

# **PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**



## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

### **DAILY HANSARD**

**MONDAY, 12TH MARCH, 2018**

**[CORRECTED COPY]**

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## **MONDAY, 12TH 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 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; and the Honourable N. Nawaikula.

### **MINUTES**

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Friday, 9th 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 today's sitting of Parliament.

I also welcome members of the public joining us in the gallery and those watching proceedings on television and the internet and listening to the radio. Thank you for your interest in our Parliament.

#### Commonwealth Day

Honourable Members, today is "Commonwealth Day" and the theme for this year is, "Towards a Common Future". Formerly known as "Empire Day", this day is celebrated every year on the second Monday in the month of March.

This year's Commonwealth Day theme explores how the Commonwealth can address global challenges and work to create a better future for all citizens through sub-themes of sustainability, safety, prosperity and fairness. The Commonwealth is a vibrant family of 53 countries, spread across every continent and ocean, and we are proud to be a member of this Commonwealth family.

At this juncture, I wish to acknowledge the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for supporting our celebrations this year. This will complement our Commonwealth Day Celebrations in the Western Division on 5th April, 2018, where secondary schools from rural and urban areas in Nadi and Lautoka will converge at Swami Vivekananda College Hall, to participate in an oratory contest and other learning activities.

Clarification – Oral Question No. 36/2018

For the information of Honourable Members, during the sitting last Friday, the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, sought leave to clarify a statement she made in the *Daily Hansard* for Thursday, 8th March, 2018. The clarification is with respect to Oral Question No. 36/2018 on Disabilities which is reflected on page 491, paragraph 6 of the uncorrected *Daily Hansard* Report for Thursday, 8th March, 2018.

I am allowing the clarification which provides that –

“the 2017 Census was the first thorough collation of data for disabilities ever done as a nation. The census figures indicated that there were 113,595 Fijians with disabilities compared with 6,365 Fijians in the 2007 Census and 3,117 in the census before that. This was an indication of just how thorough the census figures were. These figures could now be used to put together targeted policies to address the number and degree of disabilities we have nationally.”

Thank you, Honourable Members.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS**

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the following Reports to Parliament:

1. Office of the Auditor-General Republic of Fiji Annual Report 2016 and 2017; and
2. Fiji Development Bank 2016 Annual Report.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, hand the Reports to the Secretary-General.

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the:

1. Office of the Auditor-General Republic of Fiji Annual Report 2016 and 2017 to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts; and
2. Fiji Development Bank 2016 Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

**PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to have the floor.

Standing Committee on Social Affairs –  
iTaukei Trust Fund Board Consolidated 2013 and 2016 Annual Report

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present the Committee’s Consolidated Review Report on the assessment made to the iTaukei Trust Fund Board 2013 and 2016 Annual Reports.

The Committee assessed the iTaukei Trust Fund Board Consolidated 2013 and 2016 Annual Report in accordance to Section 109(2)(b) of the Standing Orders of Parliament.

On 4th October, 2017 the Committee invited the Chairman and management of the iTaukei Trust Fund Board for a presentation on their performance and to clarify few pertinent issues which were focussed on the following areas:

- Members of the Board;
- Functions of the Board;
- Investment portfolio of the Fund;
- Mandated objectives (on Language and Cultural Studies, Heritage and Indigenous Knowledge, Entrepreneurship and Leadership); and
- Financial Statement.

The Committee noted in the Report that the iTaukei Trust Fund Board's investment portfolio remains with shares and fixed income, plus its properties. It was also noted that the Fund's overseas investment remains with the listed securities in the Australian Stock Exchange. In Fiji, the Fund's investments are in a number of stocks which are listed in the South Pacific Stock Exchange and also in properties.

The Committee, in its finding, found that the iTaukei Trust Fund Board's local investment has not changed much from previous years. It still has FHL Class B shares and investment at:

- Amalgamated Telecom Holdings Limited (ATH);
- Pacific Green Industries (Fiji) Limited;
- R. B. Patel Group;
- BCN that is the BSP Bank – this is for local investors who would like to invest in shares, they can buy shares that are listed in the stock exchange; and
- Future Forest Fiji.

In addition, the Fund has investments in the Unit Trust of Fiji and the Fijian Holding Unit Trust on two products; in the form of income and growth fund.

The Fund highlighted that it has built up on its term deposits for equity purposes to take care of the bigger projects that was planned. The Fund also has term deposits with:

- Westpac;
- BSP;
- Credit Corporation; and
- Merchant Finance.

I thank the Honourable Members for their contributions towards the scrutiny of these two Annual Reports and the formulation of this bipartisan Report.

Whilst the Committee acknowledges the Fund's efforts towards the delivery of its mandated outputs with a net investment profit of \$4,557,171 achieved in 2016, however the Committee recommends that the Fund considers gender balance within the composition of the iTaukei Trust Fund Board members.

In my capacity as the Chairman of the Social Affairs Standing Committee, I commend this Review Report to Parliament.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move a motion without notice that a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

The Question is:

That a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of “Noes”)

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to have the floor.

