which is the Environment Management Act 2005, to obtain a waste disposal permit from the Ministry of Environment. Waste disposal also includes smoke emissions, apart from hazardous waste, solid waste, liquid waste, et cetera. If deemed necessary, a Waste Management Plan will be sought and imposed as a condition of the permit. The plan will be used as a monitoring guide for the company's operations. In the interim, should the Ministry of Environment when applying the pathway, the proponent will need to submit all required environmental documentation from the Ministry of Environment that supports the existing proposal and the proponent should be informed to keep the gate accessible to the staff of Ministry of Environment so that they can readily carry out inspections to find out if everything is being done according to the plan. Of course, if the proponent does not adhere to the guidelines set out by the Ministry of Environment, a Stop Work Notice will be issued. But to tell the Parliament, Madam Speaker, there is no smoke because there is no steel mill.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his response. This is coming from the people that live in the area. We surely know that if something is happening only at night and not during normal working hours, there must be something illegal about it. The people from the area are complaining that this operation only goes on during the night and emits dangerous smoke in the area. Can I ask the Honourable Minister to confirm with their personnel on the ground to go there at night and see if this thing is really happening? Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, it is of course administratively, we cannot get directives from Parliament to tell people to go individually and tell them how to do their job. But if the people living in that area believe that there is something untoward happening in the dark of the night, then please write a letter to the Ministry of Environment or give us the letter and we will make sure that the Ministry of Environment personnel can go out at night and see what is happening. But it must come from the residents, not from yourself.



BTECH Programme  
(Question No. 104/2018)

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

Can the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management and Meteorological Services inform the House on the current status of the Ministry's BTECH programme in minimising and managing the impact of *bovine tuberculosis* and *brucellosis*?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU (Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management and Meteorological Services).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to thank the Honourable Member for this question.

Madam Speaker, you would recall that in March 2017, I did make a Ministerial Statement on the dairy sector in Fiji, and of course, in that presentation, I did mention about one of the major challenges that the dairy sector is facing is the re-emergence of bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis.

Madam Speaker, that term *bovine* is the scientific name referring to cattle. In my response this morning, Madam Speaker, I will focus on TB specific to cattle and of course *brucellosis* as well because not on humans, but this is a zoonotic disease which can be transferred from humans to animals and likewise from animals to humans as well. Not only that, Madam Speaker, in some other countries as well, there are other hosts when the eradication campaign does progress then they can focus on other possible hosts. I remembered when I was briefed in New Zealand on their eradication campaign after cattles and after human beings, they found out that the hosts were horses. There is a possibility, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, *bovine TB* and *brucellosis* have been in Fiji for a long time. We can go back to the last 50 years, and not only Fiji, Madam Speaker, there are certain countries because of the environmental conditions, these diseases do thrive and of course they have been conducting their own respective campaigns. This is a very costly exercise as well. In Australia, they started on their campaign way back in the 70s, and the yearly cost for Australia, because Australia is big and they have a lot of animals of around AUD\$32 million per year. Likewise in New Zealand, it dates back to the 1960s and the yearly cost for the eradication campaign is around NZD\$80 million. In the United Kingdom, the annual cost, again it dates back to the 60s as well, is about 50 million pounds annually.

For Fiji, Madam Speaker, most of the funding inasfar as not only the development of the cattle industry in Fiji and of course dairy partially but of course in the eradication campaigns as well, we were usually funded by our development partners or other financiers, given the limitation in Government's coffers back then. That is pretty obvious, Madam Speaker.

So, these again, I can say is one of the contributing factors to the re-emergence which the Ministry detected in 2009.

I will start, Madam Speaker, with *bovine brucellosis*. *Bovine brucellosis* was detected by the Ministry in Waidawara in Tailevu, this is the Tonia area, for those that do not know Tailevu well.

Usually there are clinical signs that we call it and one of the mostly identifiable clinical signs is the rate of abortions in animals. There was a lot of abortion in the two farms in Waidawara, way back in 2009 which led to us focusing on it and then conducted the necessary tests as well. For *brucellosis*, there are only two major parts to the eradication programme or eradication campaign, if we want call it. One is through field collection and mainly blood samples for *brucellosis* and laboratory confirmation. When we see and identify the clinical signs in the field, then blood samples

are taken from the animals and confirmed in the laboratory. Both these diseases are caused by bacteria. The laboratory testing will confirm that.

For TB, Madam Speaker, if I may just give a brief history on it as well. I have talked about clinical signs but in the eradication campaign for *bovine tuberculosis*, we do field testing rather than field collection when you are comparing with brucellosis. Field collection from brucellosis is on blood samples but in TB, the mostly accepted and widely used method of testing is called the “caudal skin fold test.” Caudal refers to the tail; the forward end of the tail of the animal, that is where you do the testing. The animals are injected and then after three days, they are inspected and there will be signs of swelling and redness and other signs that will give us some indications that this is a reactor animal.

Madam Speaker, that is further confirmed when the animals are slaughtered, the best advice that is always given to the farmers is for the animals to be isolated and culled. They have to be slaughtered, so that we put a stop to the possibility of this being spread. Animals for example, if they are tested, reacted, so reactor’s recommendation move to the slaughters. At Fiji Meats and Industry Board (FMIB), there will be meat inspectors and they will also confirm the result of the test.

This is a point of contention because there are generalised TBs which the meat inspectors will inspect. You will see that the generalised TB is obvious in the lungs and limbs of animals and even to the extent of the flesh. It is obvious but where the point of contention is, is what we call No-Visible Lesion (NVL). This is where some farmers are saying, “when we take our animals to the FMIB, the meat inspector says that there is no sign of TB.”

Madam Speaker that is where the laboratory confirmation comes in as well. It is consistent from the field testing, meat inspectors and even if they are non-visible, the laboratory confirmation will give us the indication whether the animal is affected.

Let me just quickly go to some numbers, Madam Speaker. I wish to say in response to the question, although painful, it is progressing very well and very successfully because animals are identified. The painful part of it is, it has to be slaughtered and of course it means loss in income for the farmers. But in the long-term it is beneficial for the industry, not only in terms of economic value but most importantly, the health and well-being of our people as well.

My response to the question is; it is progressing very well and very successfully. These are the numbers; let me start with *brucellosis*.

#### Brucellosis Results

2010	-	549	this tests mainly focused in the dairy sectors in Naitasiri & Tailevu
2011	-	298	
2012	-	761	
2013	-	251	
2014	-	85	
2015	-	23	
2016	-	21	
2017	-	35	we have started shifting from Tailevu to Naitasiri and this figure is because we have succeeded with the big farms but now we are going into stray animals and village animals.

#### Brucellosis

2010	-	18
2011	-	69

2012	-	50
2013	-	32
2014	-	721
2015	-	1,521
2016	-	1,224
2017	-	874
2018	-	161 reactor animals ready to be moved.

The figure shows that we are successful but painful because of the losses, particularly, in terms of the value of the animals and of course affects meat production as well. I will stop there and take questions.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prem Singh?

HON. P. SINGH.- Supplementary question. What is more painful, Honourable Minister, is that once the cattle is slaughtered after being diagnosed for tuberculosis or brucellosis, the carcass that goes to the slaughter yard or the abattoir taken care by FMIB, the parts of the carcass which are identified to be infected with *brucellosis* or *tuberculosis*, that part is taken away and the rest is sold for human consumption. Is that a good practice? How do you identify which parts are affected and why a contaminated carcass is being sold or why is it that the carcass which is infected with these types of diseases are sold for human consumption?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, the simple answer is, if it is raw, then it is of high risk, but Madam Speaker, just like fruits, you can just peel off part of the fruits and consume the rest. We have trained meat inspectors. They identify, I talked about the generalised TB total condemnation, because if only for TB Madam Speaker, it only affects the lungs and the limbs, the meat is alright unless it has affected the flesh as well.

Likewise, for *brucellosis* we just advise to wear gloves and keep away from the young calves and the milk et cetera. But the advice is, as long as its cooked, boiled well the risk, it is only bacteria, Madam Speaker. You can get rid of bacteria.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu?

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply and right from the outset the opening statement made by the Honourable Minister was that this was, especially TB, it can be transferred from human beings to animals or from animals back to the human being.

My question relates to part of his portfolio as well, Disaster Management. Given the dangers and the recent statement that he made in the House that farmers did not take on board the advice given by the BTECH Programme, given that, Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Minister explain to this House as to why can the definition of disaster not under the Disaster Management? That is within his purview, Madam Speaker, it also include issues such as this. Where this is like a plate, the danger there is that the disease can be transferred to human beings. Why can the Honourable Minister not extend the definition of the Disaster Management to take care of issues such as this? The controlling and the enforcing of the programme to the farmers, so that we do not get what you have just stated, that people are allowed to cook it and he did as well because the danger is there already.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to acknowledge the Honourable Member for the question, which is very relevant.

Madam Speaker, in fact we have just like disasters, declared states of natural disasters We also have under the Biosecurity Act, this is where the two Acts work together, we have also declared *brucellosis* and TB red areas. So the movement of animals from these areas, Madam Speaker, are not allowed unless cleared by Biosecurity officers and agricultural officers.

I have a case, Madam Speaker, where people from Koro came two weeks ago. They bought animals at Navuso. They purchased this way back in 2016 and they wanted to take the animals but we have not cleared the animals. We made it very clear to the buyers that the animals will not be released because that is a declared area under the Act.

Therefore, the clearance will be given, once all the test results have satisfied the requirements that we have. So, the simple answer is, yes, we have the powers and the authority under the Act and it is currently being exercised, where areas are declared for *brucellosis* and for TB.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Minister has rightly highlighted the point of contention with the farmers.

Madam Speaker, you are a farmer, you see a healthy cattle in front of you. Someone says, no, you got to destroy that. So, it is a huge point of contention.

My question, Madam Speaker, the quality of the labs providing the backup. My question is, what do you have in terms of expertise? How many veterinarians do you have in this country? How many do you have in the works to graduate and be able to provide this service going forward? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The capacity within the Ministry, again this is a skill, and not only that, but for those in the laboratory I have talked about research yesterday. It is about capacity development as well.

You would note that from the results, we had very low numbers initially, because of the lack of the skill for those that have to go and do the skinfold test and the clinical identification but numbers increased significantly when they have mastered the skill back on again. But this para-vets or even livestock officers that we have, need to be supervised by veterinary officers, Madam Speaker, because we have only two veterinary officers in the Ministry of Agriculture, we sought the assistance of the New Zealand Government.

Madam Speaker, we are thankful again to the NZ Government. We have three veterinary officers in the Ministry right now, additional to the three vets that we have. The good thing as well is that, two have just graduated as well and are joining. One is in the private laboratory perhaps waiting for the vacancy to be advertised and one has joined the ministry. So, more vets are coming as well. Currently we have a few in Massey University. So we are working on a capacity development as well, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other question, I now give the floor to the Honourable Leader of Opposition.

Upgrade – Municipal Councils  
(Question No. 105/2018)

HON. RO T.V. KEPA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Acting Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, infrastructure and Transport inform the House the recent upgrade by some Municipal Councils have not provided proper access for people with disabilities, how can the Honourable Minister make these areas like the Nausori Market and bus stand more disability friendly?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Acting Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, infrastructure and Transport).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for her question.

Madam Speaker, the Nausori Town Municipal markets and the bus stand have two disabled facilities or restrooms. One at the market and one at the bus stand. The disabled premises facility has two outside ramps in key strategic areas for entry into the facilities. So, they have actually a ramp, they also have an internal ramp at strategic intervals to provide access to people with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, there is also one disabled car park that will cater for people with disabilities and may actually be driving.

Of course, there are people at the municipal market that are ready to help themselves. I am not sure what Honourable Leader of the Opposition was mentioning when she talked about how to make Nausori market and bus stand more disability friendly. Whether she is asking that there is not enough or maybe she does not know that there is actually disability toilet facility, both in the market and the bus stand.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to refer the Honourable Leader of Opposition to the flyer that we keep referring to. This is for the budget spend. She should have seen this, this is specific allocation of half a million dollars of retro fitting existing footpaths in the urban areas to improve access with people living with disabilities, where half a million dollars has been dedicated to it.

Secondly, some municipal councils, if you can tell the Honourable Leader of Opposition, Albert Park, Suva has disabled friendly facilities; ramp and a lift, Tikaram Park, Lami; disabled friendly facilities and ramp, Laqere Municipal Market, Nasinu; has disabled friendly facilities which is currently being built, Municipal Market, Nadi; will also have disability facilities, ramp and lift, Rakiraki Municipal Market will also have disabled friendly facilities, ramp and a lift when it is completed.

Already, Madam Speaker, the My Suva Park upgrade has included the disabled friendly access. The Suva Olympic Pool also has disabled friendly access, Nadi Town Council, Nadi Bus Stand, the station washroom facilities, the Nadi Council building has washroom facility for disabled persons, Sigatoka Town Council, the market bus station restroom upgrade has this disability restroom facility also.

Of course, Madam Speaker, we continue to do more and more will be done as budgetary allocation has been made and as elucidated earlier on, there are facilities already there, as the Honourable Member was mentioning but of course we will be doing a lot more.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Leader of Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his response.

I went to Nausori Market and the bus stand to check this out if a person with disabilities, Madam Speaker, in fact the Nausori market and bus stand, the facilities are good. There is a wheelchair ramp there, nice and wide.

Just two points for the Honourable Minister, Madam Speaker, to consider: firstly, the edges of the area where you have to walk to get to the bus, because it is new and high off the ground. I think it is at least 30 centimetres, perhaps the Honourable Minister might consider painting with reflective paint. You have \$0.5 million there, and you might want to use some of that. It really needs to be painted because there is a big drop from where anyone walks, even an able-bodied person, so if you fall off that or you slip off it in bad weather, you will be in trouble. Because it is very grey colour, so it is not easy to detect between that top and the drop. If that can be painted with reflective paint and also where the bus stops, it is a big jump down to that, so if the Minister can consider that.

HON. SPEAKER.- I do not think that is a question, it is a recommendation as to what is to be done, so that is a recommendation, not a question. Any other supplementary question, if any? There being none, I now give the floor to the Honourable Dr. Bri Lal.

Grant for Infield Drainage for Sugarcane Farms  
(Question No. 106/2018)

HON. DR. B. LAL asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister inform the House about the progress on the \$2 million grant for infield drainage for sugarcane farms?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Waterways).- Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the Honourable Member for asking this question.

As you know, Government is moving towards supporting the sugar industry and supporting farms. The drainage issues are important components of the overall Industry Development Programme, Madam Speaker, because increasing mechanisation requires that farms are stable enough for the machines to work on the farms. More and more mechanical harvesters are being utilised by the industry.

Madam Speaker, in line with this in the 2017 and 2018 Budget, \$2 million grant was allocated to assist growers to undertake drainage work. This is the first time ever a specific grant has been provided to deal with the issue of drainage in the sugar industry.

Madam Speaker, an expression of interest was called in January from contractors by the FSC's Tender Committee and contractors have been selected. Similarly, in January, throughout the sugar belt area, both the Ministry of Waterways staff as well as the field officers of FSC, called for submissions from farmers who needed assistance. This has been compiled by Mill Area and examined, analysed, screened and sorted out.

For the entire sugar industry, Madam Speaker, 1,434 farms need assistance and this was equivalent to 391,630 metres of de-silting of drains. By mill area, the largest component of de-silting is to be done for the Lautoka Mill, 487 farms need to be assisted, 132,930 metres of drain needs to be de-silted. Madam Speaker, followed by the Labasa Mill area where 319 farms need to be assisted, a total of 128,070 metres of drains need to be de-silted. Followed by Rarawai Mill Area, which has 285 farmers who need to be assisted, a total of 993,040 metres of drain need to be de-silted. Penang Mill, 343 farms need to be assisted, 37,600 metres of drain need to be de-silted. Madam Speaker,

work has started as we speak in all the four mill areas, work has started, Madam Speaker. For example, in the Penang Sector, work in about six farms have been completed, resulting in 541 metres of drain have been de-silted, Madam Speaker.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question: I thank the Honourable Minister for Waterways for his reply and given the opening line made by the Honourable Minister as well, that this is the first time a grant has been provided for drainage to the FSC farmers or FSC areas. The question that I would like to raise, Madam Speaker, is given that statement and given that this is a new Ministry, does he have the necessary regulations to provide you since the powers to go and carry out your work within these areas. As I understand it, Madam Speaker, these are areas that used to be looked after by the Drainage Board and cane farmers used to have deductions taken from their cane proceeds to cover drainage, so that is my question, Madam Speaker?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, this is outside the drainage designated various schemes. First of all, I want to let the Honourable Member know that farmers no longer have to pay a drainage levy. That has been removed by the Government and Government is not providing grant to drainage boards to undertake the drainage work. Outside the drainage schemes, Madam Speaker, this is a separate grant to assist only the sugarcane farmers, and this grant is provided to FSC. We have signed an MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) with FSC in December and gave the go-ahead for FSC to undertake two components.