Standing Committee on Social Affairs –  
University of the South Pacific’s 2016 Annual Report

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present the Review Report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the University of the South Pacific’s 2016 Annual Report.

The Committee had reviewed the University of the South Pacific’s 2016 Annual Report in consultation with USP’s senior officials and can unequivocally state that the year 2016 was a successful one for USP both, in terms of its planned transformation and continuous improvement.

USP is a robust organisation overall, with highly effective governance that has enabled growth and improvement even as unexpected challenges such as devastating tropical cyclones. The Annual Report, therefore, reflects the enormous effort and hard work being put in by staff and all stakeholders in the University’s transformation from good to excellent.

The University ended 2016 on a high note with student enrolment standing at 27,642, in what has been a record enrolment. This indicates that people value the programmes and qualifications that the University delivers.

In 2016, a total of 18 programmes have been internationally accredited and 4 programmes recognised. Out of all those, seven accreditations and one recognition was received in 2016 alone. It is very significant that USP’s overall performance is steadily improving and that it is:

- educating more people to a higher standard;
- producing more research for the region; and
- advocating for the region in areas of expertise such as, ICT, Human Resource Development and Climate Change

The 2016 Annual Report summarises the University's main accomplishments as it is being transformed to an outstanding focal point of learning, an exceptional research and development centre, and a regional institution of high importance as the Pacific people's journey towards their knowledge future.

The review identified that USP had contributed a lot to Fiji on some key areas such as, a regional learning institution which is based in Fiji, a major employer, provide relevant research, policy advice, community services and outreach, promotion and maintenance of culture and language and generates economic activity. It was also noted in the review that out of the 12 member countries, Fiji contributed about 74 percent of the USP's grant.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the input of the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs and the Secretariat Team, who were involved in the formulation of this report.

Given the review conducted, the Committee recommends that Parliament takes note of its report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this Report to Parliament.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Please, hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move a motion, without notice, that a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote.

The question is that, a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of "Noes")

There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

Motion agreed to.

## **QUESTIONS**

### Oral Questions

#### Progress of Divestment of FEA Shares (Question No. 58/2018)

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

Would the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications inform Parliament of the progress, if any, of

plans to offer shares in Fiji Electricity Authority to FEA's domestic account holders as part of divestment of the Authority's shares as announced in Parliament on 22nd March, 2017?

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

Madam Speaker, the offering of shares is progressing well. Thank you.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Aseri Radrodro?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- On 22nd March, 2017, the Honourable Minister had informed the House that a certain percentage of the shares that were to be divested will also be given to landowners in Monasavu. Can the Honourable Minister inform the House; what is the worth of shares that will go to the Monasavu landowners from this 49 percent that has been divested, as promised by the Honourable Minister for Economy?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, as responded earlier on, the divestment process is progressing well. There obviously is some work being done, and that is progressing well. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Professor Biman Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, it is interesting to get an answer from the Honourable Attorney-General. Can you define 'progressing well'? Can you tell us what that 'well' is? Where are we? I mean, that is the intention of the question. That is not a satisfactory answer from the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications on a very important question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member, as we have highlighted perhaps, does not generally *au fait* with things such as, divestment of shares, the commercial and financial requirements, if you want to list a company. As you know that we have already brought to this Parliament the various regulatory and legal changes that are needed and necessary to carry out divestment and indeed, for the allocation of shares to ordinary Fijian account holders.

As we have said in this Parliament and also outside this Parliament that ordinary domestic account holders in Fiji will actually be given shares free by the Government to enable them to be able to participate in the capital markets, to enable them to participate in a sense of identification with a major utility company, so they have the stake in it themselves.

All these requires a lot of work, Madam Speaker, and within that context, unless the Honourable Member knows specifically what specific process he wants to refer to, if he can highlight them, I can give him an idea. But it is a holistic approach to ensuring that the divestment of shares, including allocation of shares, follows a particular process and that is progressing well.



HON. SPEAKER. – Honourable Bulitavu, you are allowed only one supplementary question.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Minister confirm to the House, given that he is saying that the divestment of shares is progressing very well, when can the whole process be completed and when can this be realised by domestic account holders? What is the timeline for divestment?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, as again highlighted to this Parliament, there are two aspects to the divestment of this particular entity that we have been highlighting in this Parliament, in fact, for the past number of years and one of them is the actual divestment of the shares.

FEA is actually a statutory body. You cannot divest shares in a statutory body because it is not a company. Statutory bodies do not have shares, so you actually have to corporatise the statutory body. You then have to do a valuation of the company. Then we have to be able to determine the authorised capital of the company. I feel like I am doing 101 USP in corporate finance or whatever it is. You then, Madam Speaker, need to do all that work. This has already been presented to Parliament, to allow for the corporatisation.

We have also said in this Parliament that we will carry out what we call a “de-neutralisation-type of process” in FEA. I am sure some Honourable Members in this House have held life insurance policy with the old Colonial Life Insurance Company. When the old Colonial Life Insurance Company became a limited liability, they de-neutralised, so everyone who actually had a life insurance policy, got shares within, they could trade and they could buy and sell. Many people benefitted from it, many people actually sold it, many people are still holding on to it.