Firstly, to go ahead and survey and get submissions from farms which need assistance, collate, examine and finalise the list. Secondly, call for expression of interest from contractors, screen, select the contractors and in January, the money was transferred, and now they have completed that initial work and work has started, Madam Speaker. So, to answer your question, these are separate grants for farmers. The drainage scheme is there, farmers no longer have to pay any drainage levy, everything is taken over by Government.

HON. H.R.T. POLITINI.- Madam Speaker, just a supplementary question: can the Honourable Minister clarify how farmers will know if their farms have been selected; and secondly, what are the grants for mitigation if they have been left out?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for asking this question. Madam Speaker, the way the industry is laid out, we have got field officers for every area. The field officers have a finalised list of farm that will be assisted so they should immediately check with the field officers whether their farm is listed under that finalised list. If it is not listed, then they should inquire and make a submission. We have got an allocation of \$165,000 as Contingency Fund, so in case they are missed out, but their farm needs assistance, Madam Speaker, then they will be assisted out of this Contingency Fund.

If they have submitted initially, and they are left out, because the assessment and the result revealed that probably they do not need assistance, then that is a separate thing. So, they need to go to the field officer and explain that really, there is a major issue and if they are left out, they will be assisted out of the Contingency Fund, Madam Speaker.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, it sounds to me like this grant is totally new, surveyed to do something which has been done all the time by the Drainage Board, so my question is, is there communication so there is no duplication of work, so that you do not dig the drain now and they come two weeks later they dig again?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I think the Honourable Member does not understand.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- One here, one there, doing the same thing.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- *Wawa*, he should ask his colleague, who is a farmer also who understands that this is about infield drainage. Talk to him!

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ruveni Nadalo?

HON. R. N. NADALO.- Madam Speaker, supplementary question; can the Honourable Minister explain if all Mill Sectors have been allocated equal amount of money?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, no, they have not been given equal amount of money because the amount of work that requires to be done in each of the Mill area are different. As I had explained the largest amount of drain to be desilted lengthwise is the highest in the Lautoka Mill area - 132,120 metres. So it is in this regard that we have different allocations for different Sectors. Lautoka has been allocated \$448,000, whereas the lowest amount allocated is for Penang Mill which is \$123,735. Madam Speaker, based on the amount of work that needs to be undertaken at each particular Mill area, the weighted damage formula was utilised to allocate the grant, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other supplementary question, the next question, I suppose was tabled by the Honourable Salote Radrodoro, and in her absence, the question has lapsed. Therefore, we will move on to written questions. I now call on the Honourable Mosese Bulitavu to ask his written question.

### Written Questions

#### Number of Fijians Engaged in Peace Keeping Missions (Question No. 108/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Defence and National Security inform the House on the number of peacekeeping missions in which Fiji is engaged in overseas and the number of Fijians engaged in those missions and the duration of each of those missions?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA (Minister for Defence and National Security).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I wish to table my answer now.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

I now call on the Honourable Jiosefa Dulakiverata to ask his written question.

#### Number of Registered Valuers and Surveyors in Fiji (Question No. 109/2018)

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources inform the House on the total number of registered valuers and surveyors in Fiji and table the list of the same in this House?



HON. F.S. KOYA (Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I would like to table my answers now.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- The question time is over.

### ADJOURNMENT MOTIONS

#### Review of the Media Industry Development (Amendment) Act 2015

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call on the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, I wish to advise the House that pursuant to Standing Order 35(2), we will have to commence with the End of Week's Statements at 12.30 p.m. Therefore, the vote on the motion will be taken before that.

I now call upon the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad to move his motion.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I move:

That this Parliament agrees to a review of the Media Industry Development (Amendment) Act No. 9 of 2015, to allow subscription-based television service to air local news and commercial advertisements in conformity to principles of freedom and dissemination of information in a modern democratic nation.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now invite the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad to speak on his motion.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, the Media Industry Development (Amendment) Act was passed by Parliament in July 2015, to facilitate the Digicel Mobile Telecommunications Company to buy *Sky Pacific* from *Fiji Television*. However, certain conditions were legislated by Government through the passage of the Amendment Act.

Section 42(a) was inserted in the Act to allow a foreign person or media organisation to provide subscription-based pay television services through satellite or terrestrial transmission provided that:

- a) Such television services are limited to entertainment and sports programmes or channel source from other country;
- b) No local content, including local news is aired or shown by any such provider except commercial advertisements, which exclude advertisements by any political party, foreign government, intergovernmental organisation, non-government organisation or multi-lateral agency; and
- c) Such provider obtains a special licence approved by the Minister which shall be subject to such conditions as written by the Minister.

Madam Speaker, any person or organisation awarded as licence shall be subject to conditions as determined by the Minister. Therefore, a pay or subscription television service provider is not

only handicapped by the restrictive provisions of the MIIDA (Amendment) Act, but also restricted by the Honourable Minister who can enforce conditions.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister who issues the licence is the Minister responsible for communications, and currently the Minister is also the Honourable Attorney-General.

We recall that when Digicel was supposed to take over Sky Pacific from 1st October, 2015 an announcement was made that *Fiji One*, the free-to-air channel available in Fiji since October 1991, would no longer be part of *Sky Pacific*. This was a shock to thousands who access *Fiji One*, especially *Fiji TV* news through *Sky Pacific*.

It was important for them to continue watching Fiji One because the 2015 Rugby World Cup had just begun in England. They had a temporary reprieve when the Honourable Attorney-General announced that *Fiji One* would continue to be part of *Sky Pacific* until after the World Cup. But inevitably, *Fiji One* was removed because in accordance with the MIIDA Act, Digicel was restricted from providing a free channel on *Sky Pacific*. Customers had to fork out extra funds to install antennas in order to watch *Fiji One*.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, free-to-air television does not cover the entire country. In our travels around the country, we were told by many people, especially in Tailevu, Ra, Tavua, Ba, parts of rural Nadi and Vanua Levu Madam Speaker. People previously in those areas access *Fiji One* through *Sky Pacific* and ever since mid-1990s when subscription televisions was introduced in the country by *Fiji TV*, we had access to *Fiji One* on Pay TV.

First, this was *Sky Fiji* that had four channels, one of which was Fiji One. Then when *Sky Pacific* began in 2000, I recall that one of its 16 channels was *Fiji One*. Even when the number of channels were increase, Fiji One remained an integral part of *Sky Pacific*, watched not only by people of Fiji but the Pacific as a whole.

Madam Speaker, it is totally unacceptable that *Sky Pacific* customers are denied access to *Fiji One*, they are denied daily local news service, *Fiji TV* now runs three news bulletins - breakfast, lunch and 6.00 p.m. news, people have a right under the Constitution to be well informed through the news media of their choice.

Madam Speaker, we may have *FBC TV*, *Fiji TV* and *Mai TV* as free-to-air channel but the right to choose is paramount. Just as people choose between radio stations, newspapers, or any other product similar in nature. This is, Madam Speaker, common sense and this Government obviously has always talked about freedom of choice without restrictions.

Further, Madam Speaker, the provider of subscription television, in this case Digicel, is prohibited from airing commercial advertisements. Again, this is totally against principles of doing business and competition.

Any media organisation's core business is commercial advertising, even reputable international media organisations, such as *BBC*, *CNN*, air commercial advertisements. All pay channels everywhere, including in Australia and New Zealand air advertisements, Madam Speaker. The only exception may be *Pay-Per-View* Channel. *Pay-Per-View*, as we all know, is paying for a specific event to be aired on television, for example, a major boxing bout of which there have many examples in Fiji when *Sky* was being run by *Fiji Television*, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, on Wednesday, 14th March, 2018, the Honourable Attorney-General while outlining the progress of *Walesi* Digital Platform, also alluded to pay or subscription *TV*, saying *Sky TV* if allowed to sell advertisements would seriously undermine the business of free-to-air channels.

The truth is that *Sky TV*, Madam Speaker, had been airing advertisements as sponsors to their programmes until it is official takeover by Digicel. This, Madam Speaker, suddenly did not affect the revenue of *Fiji TV* nor FBC. Even the notion that Fiji is not ready for more than one television station was destroyed when FBC entered the market.

The procurement of television programmes, Madam Speaker, is expensive. The Honourable Attorney-General understand this extremely well and I am sure he agrees with me.

The Television Cross-Carriage Decree promulgated in 2014 generated controversy after Government wanted both televisions stations to broadcast Sevens Rugby and events sanctioned by World Rugby.

Rife that were with *Fiji TV*: Why would Government force *Fiji TV* by way of a decree to shares its rights with FBC if FBC TV did not have a market and viewership? An agreement was reached after the rights were sorted out with World Rugby and reportedly FBC TV agreed also to contribute funds towards the payment of the rights in accordance with the market share of its station.