The other aspect of this FEA divestment is for sale, where we have repeatedly said, “The Fijian Government will hold the majority of the shares”, which is, majority of 51 percent. And then apart from the portion that we keep aside for Fijian electricity domestic account holders who will be given shares, the balance of the shares, Madam Speaker, we are looking at divesting. That, of course, has its own route, vis-à-vis, who offers us the best price to bring the best technical expertise, who offers the best strategic partnership in respect of things like renewable energy, for example.

And we have also said in this Parliament that portion of the shares will not, in any way, be simply sold for the sake of selling it. I have said this in Parliament on a number of occasions. We need to get the best people, and we do not mind holding on to those shares until we get the best people, we are not in a hurry to sell it all off. We will always continue to hold 51 percent.

In the meantime, what FEA has also done, FEA is looking at some very strategic partnerships without the divestment, so that will actually enhance the share value of FEA once it is corporatised, which means when we actually give the portion of the shares as a gift to the Fijian people to get them to become ordinary shareholders in the South Pacific Stock Exchange because they can then go and sell and buy and own shares for themselves and the future of their children, it will enhance the value of their shares by getting strategic partners in, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prem Singh?

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the process of divestment, can the Honourable Minister inform this House, what percentage of the shares is the Government looking at, giving to the domestic users?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- At this point in time, we are looking at 5 percent and it is not all given now because we will need to hold some shares in trust. As you know that we have, at the moment, unprecedented connectivity to electricity for such a short period of time. So currently there are Fijians, on a daily basis, who get connected to the electricity grid, who will also become domestic account holders. For example, hypothetically, if we do the allotment of the shares next week and we send a correspondence to all domestic account holders and you can only get it for one domestic account to all of them and say, "These are the number of shares we want to give you, you agree."

It is also, Madam Speaker, not only for those people who do what we call post-pay, it is also for those who do prepay. There are certain people in the rural areas who actually do prepay. They go and use their MPAiSA, et cetera, they will also be getting shares.

However, we also recognise the fact, Madam Speaker, that in one year's time, there will be another hundred more account holders. Two years' time, there will be more and there will be thousands more, so we are going to hold certain amount of shares in trust for a period of time until all these people actually come online so that they can also be given shares. So, we are looking after the future too.

HON. SPEAKER.- Lastly, Honourable Ratu Kiliraki?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, a particular mention and for the interest of the Monasavu landowning units as opposed to individual consumers, for the divestment of shares, can the Honourable Minister explain whether there is any capital investment assistance to those landowning units in terms of progressing into the divestment of shares and business?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member, if I can get clarification from him, he is talking about capital investment and he is also talking about allotment of shares. What is he talking about? I do not understand.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- It is capital assistance, Madam Speaker, if I can correct that. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Capital assistance for what, Madam Speaker?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- In progressing from divestment of shares and going into business in terms of the assets that they have in Monasavu and buying more into the assets of FEA.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I assume the Honourable Member is talking about buying shares.

Madam Speaker, once the shares are listed on the stock exchange, it is up-to anyone who wants to buy the shares. Government will always hold on to 51 percent but the 49 percent of the shares can be traded, people can buy, people can sell.

The other point, of course, Madam Speaker, is when we actually do give shares to the domestic account holders, at least, for a period of time, they would not be able to trade on it because we need to be able to build up the value of the shares. So, anyone can buy and sell shares on the stock market.

The landowners, as we know, had a deal with their lawyer who got them the \$50 million deal, who I understand got a very healthy chunk as a fee and who now pays them (I understand) on sixth monthly basis or whatever the case may be and also makes administrative deduction from the payment of that six monthly fee, no one challenged. In fact, we have had some landowners who have come to see us to see if that can be reversed, if they can get the deduction directly for themselves (the payment). However, unfortunately, I understand there are 12 landowning units, I understand there is no agreement between the 12 landowning units. We were quite happy to take the action for them but we need the landowning units to have agreement amongst themselves.

Now, Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that, if they are able to get that going, of course, we will be able to assist them in respect of any programme they want to get on to as we know and in particular, we can assist them through the *iTaukei* Land Development Fund that we have set up. Already, we have about four or five different landowning units that have benefited from it. In fact, in the next two weeks we will be announcing another four or six projects that will actually also come to the fore in respect of land development.

So, those are the facilities available if they want to develop land, and that is available through the *iTaukei* Land Development Fund that we have set up. Those projects are available to them but they need to be able to ensure that there is a concerted effort for all of them to be able to get that consensus amongst themselves, so we can actually assist them even further.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Mataiasi Niumataiwalu.

Public Private Partnership – Lautoka and Ba Hospitals  
(Question No. 59/2018)

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

Can the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications inform the House on the current stand of the Government entering into the Public-Private Partnership for our hospitals in Lautoka and Ba and how will this benefit the people of Fiji?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I thank him for the question.

I think we have had a bit of discussion on this last week also in the debate on the motion that was introduced by Honourable Professor Biman Prasad. Madam Speaker, the Public Private Partnership (PPP) as highlighted last week, obviously the public end is the Government of Fiji and the private end is the Fiji National Provident Fund and also an internationally certified hospital that will partner with them to get a concession on the Lautoka Hospital and also the Ba Hospital.

It is not privatisation. I have seen a lot of people, Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, even said last week it is privatisation. Privatisation, just because we have a PPP it does not mean it is privatisation. So PPP simply means there is a public arm and there is a private arm and they are into a partnership to deliver a particular service. What privatisation means is that, when you sell off something completely and it becomes completely private, that is privatisation.

Madam Speaker, it has been highlighted on a number of occasions that there are a number of services currently not available in Fiji, primarily because of the lack of personnel. It is not because Fijians are not capable of doing it or carrying out these procedures, it is because of the lack of:

- exposure;
- training;
- specialised training; and
- even accessibility to various procedures.

For example, if you do not have open heart surgery being carried out in Fiji, obviously the doctors here cannot learn about it from a practical sense because it is not being done here. They need to go overseas, they need to be sent overseas, they need a level of exposure and as has been highlighted previously, you cannot get that level of exposure within one or two years after doing MBBS, it takes people 10 to 15 years to become a specialist.

Now, let us assume that at the moment, it is actually a fact, we do not have a Fijian who can do open heart surgery. If we are then going to say, “Alright, let us now train all these people in this particular area”, we have to wait another seven or ten years, maybe. We do not want to do that, we want to be able to bring that service now to Fiji. There are areas of oncology, there are areas of palliative care, all those areas in medical services that are currently not available or it may be available but in a very rudimentary sense, it is not in a highly specialised service. Many countries have done this, it is not something peculiar to Fiji, where they have partnered with the private sector and they bring in those services within a very short period of time.

As highlighted also, our Honourable Prime Minister is currently in India, he is also having bilateral talks with the Prime Minister of India. One of the areas the Prime Minister Modi who gave a speech here in this Parliament, in his speech, he had also posed a speech, he did say that he wants and he believes that Fiji can become a regional medical hub for the Pacific because we are geographically and strategically located in the hub. Therefore, he wants to provide a particular level of equipment to Fiji to be able to provide services, not just to Fijians, but also Pacific Islanders living around the Pacific.

So, we grabbed that opportunity and we are looking at bringing this internationally-certified hospital, partnering with the Fiji National Provident Fund to provide that concession. We have used International Finance Corporation (IFC) which has done similar types of PPP, and we have actually called for Expressions of Interest (EOIs). We hope that the EOIs, Madam Speaker, and the final identification of their partner will be done by early May.

Once that is done and an announcement is made, then we will be able to have that provider come into Lautoka and Ba. We will then be able to use the Indian Government’s undertaking that was given to us, to provide us with equipment. For example, you may have an eight or 12 slice scanner, you can now get a 64 slice scanner. You can get very high-tech MRI machines. All of these can be given because the Indian Government will also feel a particular level of confidence that the people who will be running the hospital actually know how to use the equipment, they can actually provide the services and indeed, it will be helping the rest of the Pacific Island countries.

Ba Hospital becomes the feeder hospital because Ba Hospital, in fact, caters for the Northwest of Viti Levu. It is a modern hospital yet to be equipped because we are waiting for this deal to be done, but the architecture is being done in a very sophisticated and hospital-friendly manner. In fact, one of the key architects of the Ba Hospital is the architect who actually designed the Star Hospital in Auckland. I think it is called the Star Hospital, I forgot the exact name, but they are the people who have done it.

Before we have had Government architects designing hospitals. They do not know anything about hospitals *per se*. We need experts who actually know how hospitals need to be designed. We have had designs wherever, for example, you wheel the trolley or the bed and it cannot even turn around the corner because it has not been taken into account that there will be a trolley this big to turn around the corner, that is why you have all these breakdown in the walls, et cetera.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Navua!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There are lots of places that need to be remedied, Madam Speaker. There are issues in the Navua Hospital and most correct in that, Honourable Karavaki.

Madam Speaker, we need to take a modern approach to this. The PPP, before we went out to the public, we actually went and met the doctors, nurses and other ancillary staff at the Lautoka Hospital and also Ba Hospital. They were actually very much supportive of this because they recognise very quickly because they are professionals in that area, that it will give them all of a sudden the ability to leapfrog into providing services. For example, one of the nurses who on her own is looking after cancer patients, she said, "Many of these people cannot actually go home but they are actually occupying beds in the hospital when they really should not be occupying beds. Is there a halfway place that they can be looked after?"

We are looking at things like aftercare because as it has been announced last week, Madam Speaker, and as we read in the public announcements that part of the deal with the PPP is that, whoever comes in needs to build a new hospital or block altogether. Obviously, part of the block will be modernisation of the facility, but also things like the operating theatre that will be built, it needs to have a viewing area so that the students at the University of Fiji and the Fiji School of Medicine can actually come and view surgeries as they do overseas. So those are the kind of facilities that will be built and, Madam Speaker, the costings have already been done for them.