Also, Madam Speaker, free-to-air television stations also prioritise commercial advertising over transmission of free content and the example is the FBC TV that cuts short broadcast of Parliamentary proceedings at midday, to air programmes and advertisements of sponsors, such programmes as Indians soap operas. This is despite Government allocating \$11.3 million in taxpayers fund annually to both, FBC TV and Radio for public service broadcast.

So, Madam Speaker, the idea of commercial advertisement is important, FBC. The fact that commercial viability of any entity is paramount cannot be over emphasised. Television programmes and live sports are expensive. All programmes have to be purchased, and that is why commercial advertising is important to all media organisations. No media organisation can survive without commercial advertising.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, there was talk of no room for two radio companies in Fiji in the past. We have heard this many times. FBC had a monopoly for about 30 years until Communication Fiji Limited (CFL) entered the market in 1985. FBC, if my memory serves correct, used to run two or three stations until then. Now, they have six and they are doing probably well.

CFL started with a single station and it was mainly in the Central Division, Madam Speaker. But today, they have become a very highly successful commercial entity without Government support in the past or present. So the notion that competition will destroy others is a myth, and I think it is badly misplaced, Madam Speaker. In fact, more completion will allow the media to strive for success.

So, Madam Speaker, this whole issue has adversely affected people's freedom in the dissemination of information and their right to actually make a choice. And let me just read this Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights statement; "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. These rights include freedom to hold opinions without interference and seek, receive and impart information and ideas through the media regardless of frontiers". This freedom and right is repost in the people with the State and politicians like us and those on the other side must respect all times.

Madam Speaker, the Media Industry Development Decree is regressive, we have said this many times. It is regressive, and suppresses media freedom because it imposes restrictions on Pay-Per-View networks, as well as other restrictions that we have told about in the past.

Madam Speaker, even if *Walesi* becomes the genuine national network which it probably will, Madam Speaker, in the future, it is still discriminatory to suppress news and current affairs, as well as advertising on *Sky*.

Madam Speaker, it is very important that we understand this because it does not work well for competition. What we have now is actually restricting competition and the Honourable Minister for Economy notices that even in small market, even in smaller countries competition is very, very important, Madam Speaker.

I, therefore, commend this motion to the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The motion is now open for debate and I invite input.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, just a point of clarification; in the Business Committee we had agreed that there will be a 10 minutes and 5 minutes response and then that is it. Then there is a 10 minutes response or are we opening it up to the floor?

HON. SPEAKER.- We are actually opening it up because we have saved time in the absence of Honourable Salote Radrodoro or the withdraw of Honourable Prem Singh's statement. We have actually saved time so we give an extra time from the 10 minutes; may be 15 minutes. Thank you. I invite input.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, just a clarification; I understand that we agreed in the Business Committee that there will be 10 minutes from this side and 5 minutes for other Honourable Members, and then 5 minutes for the reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- 10, 5, 5.

HON. P. SINGH.- 10, 5, 5.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thought it was 10,10, 5?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Oh, 10, 10, 5. Alright we stick to the 10,10, 5.

HON. P. SINGH.- No, 10, 5, 5.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Dr. Reddy remembers it very clearly.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It cannot be 10, 10, 5, it should be 10, 5, 5.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, please, it is 10, 10, 5.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad's motion is completely flawed. I think he is trying to address a number of issues that he has been prancing around on the floor of this Parliament, Madam Speaker. It is highly unusual that you have a person advocating for a private company on the basis of so-called freedom of expression, just for commercial purposes.

Madam Speaker, the reality is this, which he has not mentioned at all. Now, he is mentioning competition, it was actually very curling, Madam Speaker, that he did not read the entire motion in its entirety when he stood up because the second part of his motion says, "in conformity to the principles of freedom and dissemination of information in a modern democratic society", in fact, is flawed.

In fact, what he is doing here standing in Parliament advocating for Digicel Sky subscription, Madam Speaker, that is what it is appearing, and I will tell you why, Madam Speaker.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD – (Inaudible interjection)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Maybe you should have moved a different motion then.

*Walesi* today, Madam Speaker has a hundred percent coverage in Fiji - terrestrial and satellite anywhere. You see, Madam Speaker, he has not tried it. He is talking about maybe six months ago and the reason why, for example, parts of Rakiraki and Tavua that used to get *Sky One* or used to get *FBC* did not get it because the towers went down after *TC Winston*.

Madam Speaker, today under *Walesi*, the news that is broadcast by *Fiji One*, the news that is broadcast by *FBC* and the overseas news that is broadcast by *Mai TV* can be watched by everyone. And on the *Walesi* Platform, Madam Speaker, you get the eight channels which gives you the option to flip your channel if you are talking about news at 6.00 p.m - *Fiji One*, 7.00 p.m - *FBC* and whatever time is the *Mai TV NZ*, they have the choice. They are not being denied of any rights.

In fact, I can sit just down and stop talking about this motion because they are the facts. People actually have the choice to watch whatever they want, Madam Speaker. What the Honourable Member also forget to tell Parliament is the subscription television by the very words, "subscription" that is how they raise their revenue. You pay \$60 a month whatever it is, it used to be \$50 I understand \$60 a month, that is how they raise their revenue. That is how they actually pay for the programmes they buy and that is how they get their profit margin. That is their source of revenue, not advertising *per se*.

*BBC* is not subscription television. To draw a linkage between *BBC* and subscription, Madam Speaker, is incorrect. As the Honourable Radrodoro said, you are not comparing apples with avocados.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that the Fijian Market is a limited market. The reality is, there are only 900,000 people or less than that in Fiji. The reality is, Madam Speaker, that free to air television channels mean that *Fiji One* does not charge anyone for watching *Fiji One*. *FBC* does not charge anyone for watching *FBC* nor does *Mai TV* charge anyone for watching *Mai TV*.

Whatever programmes they show, they actually have to buy the programmes from the revenue they make, and the revenue they make is from the advertising they get, Madam Speaker. That is how commercial television stations work and that is how free-to-air television stations work. So it is incorrect. If you say the saying, you try to take out ghee from the fingers and putting it behind your back. He is actually trying to have a go at the Media Industry Development Act. On numerous occasions, the Honourable Professor Prasad has come to Parliament and said; "There is no freedom of the media."

Every single things that he says in Parliament, they say outside gets reported. No one goes and tells them what to say, no one goes and seats in the newsrooms to tell them what to publish. He does not talk about the fact that the lawyers that they use are also the lawyers of a newspaper. What about the conflict of interest there?

Madam Speaker, if we want to discuss and have a healthy discussion about the so-called conflict of interest media industry, let us be upfront about it. Not a single journalist in Fiji has been prosecuted under the Media Industry Development Act. There was only one prosecution in which the people who were being prosecuted actually admitted guilt. They were the Directors of *Fiji Times* because they had breached the law in respect of the Directorship, they paid a \$5,000 fine, that is all.

These are the kind of restrictions, Madam Speaker, the individual countries do put. When Rupert Murdoch wanted to buy media organisations in USA, he gave up his Australian citizenship to become an American citizen so he simply could buy a media organisation there. That is how countries deal with matters, but to bring this under the guise of saying that the principle of freedom and dissemination information in a modern democratic society because *Sky Pacific* does not get to show *Fiji One News*. Madam Speaker, *Fiji One News* can be watched by everyone today in Fiji, no matter where they live; in Cikobia, Rotuma, inland of Naitasiri, wherever, they can watch it, there is absolutely no restriction, Madam Speaker.

He will continuously say it is not true, it is not true, I urge him, do not listen to your lawyers, do not listen to advisors, go to the *Walesi* Office who probably the lawyers for the company he is talking about, go to the *Walesi* Office and talk to the CEO, Shivnesh Prasad, and he will tell you and take you through the maps to show you exactly where is terrestrial coverage, he will show you exactly where you need satellite coverage. It is a hundred percent coverage. And to sit here and say, “No, it is not, no it is not”, of course, it is!

Go and talk to them. Do not come to Parliament and give misleading information. Madam Speaker, there is absolutely no correlation between what they are saying about allowing subscription-based television to air local content, it is not denying anyone the freedom. They knew what the conditions of the licence were, they agreed to that, only then that the sale transaction took place.

Yes, *Sky TV* used to show *Fiji One News* because it is the same company owned it. They rent the free-to-air television station. That is why it was easy for them to do it, it was like another channel. They are saying; “We are giving another additional channel but this one is for *Fiji One*.” That is all they want.

On the terms and conditions prior to the sale, they agreed to it and they went ahead with it. And here we have a Member of Parliament advocating for one company for their so-called private interest under the guise, Madam Speaker, of Freedom of Expression and Access Information. It goes to show that their understanding of rights is very limited. Extremely limited, Madam Speaker! I can read to them numerous passages about freedom of expression, access to information, from the European Courts, from the ICCPR. I have got a copy of it that takes about accessibility and, indeed, the limitations of it, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that, this is a very ill-conceived motion that has been left behind by time. We, today, have *Walesi* that has completely crapped up all over Fiji. Accessibility of free-to-air television stations. Anyone can watch any news channel they like, any programme they like, they have the accessibility to it.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, this motion needs to be rejected and not be given the level of credibility that they seek because it has absolutely no correlation with principles of freedom and dissemination of information. These are private interest, the interested party knew about the terms and conditions, in fact, what the Honourable Member does not know or maybe does not show Parliament, that there was a restriction on foreign ownership of media.

We made an amendment. Fijian Holdings came to us and said; “Look, one of our companies we want to sell it. We are not making money, the only company that is actually willing to buy

is Digicel.” We made an amendment to accommodate Fijian Holdings so that foreign companies could buy their pay-to-air subscription TV company. We facilitated that, and we said these are the terms and conditions. So they took it Digicel, they agreed and the transaction was done. Prior to that we made an amendment. He does not tell Parliament about that. There was a restrictions but we actually made a facilitative amendment, Madam Speaker. You see, now everyone knows why he did not tell Parliament. What is happening here, come on! Let us be transparent and let us talk about the truth!

(Laughter)

It is not a competition, wait for me, I will give you this, it has nothing to do with that. We are talking about the principle of freedom of dissemination of information and, therefore, this motion needs to be rejected and it is very pedestrian actually.

HON. SPEAKER.- The motion is still open for debate. Honourable Viliame Gavoka?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Can I give my intention piece, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this motion has to be brought to the floor because there is so much confusion in the way our television has been managed in this country. I go back to the days when I had *Sky* and I had everything that I wanted. All of a sudden, I had my *Sky* but something was removed from it. And the way it was removed, Madam Speaker, did not make any sense. Today, you on your *Sky* and then switch it off and then you go on to the other ones, this is creating a lot of confusion in the community and also the content that you are accustomed to with *Sky* is now missing.

I would like to see a day where everyone in Fiji could watch *Sky*. Like I said yesterday, a child in any part of the country should see what the child in Suva sees, and that is only possible, Madam Speaker, if we continue strengthen *Sky* in what it offers to the country. Today, we are now doubtful, whether *Sky* can continue in this way, if you deny them the ability to collect revenue from advertising.

All this notion about Fiji being a limited market, Madam Speaker, that is not true. In competition, only the strong survive and if the other stations are strong as the provider of *Sky*, so be it, that is the name of the game. It is fundamental freedom, we enjoy as a people. I do not want anyone to be controlling what I see, Madam Speaker. *Sky* is there and it was made available to a lot of people in a better way and now coming restricted.

Madam Speaker, if I may, we like what *FBC* has accomplished. I think they have done a very professional job but maybe they should not be in the commercial arena, maybe they should focus on Government or more community-based programmes as supposed to competing with the commercial stations.

What is happening today, Madam Speaker, is creating a lot of confusion, and at the end of the day it is not accomplishing what it was set out to do.

For many years, for quite some time, for many months rather, people did not have *Sky*, like I said yesterday, I was in Labasa, I could not see any *Sky*. I was watching a *TV* programme in Papua New Guinea, people in the West in Vatukoula have just begun to see *Sky* now, Madam Speaker. It is trying to do so much, not properly researched, Madam Speaker, and I think we should open it up as the motion is recommending today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you there being no other input. Now I give the floor to the Honourable Professor Biman C. Prasad for his right of reply.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you Madam Speaker, I am not surprised at the response from the Honourable Attorney-General. It is actually quite disappointing that he misses the point that I was trying to make, it is not about one company. It is about the principle of advertising, it is a principal of choice and people have been denied their choice, Madam Speaker. It is also important to understand, Madam Speaker, when the Attorney-General talks about the MIDA Act, everyone in the country, every international organisation, including the recent visit by the UN Human Rights Commissioner, where they have talked about the restrictions in the MIDA Act. So there is no denying, we know, Madam Speaker, that tax payer funded Qorvis influencing certain media organisations in this country. We know that, Madam Speaker, we have evidence of that, so we could talk about all that but that is not the issue here, Madam Speaker.

Every citizen in this country understands the restriction on the media including those who give coverage to us. So, it is very important for the people in this country to understand, despite what the Honourable Attorney-General might say, despite what the spin he puts on and what is going on in this country. The fact of the matter is Madam Speaker, that the MIDA Act is a regressive piece of legislation and we will continue to push for its removal, its chain we have done that in the past, we will continue to learn from the past and when we come into Government, that is one of the first things we are going to do to change, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Let me come back to the point I was making, worldwide we have subscription TV. That does not mean, Madam Speaker, that we cannot provide the choice to others. As Honourable Gavoka said quite clearly, I do not believe that this idea of competition, if we remove the restrictions under Section 42(A) and allow local content, local news, is giving more choices to our people. It is simple Madam Speaker, and the people would have an opportunity to make that choice and the other operators in the country, Madam Speaker, and I gave a very good example of how FBC has improved, instead of two or three channel they have now six channels. We have CFL now started as a central division radio station becoming a truly commercial organisation and it is partly because of competition and he knows, Madam Speaker.

The Honourable Attorney-General knows that competition is healthy and yet he is contradicting himself by putting out legislations and restricting that competition. We have a lot of examples, Madam Speaker, under this Government where competition is being stifled and that is not going to be good for us in the long term. So, Madam Speaker, I am naturally disappointed with the response from the Government side but that is expected. The people in this country know, Madam Speaker, what is the reality. I still hope that the government would support this motion and that someday when they realise that it is sensible to do that, they will do that. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote on the motion and the question is that:

This Parliament agrees to a review of the Media Industry Development Act 2010 to allow subscription based television service to air local content including local news and commercial advertisements in conformity to principles of freedom and dissemination of information in a modern democratic nation.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Ayes' and 'Noes')

HON. SPEAKER.- There being opposition, the Parliament will vote.



Votes cast:

Ayes	-	15
Noes	-	27
Noted Voted	-	8

There being 15 Ayes, 27 Noes, 8 not voted, the motion is defeated.

Select Committee – ADM Plans and Strategies for Fiji

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you Madam Speaker, I move that:

This House hereby resolves to appoint a Select Committee to inquire into and make recommendations in relation to Agriculture Development and Marketing plans and strategies for Fiji with a view of sustainable development of our natural resources..

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now invite the Honourable Viliame Gavoka to speak on his motion.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as I have highlighted a number of times, Madam Speaker, it is to be a tragedy that the contribution of agriculture to GDP continues to be low at between 10 percent and 12 percent.

Madam Speaker, Fiji has limited arable land and it is further complicated by the land use policies of the current government. We need sustainable developments, our natural resources, to this end, there needs to be a clear strategy and policy in place to guide us about how to go about using our land and developing our resources in a sustainable manner.

Madam Speaker, we can do it but we need to sit together. We need to have a Select Committee sit like this and enquire into why we are failing with our agriculture. Madam Speaker, as we know in the recent census, there has been a huge scale of migration from the rural areas into the towns and it is telling us something - that our people do not find land usage or special agriculture as profitable, hence the migration into the city and it is a tragedy, Madam Speaker, because Fiji can very easily develop its agriculture and keep our people gainfully employed at the villages and in the rural areas.

Madam Speaker, I just like to touch on our relationship with the State of Israel. We are linked to them in many ways and we know that a lot of our people have been to Israel and they know how they structure the agriculture. I just wish that you would consider emulating what they do in Israel.

Lately, Madam Speaker, I saw the Honourable Prime Minister Netanyahu with the Honourable Prime Minister Modi and the farmers and Gujarati's celebrating the phenomenal yield to their agriculture sector through the intervention of the agricultural specialist from Israel and it is happening all over the world. Even the nation of Bhutan have sent their people to Israel to study and Fiji should also do likewise. A lot of our people who have been there come and tell us that the cows in Israel yield the most milk anywhere in the world and you are talking about a tiny country, pretty dry in many areas but somehow they do it well and in terms of irrigation Madam Speaker, the university wrote a book about irrigation hence the productivity in the country and they are doing it all over the world. I just wish this could be part of the dialogue, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I am part of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs and we are scrutinising Bills 19 and 20. We have held discussions with the cane farmers all over Fiji.