The other point (unless there is some supplementary question) about it, Madam Speaker, is that, there will be no change to any ordinary Fijian who is currently paying whatever fees they pay at Lautoka Hospital. There is no change to that whatsoever. Of course, Madam Speaker, in time to come, we would like a person who does not even go to Lautoka Hospital because he or she earns \$500,000 annually, business people who go for their medical check-ups overseas, if they want to be able to access high-end medical services, we would actually like them to pay for it too. They are not our customers in any case at the moment, but all Fijians who are currently going to Lautoka Hospital, there will not be any change whatsoever in the tariffs that they currently pay.

So I think it is a hoax by anyone who is commenting on these issues publicly in the media or social media. There are lots of shenanigans going on in social media at the moment without any sort of analysis, without trying to get the facts, untruths analysis to say, "Oh my God! Privatisation, public-private partnership, everything will go out of the window." It is not true, Madam Speaker.

We are now going to be able to offer, through this PPP, a range of services that currently are not available. Of course, Madam Speaker, our first priority are ordinary Fijians to be able to get access to these kinds of services, they do not have to go overseas. But in time to come also, Madam Speaker, with an internally-certified hospital, you are also able to tap into other areas of the economy that we cannot currently do so; firstly, medical tourism and secondly, retirement homes.

We have got a number of Japanese investors, for example, in my time as Minister for Tourism (the Honourable Minister for Tourism is also getting this kind of request) where people do want to come and set up retirement villages in Fiji but they do need access to full tertiary medical care.

Some retired persons from Australia, New Zealand, Japan or wherever it is, if they come and retire here, spending the most of their winter in Japan to come here, they will need access to good quality medical services. So that means if we are able to offer it, we will have more retirement villages set up. What does it mean? More investment, more jobs and more opportunities for our people. I think there was a question asked by the Honourable Nawaikula to the Honourable Usamate the other day about the care for elderly people. Do we have training for them? It will create a whole new industry in that respect.

We recently had about 18 months or two years ago, a very well-known international company that most of you know about, that wanted to come and have a conference here. Madam Speaker, 3,000 of the senior executives and other people around the world wanted to come here, but the first thing they did was, they came and did a reconnaissance. They went to Nadi Hospital and Lautoka Hospital and they said, "If something happens to one of our senior executives, will you be able to cater for them?" We said; No we cannot." They said; "Sorry, we will go to another destination."

We are missing out on these business opportunities also. So they left and obviously now, if we get those facilities available and because everyone knows the Western Division is predominately where all the hotels are because that is where the Nadi International Airport is and Lautoka is there, it also fits in very well strategically in that respect.

Thirdly, of course, Madam Speaker, countries like Australia and New Zealand, in particular Australia at this point in time, where the waiting time at a public hospital is about two hours and 20 minutes, and sometimes two hours and 15 minutes. If you go to Queensland, it is roundabout that time too, different States have different waiting times. But it is not just that, Madam Speaker, but they also have huge queues for elective surgeries. Huge queues for elective surgeries.

Medicare, which is the national health insurance scheme of Australia, recognising the fact that there is a queue for elective surgeries have also now offered those Australians who go offshore and can get those elective surgeries at internationally-recognised hospitals, they will get paid for that too through the scheme because they recognise that. This is why we are insisting that if we get an internationally-certified hospital, we can get Australians to come and have elective surgeries. We can offer them, not just that, we can also then throw in a two-week package at some hotel, recover after you have your surgery, get a suntan, whatever it is and they go back home. You create a whole new industry that is related to the medical field. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Professor Biman Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the jury is still out, there are a lot of unknowns in a PPP. I can understand the Honourable Minister's vision on tourism and retirement homes and the question is; how will the Honourable Minister ensure that in any PPP, the costs are likely to go up?

The Honourable Minister is saying that the current system where people go to the hospital, they do not have to pay any extra tariff, but how can he ensure that having a PPP in the medium to long-term is going to ensure that we do not burden the ordinary people? Even with the national health insurance scheme, Madam Speaker, that itself is not a guarantee that the healthcare will be affordable to ordinary people in those hospitals.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, you see it is very important and the Honourable Members know that in order to get the best results, we need to be able to work with the best experts, and we are currently doing that.

Madam Speaker, it is all right to stand up and make some kind of comments saying, “How do we know it will not go up?” Obviously, Government has made a commitment to ensure that it will not go up, and we need to have very good contracts in place. We need to be able to work with the experts to be able to do that and this is why we are not going off and working using some local lawyer firms, who have not done a private medical contract in their life. We are working with people who have done dozens or hundreds of this, who had actually worked for Governments to get the best deal for them. That is what we are doing, Madam Speaker, and that is the assurance we have.