I just wish that we could also have a Select Committee of Parliament to all go and sit with the farmers, non-sugar farmers and listen to what they say about the challenges that they are facing, about the opportunities they see. The opportunities in my view are limitless. In Nadroga, up in the hills, in the Navosa area, we are setting up a collection centre to collect their produce and then sold to a distributor who already has a market. But the challenge is we cannot get irrigation. The challenges are in nursery, we cannot get the seedlings. The challenges are in the availability of land, there is so much land in there but it is land that is owned on a communal basis. Land Use Policy is also important to this. I have urged my people in Nadroga to give every youth in the village, two or three acres of land so that they can grow vegetables in a programmed manner.

With the market that is assured down the line, these are the types of issues we need to raise because I see a lot of our young people, virtually doing nothing, with nothing to their name. If we can do this properly, in any part of Fiji and say you have three or four acres, this is your land and this is what you can do with the support from Government or from the authorities, it can happen.

Like I say the potential is limitless, be it rice, be it vegetables, *dalo*, cassava whatever it is, Madam Speaker, we can do it on a bigger scale and even to the extent of starting to manufacture processed food in Fiji. I mean all the surplus, the problem with us in Fiji is the oversupply at certain times of the year. The seasonality and the surplus is wasted. As a former hotelier, our concern in the hotels was consistency of supplies. Consistency of quality and you could never get it. Surely we should have now developed a system that can virtually supply hotels on a 12-month basis, seasons and off seasons.

These are the areas we are lacking very badly. It takes leadership at the national level and I believe this Parliament can drive this by setting a Select Committee and look into it very deeply and to chart the way forward. I know my colleague from the Government is very passionate about this issue. I know he promised us an agricultural revolution, two or three years ago but it is still not happening. Where is it?

Let us get a committee from here. Let us talk to the farmers, get their feedback and put a strategy in place. If we can do it and raise agriculture's contribution to GDP, double it by 20 percent, we would have accomplished a lot and put a lot of our people to work in a meaningful and lucrative way. Just before I sit down, I am staying in an apartment here and the house maid who looks after our room, works and then goes home at 12 p.m. We asked her, where do you go after this? She says there is a table in the Suva market selling vegetables and at two in the morning, you have to be there to be able to buy from the Chinese grower who brings in these produce to be sold by the middlemen in the market. At two in the morning, I mean it gets me thinking, what are we doing wrong that they all have to rush in there, and if you miss out at 2 a.m., you do not get anything.

So, what are we doing wrong? The market is here, the demand is here. What are we doing wrong in terms of supplies? I hope that we can all contribute to this, have dialogue, I would like to hear views from everyone but I believe the way forward is the Select Committee. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The motion is open for debate and I invite input if any. Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources, Faiyaz Koya

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Right at the outset, I wish to say something. I really wish we would stop this ethnic profiling. A farmer is a farmer, is a farmer, is a farmer. Any farmer does not naturally have to be of any ethnic background. There also seems to be this fascination with committees but I am going to break some stuff down so the Honourable Gavoka will know, the kind of committees that are working under the Ministry of Agriculture.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government actually works in a very organised fashion and the agriculture sector is undertaken in a systemic manner. There are committees established with a specific focus and they work well within the relevant stakeholders. There are committees and I am going to spell them out, Madam Speaker. They are; Agriculture Facilitation Committee, the Codex Committee, Agro-Trade Process Committee, Ginger Taskforce Committee, *Dalo* Taskforce Committee, Kava Taskforce Committee. Madam Speaker, there are enough committees established already.

The Government has taken steps to provide an enabling environment for the growth of the agriculture sector. Recently, Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture also established the Agro-Processes Infrastructure Support Committee, which actually comprises all the Permanent Secretaries. Now from the relevant agencies, in addition the Government's focus is on the modernisation of the agriculture sector and through the adaption of the Fiji 2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda, there are key objectives in that and that is building a modern agriculture in Fiji and an organised system developing integrated production and all those things that he is actually talking about, are taken care of, Madam Speaker.

This particular Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda complements the National Green Growth Framework and the Fijian Trade Policy Framework. I really wish they would take the time to read all these documents and put all the dots together because this side of the House, the dots are completely together.

Honourable Gavoka, is urged to go and read the Fiji 2020 Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda. He is urged to go read the Fijian Trade Policy Framework which actually recommends practical solutions for the agricultural sector which Minister Seruiratu takes heed of, Madam Speaker. In addition, there is ....

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I said Minister. I said Minister. He is the best Honourable we have.

(Laughter)

I am biased because he is my best friend. The Honourable Minister, in addition, Madam Speaker, the strong collaboration between the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture, creation of linkages between the tourism industry like he speaks about and agriculture has been formed. We have also got a compliance committee with respect to the organic that we are developing. I really do not understand, this is the form of targeted marketing that will enable our agricultural products. I do not support the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister for Agriculture.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Very quickly, although the contribution to GDP is less than 10 percent, I have stated already in this Honourable House that the contribution of non-sugar agriculture has continued to increase consistently from 2017.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. LT. COL. I.B.SERUIRATU.- Let me give you the figures again. In 2017, the export value was \$130 million. In 2008, \$143 million. In 2009, \$146 million. In 2010, \$149 million. In 2011, \$178 million. In 2013, \$179 million. In 2014, \$180 million. In 2015/ 2016, \$198 million. That tells this Honourable House that agriculture is doing well but can be more. We admit that, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Member wants to develop a system. The Honourable Member wants to

develop a strategy. Too late, Madam Speaker. It is already here. Way back in 2014, we did all of it. Agriculture Sector Policy Agenda 2020. This is about modernising Fiji agriculture sector. Madam Speaker, after 2014 ...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. LT. COL. I.B.SERUIRATU.- We have organised consultations throughout Fiji. All the stakeholders, from the farmers to the market, the Crop/ Livestock Forum and the Crop Forum and the Livestock Forum.

(Honourable Members interject)

Madam Speaker that has been collated into one document and this is the Ministry of Agriculture's Strategic Development Plan for 2012 to 2018.

Madam Speaker, I will not go into the details. Urban drift, Madam Speaker, there is no analysis behind urban drift. Lack of development in rural areas, because previously most Governments forgot to develop the rural areas. It is about employment opportunities as well, Madam Speaker. People have a freedom to choose, so they have shifted from the rural areas into the urban areas. They do not understand the characteristics of small holder farming. Small holder farming, Madam Speaker, one of the major characteristics is they lack capital and that has been the problem in Fiji for a long time.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- To address that, this Government has given them authorised subsidy, has given them farm mechanisation, has given them land preparation facility, which he enjoys, more roads ....

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- That is to bring the people out of the poverty cycle, Madam Speaker. For us to address this issues, we need to go down and sit with the farmers and identify their issues. We cannot work in isolation. I have talked about this so many times, this is the problem I have talked about on strategic paralysis; when you are strategically paralysed, you lose the art of logical reasoning.

(Laughter)

That is what is happening on the other side, Madam Speaker, you lose the art of logical reasoning. People are strategically paralysed. They have lost their memory, Madam Speaker.

(Honourable Members interject)

I have said so many times in this honourable House, for you to address agriculture, you address the whole value chain because for Fiji, for a long time, we have been focussed on production; there were no digging facilities, there were no roads, there was limited petitions, coastal resistance. Agriculture is perishable; it loses its quality, it loses its value. Now we are placing the coastal resistance, Madam Speaker. You will see in the current budget, we have an allocation for Agriculture facilities so that people can have this facility in the rural area.

Madam Speaker, we are pragmatic; we go down to the people; we identify the problems and we come up with solutions. The strategies are already here (*showing the book*). It is too late. Too

late, Madam Speaker, because they are strategically paralysed. Therefore, I do not support the motion because Government has already done it to address the Agriculture Sector, Madam Speaker. I have said it so many times, because previously it was just cobwebs but now we are getting it off the spider. Kill the spider so that you can get rid of the cobwebs as well! Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to Honourable Mosese Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to support the motion which is before the House. Again, Madam Speaker, we know the Honourable Minister is very energetic and every time he speaks in the House and talks about his ideas and plans with all the books that he has shown us, Madam Speaker.

We do not really see any materialisation when you go to the rural communities. The Honourable Minister will know that even there is not enough tractors in Labasa, that the Ministry of Agriculture provide us to be hired. There is not enough and that shows that people want to go into farming but the Government has not provided enough machines for that to be attained.

Again, let me take back the Honourable Minister just this week that the Committee for Natural Resources only tabled the Ministry of Agriculture Annual Report for 2014. Their reports is still pending for 2015 and 2016 and that shows the duty of Parliament is to scrutinise and look into the real implementation of what the Ministry is currently doing with all the manuals and handbooks that the Ministry has created.

This motion, Madam Speaker, clearly states that a Select Committee be selected by Parliament with the responsibility to look into those programmes and strategies which the Honourable Minister has alluded to; whether those strategies are working; whether they have failed and what strategies can be used to improve those strategies. That is one of the core duties of Parliament.

During the current term of our Parliament, the Parliament Committees have not gone into selecting sub-committees within Committees, Madam Speaker to be empowered to make inquiries into various issues in the Ministry. The Government should understand what is the role of the Executive Government and what is the role of Parliament as the Legislature, that is, to monitor and to provide scrutiny and keep track of what the executive Government is doing. I think Madam Speaker, this is a very good idea and the findings of the Select Committee will bring out some of the weaknesses that are there, some of the very issues that Members of this side of House have been questioning the Minister.

Again the Honourable Minister, on various occasions, has admitted that there has been shortfalls. There has been false starts in various programmes. We were talking about the AMA the other day, and again, it has not worked and it was a market that was supposed to provide market for rural farmers and it does not work. The prices are not fair enough and sometimes they do not come to buy the goods that they have already ordered.

These are some of the areas, when you talk about value chain from farm to the export level. I think there needs to be a committee set up to at least provide scrutiny and also to investigate the various programmes that are ongoing; various plans that the Honourable Minister has. That will provide clarity and that will provide a direction on how our locals and our resource owners can be developed and how their resources are able to be developed into not only subsistence farming but also at a commercial level. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua?

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the motion by my colleague, Honourable Viliame Gavoka calling on for the establishment of a Committee of this House to inquire into and make recommendations in relation to the Agricultural Development and Marketing plans and strategies for Fiji.

Madam Speaker, the mover of the motion has drawn some very important points which I wholly endorse and fully support. In doing so, I wish to say a word to substantiate the motion. Firstly, one cannot deny the importance of Agriculture to the Fiji economy and our people. It create jobs, earn revenue, puts food on the table to sustain us and is deeply, some of the most important are the disadvantaged people in gainful employment to make livelihood out of it. Therefore, based on these reasons, you cannot allow our agricultural sector to fail or flattened. We cannot afford to have a case of wrong value and allow to .....

SODELPA believes in taking the bull by the horn. We do not suppress the truth or invade it; we face it as we should be a responsible party and the intention of this motion clearly demonstrates that.

Madam Speaker, I come from Serua, Namosi region, which used to be thriving in the agricultural sector. The days have gone then forcing our people into urban areas. Today, vast pieces of land improvement, lying idle, Madam Speaker, which could be used or better use if this motion is realised. I believe this motion will do wonders for farming areas like Namosi, Serua, Bua Macuata, Ra, Nadroga and Navuso and the other provinces too.

I support this motion because it seeks to empower the Fiji economy by offsetting the balance of trade, to create jobs, and seek to put our land into sustainable use and develop the land more than anything else. It seems to curb and control NCDs by growing fresh fruits and vegetables. I support the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Viliame Gavoka you will now have your right of reply, you only have five minutes.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pity because a lot of my friends from this side of the House have a lot to say about this subject. Madam Speaker, let me just say that I am always impressed by my colleague, the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, the passion that he brings into this House in relation to his portfolio. But Madam Speaker, if he calls us as strategically paralysed we can also return the favour and say implementation paralysis is also the order of the day with the Government.

After sitting in Parliament, Madam Speaker, and I have this relationship with my people in Nadroga I told them that there is an agriculture revolution happening and that it will happen. Madam Speaker, to try and get this done, to be honest it sounds very good on paper but implementation the reality is very different. I can ask my colleagues here who are farmers, Honourable Karavaki, Honourable Dulakiverata, Honourable Biman, Honourable Prem Singh, are you seeing the revolution that was promised.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- The answer is no, Madam Speaker.

In Nadroga, Madam Speaker, we wanted these five *tikina* to grow vegetables. We wanted the Ministry of Agriculture to come and give us a stock of what was on the ground to enable us to plan.

We had a distributor in place and he would have put it in such a way that production could meet the demand on a three or four months' time. Madam Speaker, that was three years ago, we are still waiting for the agriculture department to come back with the stock. That is where the concern is. What is happening? What is the paralysis?

Madam Speaker, even to the extent that one day they bring back some photographs of nurseries in the highland of Navosa. I thought that the agriculture revolution was real that something modern had taken place in there and he showed me a photograph of a nursery that had a coconut leaves on top. Like you dig up a plot then you cover it with coconut leaves. I had to laugh and said I cannot believe my good buddy the Honourable Minister says a revolution is happening. It has not happened, Madam Speaker. That is why we need this Select Committee. We need to audit what is happening. There are so many Committees highlighted by the Honourable Koya. This Select Committee can also provide guidance to them or determine what is happening. Where is the obstacles to all these? It is very frustrating and we need to free up the resources of this country, free up the system and I believe that the power from this Parliamentary Committee can make it happen.

Let me just end, Madam Speaker, by a story about years ago. One of our colleagues met a group from China, he was a senior officer with the Ministry of Agriculture. I met them at Nadi Airport, drove all the way to Suva and was giving them all these plans the impressive stuff that will be taking place. The Chinese guys did not say anything, when they got in to Suva only one word, "Are you going to export grass?" That was about 20 years ago and that is still true today, Madam Speaker. If you do not do this we will only have grassland in our area and we can only see salvation if there is an export market for grass. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote on the motion.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of "Ayes" and "Noes")

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	14
Noes	-	26
Not Voted	-	10

There being 14 Ayes, 26 Noes and 10 Not Voted, the motion is defeated.

### **END OF WEEK'S STATEMENT**

HON. SPEAKER.- A Member may speak up to 10 minutes with a 10 minutes response by the relevant Minister responsible. There will be no other debate. The End of Week Statement by the Honourable Salote Radrodro lapses since she is not in today. I now call on the Honourable Aseri Radrodro to deliver his statement.

#### Challenges faced by Tertiary Students in Fiji

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to state my End of Week Statement highlighting the challenges of tertiary students in finding decent and affordable accommodation while studying away from home. Madam Speaker, there is a notable increase in

students now attending tertiary institutions in Fiji. We note Government is actually widely advertised the fact on billboards around the country.

Madam Speaker, I am not here to make a statement on the quality of output of students. What I wish to raise is the issues in regards to what we can do or should do to provide for our young people the right environment to learning. Tertiary learning is one of our most important investments as a nation. Tertiary institutions is where the nation prepares our replacement workforce and next line of leaders, the future workers who will be expected to contribute in the prime of their lives the best ideas for the nation, best development policies and solutions for our nation, national needs and sustainable development and be the best delivery of services.

We have a problem, Madam Speaker, when our tertiary students however become limited with the ability to be the best they can be because the environment of learning especially their accommodation or place of rest, eating and training or relaxation is badly compromised or badly limited, Madam Speaker. Two weeks ago a group of students from Lautoka Teachers College invited me to visit them to discuss some of the challenges they were experiencing. Majority of the students I met were on TELS loan schemes, most of them were from areas outside of Lautoka. Some major issues that was noted is the limited space available to cater for campus boarding forcing students to look for alternative accommodation outside of the college facilities and their quality of living conditions which included their meals provided, recreational areas, lavatory and bathing facilities. I was informed Madam Speaker, the students were being forced to find houses around Lautoka to rent and study at LTC when they do not have space available in the campus. Rentals were very high but worse were the condition of homes being rented. Students as a result were bunking together in huge numbers to be able to afford some kind of rental.

Similar incident Madam Speaker, I have encountered by FNU students currently engaged in practical programme arrangements at the FNU, Navua. For their meals, for those with the institutions boarding their food allowance are paid straight to LTC from students loans yet, Madam Speaker, the quantity of food that were being served according to them is very poor, soggy rice, watery dhal I am informed is a constant menu. It will be definitely impossible to imagine students functioning well in class with a poor diet. Healthy eating is especially important when students are under stress and they are rushing to try to meet deadlines when the body need good nutrition the most. When anyone is under stress or you need to concentrate a healthy diet will help you keep focussed. Students in this case cannot expect to keep up the pace of consistently ensuring stressful assignments and exam preparation and learning if they do not have good meals.

Madam Speaker, LTC is part of our FNU and has been following the merger of various local tertiary institutions. They are Government supported institution it must be Government's responsibility to ensure the institution sets an example to other institutions which may exist. We question the ethics of Government and ingenious to provide quality education when students are made to take loans for their meals whereby this money is paid directly to the institution. However the meals provided to the students institution dining hall is very often unfit for human consumption. I wonder whether the menu at LTC is even known to Government, let alone approved.

Madam Speaker, I fall short of holding pictures of meals from LTC for this House to see for yourselves. Similarly, LTC students are now confused, frustrated when the Semester term is now being introduced giving no options for those students who are currently on Trimester Education cycle. May be in the future, Madam Speaker, to assist the House get to grips with the struggles people of this nation encounter, we may need demonstration aids that can be pressed on to PowerPoint for the right effect and to assist our elected leaders grasp the extent of the challenges in reality.