For the Honourable Members’ information, if you look at the budget books, it has got detailed expenditure. Currently for Lautoka and Ba Hospitals, we spent about \$65 million in maintaining those Hospitals, pay for the equipment, staff, salaries, electricity, water, et cetera. So, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, hypothetically, for example, if you are spending \$65 million at the moment in running those Hospitals and you get x, y and z range of services, if you are able to pay even \$65 million or \$70 million but are able to get a wider range of services without any cost to the ordinary Fijians, that is a much better position to be in because if these Fijians are currently going overseas to get their medical treatment, what does it mean? It is an enormous drain on our foreign reserves and it is a drain on our FNPF funds too.

This is the beauty of it. Here, you have most people who do go overseas for medical treatment, apart from getting assistance from the Minister for Health, they go and withdraw their FNPF funds. In this particular instance, they will withdraw their FNPF funds from a Fund that also is an owner of the concession. So that money goes in the circle but it provides the services, it also gives that capital investment to FNPF, they get a return on it, it works well for everyone and for us the most important thing is that, we are able to provide that level of medical services to ordinary Fijians, medical services that currently is not available. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Bulitavu?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, in regards to the question that is before the House on PPP, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister whether proper consultation has been done, even in a concession whether we are moving into management contract or leases in PPP, there is a private partner into the whole agreement. What about the employees, is there sufficient consultation being done on how they will be employed? Will the partnership form up private entities to take them on board to provide other service providers to the hospital?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I have already mentioned this in Parliament. Honourable Bulitavu may have been on one of those occasions walked out generally, may be writing letters, I am not sure, but the fact of the matter is this, we made a public announcement (as I have said in Parliament), we have also met the staff who are actually very happy with this pronouncement, extremely happy. You do not know them, you have not even met them yet. They are extremely happy.

Madam Speaker, as far as employment conditions are concerned, they will continue within six months. They make their choice whether they want to stay with the new entity and should they want to stay, whatever hospital is going to be with FNPF they have a choice, they enter into new contract with them or if they want to remain with Government, they will remain with us and we will give them

another posting to some other hospital. Very simple! No one's job is lost, not a single person's job is lost and not for a single person's employment condition is changed.

I have said this in Parliament, Honourable Bulitavu. No point shaking your head and laughing, that is a fact.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Salote Radrodro?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, in the three piece arrangement, there are benefits and there are also costs and the costs are usually on to the uses and for the healthcare, it is to the patients. And for the investors coming in, they want a return for their money or even more of that. Can the Honourable Minister explain whether the patient is not going to be financially burdened, how will the arrangement satisfy or benefit the investors?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, these repeated questions on the same topic, I think it actually indicates that the Opposition is quite bamboozle, they are bamboozled by this arrangement which is actually a fantastic arrangement.

I have already answered the question, Madam Speaker, and if I can repeat myself.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You are a jury I do not know what happen to your investigation and jury. Judge and jury at the same time.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There is no jury system in Fiji, get it right!

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Radrodro, just to highlight to her again, we have assured and we have said and this is an undertaking on our part, that it will not be an additional cost to ordinary Fijians who currently are not paying, or whatever, it will remain the same. It will be done by the Government.

Madam Speaker, they do not understand that! I have just highlighted to them that the cost of running the two Hospitals is about \$65 million.

Madam Speaker, there are already experiments been done in numerous countries. They do not even understand! They have not even read about it. They have not gone and done their research. It is like shooting in the dark. People who write on social media, and come and make comments. No idea whatsoever! No sense of financial capacity of commercial undertakings, not even looking at what has been happening overseas, how countries have leapfrog in providing services!

National Health Insurance, Madam Speaker, look at how it has been working in other countries and working very well. If you look at the ratings of medical services and accessibility to medical services, the UK has one of the best National Health Insurance Schemes, compared to countries like USA where they do not have a National Health Insurance Scheme. They need to go and look at these statistics, they need to look at all these studies, Madam Speaker.



One of the main objectives, Madam Speaker, of bringing about such a PPP in Fiji, like I said, is essentially to help us leapfrog in accessibility of those services and by doing so, the cost of medical services gets reduced because people no longer have to go overseas and, therefore, you can actually have a viable National Health Insurance Scheme.

Madam Speaker, FNPF a few years ago wanted to have a national health insurance scheme and when we found out about it, I said; “You are only concerned about your own members, there are only 417,000 members. What about all the other Fijians who live in villages, who are famers, et cetera, who do not pay FNPF, who have never had FNPF, what about them?”

So National Health Insurance Scheme, Madam Speaker, means that you are able to have a National Insurance Scheme for everyone. And as someone who is yelling out from the other end, “How will they pay?” The National Health Insurance Scheme, Madam Speaker, as some countries have done, actually pay through Government coffers. That is how it is done. You do not pay them directly.

In the same way as we stated in this Parliament, that we have set aside, for example, in this Budget \$1 million to pay for premiums for domestic home insurance for those people who are below a particular income level. In the same way, we set aside \$350,000 for parametric insurance for crop insurance that Government subsidises.