Madam Speaker, a SODELPA Government will put the needs of students ahead of making money.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- We will ensure the plight of students from outer islands travelling to the urban centres to study is addressed by investing in proper facilities for them. It is only fair that we do so because they need to get their money's worth.

I wish to similarly highlight the challenges faced by students studying at other institutions like the University of the South Pacific. Their plights are similar, Madam Speaker. Some students facing similar challenges in finding decent accommodation at additional costs. I know of a case where a Samoan student on a New Zealand Aid scholarship had to sleep outside the Japanese ICT at USP on his arrival because his accommodation was not sorted prior to his arrival. He remained on a waiting list for boarding at University, two days later he was still unable to find accommodation, he flew back to Samoa. Imagine the disappointment, Madam Speaker, of his family and the reputation of our country where we pride that we host a Regional University that is breeding future Pacific leaders. It is a joke, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, other local students coming from outer islands like those from the Western Division and the North are experiencing similar challenges. There is a lack of facilities all around, yet the universities continue to increase students' subject fees per year. It makes us question what those exorbitant fees are paying for? Students are now renting in Suva in squalor conditions, and I know of a few that are renting in squatter settlements because those homes cost around \$150 at least a month. I have noted that USP have started the groundwork to build more boarding facilities, Madam Speaker. I am hopeful they will consider such issues carefully as there are new students for the new study terms.

Madam Speaker, we have to consider the safety of our children. We cannot compromise our standards. I am always of the view that whatever homes we allow our children to grow up in leaves an impinge on their minds as they grow up. If we are to allow them to grow in squalor conditions, as they learn I am pretty sure those habits will be tempting to maintain as they enter the workforce. I shudder to think, Madam Speaker, that we are breeding a workforce that will contribute to our squatter population because it is the kind of life they will become accustomed to, not to mention the kind of accommodation they will be able to afford anyway with the exorbitant price of housing now available in Fiji. I have heard arguments, Madam Speaker, that we are a developing country. I always respond that we are a developing country gripped by the lifestyles of the rich and powerful that soon will be the New Zealand and Australian countries with much more powerful economies when it comes to affordability to own homes.

The FNU campuses in general around Fiji face similar challenges, Madam Speaker. Boarding facilities are also limited. There has to be set standards of learning. When approving campus facilities for education purposes, Government needs to take into account the needs of the students who will have to travel away from home to study. After all, we all know that many leave rural areas to come to the main centres so that children can have a better opportunity to access quality education. The failure of Government to ensure proper facilities are provided for the growing number of tertiary students in institutions like FNU, makes a mockery of Government's intention.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude by also suggesting with the commitments Government makes in its annual budget to tertiary institutions, it is their responsibility to ensure that the right facilities are provided for our future leaders. They need better, improved recreation facilities. A physically fit body assists to give a vibrant mind. A USP gymnasium (the honourable Attorney-General may be

aware of this) has experienced students being turned away because the demand is outweighing what it can offer. Students pay for the University Facility's Fitness Centre, however we know it is also open to the general public so students are being asked to come at scheduled times giving priority to outside members who pay huge sums of money to use the gymnasium. USP needs to perhaps enlarge the Fitness Gymnasium to accommodate everyone and ensure students of the University get their money's worth. Similarly, the FNU students, like those at LTC, the Agriculture School in Koronivia, Fiji School of Nursing, Fiji School of Medicine need proper well-equipped Fitness Centres that the students can use to assist them stay physically and mentally fit for the mammoth task for studying. I trust that Government will pay heed of their needs and invest in their appropriate infrastructure. A SODELPA Government will surely do that.

(Honourable Members interjected)

Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure in closing this End-of-Week Statement and as someone has said, "A Quality Education grants us the ability to fight the war on ignorance and poverty." *Vinaka vakalevu*, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, obviously the End-of-Week Statements give the liberty of Opposition Members to say whatever they like, whether it is factually based or not is obviously another issue. Madam Speaker, as highlighted in the Budget Speech for 2017 and 2018, we did say that it is already happening that the annual allowance has increased for Semester students from \$4,334 to \$6,600. Madam Speaker, also a Trimester based student will receive an allowance of \$7,125 instead of \$5,736; we have also provided TELS students an allowance of \$1,000 for other incidentals too.

The Honourable Member completely forgets to mention the fact that now at Lautoka FNU Campus, which is not Lautoka Teachers College anymore, it is the Lautoka Campus of FNU. Madam Speaker, previously when students used to get the accommodation allowance, the accommodation and meal allowance was paid directly to the FNU from TSLB. That obviously, Madam Speaker, has changed and the cost of accommodation will be paid directly to the University and the remaining allowance will be paid directly to the students. I do not know when he went to visit the students, Madam Speaker. In fact when we do our budget consultations, we did actually have this raised with us and as a result of the direct consultations we had with the students these amendments were brought about. The students wanted to have the liberty to be able to choose what they want to eat. Those who choose to eat at the University Campus, they can eat at the Campus, those who choose not to they can actually eat out. Madam Speaker, that is how the allowance has been split.

The other point, of course, Madam Speaker, predominantly the honourable Member focused on Lautoka, yes, there has been obviously accommodation challenges in Lautoka but there is a growing market, obviously a demand. There are a lot more students in University, yes, as the billboard says. They are obsessed with the billboards. The realities, Madam Speaker, there are more university students than ever before. Precisely, because we have TELS now, there are more students accessing tertiary education because of the fact that they can afford to do so because of TELS, and that is the fact. Yes, it is a responsibility of the universities to also be able to ensure that accommodation is provided. There are, of course, some people in this Parliament who may actually own properties themselves and be leasing out to students, and I know some of them do that without mentioning names. Similarly, Madam Speaker, the reality is that there is pressure on accommodation. The Universities are being given the funding, the actual students also have increased allowance to meet these accommodation costs and other costs that they may face.

Madam Speaker, the other thing that the Honourable Member seems to be talking about is as if we run the Universities. They are talking about the academic freedom, they talk about universities that needed to be free to run their own affairs yet they want us to go and run the gymnasium. They

want us to go and run their Accommodation Centre. He brings up one example of some foreign students from overseas whose accommodation was not arranged because probably of some administrative wrongdoing by someone at the University, and he highlights this in Parliament as an example of what Fijian students are facing. There is no logic to that. How is that logical? The motion is about Fijian students but he highlights about an overseas student, one incident of one particular administrative problem or mishap by the University of the South Pacific.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that, firstly, this motion of course is ill-conceived. Secondly, there is of course a recognition with all universities. Many of us went to university too, and we also shared with other people without scholarships. We all went and shared, we worked and studied at the same time; we shared rooms, flats, Madam Speaker, but that is also part and parcel of your character-building too. We are not saying that we do not have people who are living under plastic bags or on the plastic, Madam Speaker, if that was the case, obviously it would be addressed. Yes, of course, there is room for improvement. Yes, of course as we stand in Parliament, we need to have more stockpile of accommodation, we all know that. Government has Madam Speaker, also provided various incentives for people to invest in accommodation. Therefore, the reality is Madam Speaker, whilst these places exist, I think it is completely inappropriate to suggest that no changes have been made by Government to help students meet increase in costs, as we have increased the TELS allowance, we have given more funding to universities Madam Speaker.

But also at the same time, Madam Speaker, they have accused us in the past. They are saying you only want to give hand outs. No! We are giving people leg-up but as far as we give people leg-up we also want them to stand on their own feet and build up some character out of this. The reality is Madam Speaker, more students in Fiji have more access to education today, in high schools and in universities, it does put some pressure and we are looking at how to address this pressure, we are looking at answers.

Again, Madam Speaker, we will be coming back to Parliament in a few months' time to present the next Budget, 2018-2019 Budget, and obviously all of these things we are looking at through the budget consultation. I am happy to announce again that we are starting the budget consultation next Tuesday and we are starting with university, Madam Speaker. Therefore, we will again listen to the issues that will be raised by the students and see how we can address that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We move on to the last item in the Agenda.

### ADJOURNMENT

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move his motion.

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

Parliament adjourns until Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 at 9.30 a.m.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- At this juncture, I reiterate my gratitude to the Committees for their hard work and efforts in presenting and ensuring that large number of Review Reports were tabled during the two weeks Parliament Sitting. Additionally, I emphasise the need for the relevant Ministries to comply with Standing Order 121 (6) (b) and provide relevant and satisfactory responses to the recommendations provided in the Committee Reports as they are an important document and the recommendations need to be responded to. I thank all the Honourable Members for your contribution to the Parliamentary business and debates.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.27 p.m.