A classic case in India, the Government of India decided to have crop insurance. Now the insurance companies were takers, they started it on their own. They called for tenders, they started paying for the premium and today, it is one of the most viable insurance schemes. Assisted by the Government initially, now all the insurance companies are being provided.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that, we obviously on this side of the House, including those people there are thinking outside the box. We are able to look outside Fiji, we are able to look outside the various advisory these people may have running around in Suva. We are looking internationally, we are looking at international best practices and we are able to bring that home to Fiji to be able to suit our needs but get the best accreditation. It is very simple, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- And lastly, the Honourable Karavaki?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Attorney-General for his answers and I thank him also for taking our ideas and spinning it ....

(Laughter)

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- ...in a way so that it becomes an original from their side but that was our idea last year.

Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Attorney-General explain why are they tying up the Lautoka and the Ba Hospital in this case, and not building a new hospital to come under the scheme? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. Please be reminded it is “Honourable Member” and not “learned”. Honourable Minister?

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

Madam Speaker, Honourable Karavaki may not have heard but I did say as part of the PPP, there is a requirement in the EOI for them to build a new hospital.

Madam Speaker, the reality is if you go to Lautoka Hospital now....

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, if I could answer; if you go to Lautoka Hospital now and like many hospitals in Fiji, when you have a bed up against the wall and the person requires oxygen, they have this big gas cylinder next to the bed and then you have the mask.

(Honourable Members interject)

Madam Speaker, that is not how it is done.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- How do you know?

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, interjection should not really disturb the speaker, please be mindful.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- For example, Madam Speaker, you have the gas pipe, et cetera, within the panels of the wall. You go overseas, they simply pull it off the panel and they connect it to the person's face and the mask is on. You do not physically carry all these things, electrical connections and everything.

If you look at Lautoka Hospital, Madam Speaker, even the way it is being architecturally designed, many of the architectural design do not actually fit into the modern day hospital system. If we were to go ahead and say, "let us use this building to do that", it will actually end up costing you more to do the renovation than to actually build a new one. You will also be limited in your renovations by the fact that your structure is determined in such a manner; it is already pre-existing. This is why it is part and parcel of the requirement of EOI because there is not enough land in Lautoka, in the premises of the hospital, to put up another new structure and we can use the existing structure for some other facilities that currently are not available, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will be breaking for morning tea at 10.30 a.m. We still have three minutes, in that case I can just allow one more supplementary question.

Honourable Viliame Gavoka?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, we understand what is happening but we are still concerned about the ultimate cost to the people of Fiji. We have quality medical treatment, yet the cost will not increase so someone has to subsidize that. Our concern is that, the \$65 million will not become \$140 million to \$150 million in years to come and thereby, compromise this initiative. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Could I get the Honourable Member to repeat the last part of his question, what is he saying will be compromised?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Once it becomes too expensive, you may have to relook at the model again, collapsing the whole system; that is what I am saying.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, it would not collapse the whole system, if that is the question. Like I said, Madam Speaker, we are working with professionals who have done this in other countries. We have people who have done similar contractual arrangements where Government similarly are always cognisant and mindful of the need to ensure that there is no *laissez-faire* approach by any private company coming in to simply escalate costs. There are various checks and balances that have been put in, but as I have said, the structure is all about ensuring that when an ordinary Fijian walks in through the door, they do not pay anything. Ultimately, that is what should matter.

In the same way, Madam Speaker, currently for FEA, any Fijian that has an account with FEA earns less than \$30,000 a year, we pay 50 percent of the electricity costs to FEA. We subsidize it, they are entitled to that. We are doing so because we want that ordinary Fijian to be able to access electricity and not to be burdened by the tariff. This is what you call “targeted approach” or “assistance”.

In the same way, if a child whose father or mother, or family (as I should say) earns less than a particular amount, he/she gets subsidised bus fare. If you have a child whose parents earn \$200,000 a year and they want to catch the bus to school, they do not get the subsidised bus fare. It is only for people or families below a particular income level. That is how you make best use of your funds.

I have just highlighted that there are people in Fiji currently who earn very high income levels, who would not go to Lautoka Hospital. There are some people in Fiji, even if they get a slight headache they fly off to Australia and New Zealand, or if they want some minor procedure, they go to Australia and New Zealand, India or wherever it is. If you have an internationally certified hospital that does offer those services and these people are high income people, they can access these services and actually pay for it.

But the ordinary Fijians would not pay for it and at the moment, they are all those people who currently go to Lautoka Hospital. There is absolutely no change for them. If for example, Madam Speaker, there is a slight fluctuation, the Government will have to absorb that cost. I have said before, obviously Government needs to be concerned about the ability of the provider to ensure that that provider does not have a *laissez-faire* approach.

This is why also in this PPP the major shareholder or partner is the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF). It is not some foreign entity, it is not someone who is going to come in the whisk of the night and whisk away in the day or whatever it is. This is a local entity that has every single Fijian who formally works in Fiji and gets FNPF, a member of that organisation. This is why we show it as a very strong partnership to have FNPF involved as the key component or key partner in this PPP. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.-Thank you, Honourable Members. We would like you to break for refreshment in the highest of spirit. We are able to do that, Fiji has beaten South Africa in the semi-final.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- The score was 15:12. Thank you, Honourable Members.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.32 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.00 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will now resume from where we left off, and I invite the Honourable Parmod Chand to ask his question.

Full and Proper 99 Year Leases - Clopcott Settlement, Ba  
(Question No. 60/2018)

HON. P. CHAND asked the Government upon notice:

Can the Acting Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport inform Parliament whether all residents of Clopcott Settlement in Ba, who were issued the Agreement to Lease by Government in December 2014, have been issued with full and proper 99 year leases, stated in this Parliament by the Minister on 21st March, 2017?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- (Acting Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and would like to thank him for his question. It is good to see him asking question about something in the Western Division instead of Vanua Levu.

Madam Speaker, the residents in Clopcott will be issued 99 years residential leases in mid-May 2018.

Workplace Employment Grievances - Mediation Services  
(Question No. 61/2018)

HON. H.R.T. POLITINI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations inform the House on how well the mediation services have been able to effectively resolve workplace employment grievances?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations).- Madam Speaker, I rise to reply to the question asked by the Honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, the mediation services provided by the Ministry has been very effective and efficient in terms of trying to address the issues brought up by employees through grievances or disputes that are brought up by the trade unions.

Basically in mediation, we have a mediator who sits and mediate between the two parties so that they can come up with a solution to their conflict between themselves rather than going to a third party, who then decides what the solution should be. The distinct advantage of mediation is that, both parties have an opportunity to be part of the decision-making on what the solution is rather than having a solution that is imposed on them.

In terms of the question on how effective it has been, one of the most important illustrations of how effective this has been because in the past before this current legislation that we have, a person could only bring a grievance to the Ministry if you were a member of a trade union. But under this new legislation that we have (the Employment Relations Act), people can bring their own grievance, whether you are a member of a union or not, you can bring it up to the Ministry and then we use the mediation service to try to resolve the particular issue that they have.

The kinds of issues that they bring up will be cases if workers feel they have been disadvantaged, they have been dismissed unfairly or been discriminated or if you are under duress, or whether they feel that they have been sexually harassed. I have just been looking through some of the statistics that I see here in front of me, that in terms of the areas like unfair dismissal of cases that have been brought to mediation, about 87 percent of these cases had been mediated successfully. For the cases of disadvantage, where people felt that they had been unfairly disadvantaged, about 64 percent of the cases had been mediated successfully, and for discrimination cases, about 83 percent, so the success rate is very good.

Internationally, if you get the mediation success rate of around 70 percent or 75 percent, that is seen as very good. But in Fiji, on average, if you look over the past two years from 2008 since we have had it, we have averaged around 80 percent success rate. I was just looking at some of the figures that we have for last year (2017), we noticed that a number of cases that were mediated rose from 1,128 to 1,436, that is an increase in the number of cases by 27 percent but the success rate of coming up with solutions increased from 82.4 percent to 83.4 percent.

The other advantage is that it is timely. Normally, sometimes when you have a conflict, you take it to the courts, it can take an enormous amount of time and enormous amount of expense to pay for your lawyer, and to be able to fight for your case. But with mediation for all workers in Fiji, it is timely because that is a 30 days' time limit in which the mediator has to come up with the solution with the parties and it is also free to all the workers.

I think the last advantage, a great benefit for the mediation services is that, in the Ministry, we have used this opportunity to not only train our own mediators but to train other parties from other Ministries to learn the skills of mediation so that they can apply in their own areas of interest. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Samuela Vunivalu.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker; what role does mediation play in the event of strikes or lockouts?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, mediation is a tool that we use in the Ministry anytime that we have a grievance or dispute. Basically, the philosophy in the Ministry is that, those who create the conflict should be held primarily responsible for resolving the conflict. If there is a strike or as in the case that we are aware of, like the ATS issue where people left the workplace, the Ministry then institutes informal mediation where we have mediation to try to get the parties to resolve. If they cannot resolve the dispute, then it is referred to the Ministry and referred to the Tribunal that then tries to come up with a solution to that.

If we have a strike for the essential services, strikes on certain matters or lockouts, they are referred to the Arbitration Court, which then often refers this to mediation. We now have a Fiji Mediation Centre that is being established within the Judiciary and they also participate in mediation to try to get the parties to agree.

For non-essential industries, if there is a dispute, it is referred to the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry and she will also refer issues to mediation. On disputes for essential services, these are also referred to the Arbitration Court and it will often refer it, first of all, to mediation, if that fails some of these cases are referred to me as Minister to become a conciliator. Basically another word for mediation, and those are some of the cases that I have done in the past to try to address these issues. So mediation is used extensively in addressing grievances and in disputes.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Mikaele Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for his response. In terms of the ATS impasse, how far was the mediation services successful in terms of solving the problem at ATS?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Looking at the case in particular for the mediation that was taken for ATS, it went on for about two weeks. In mediation, there are two things that you need, including mediation:

1. You must come to the mediation with good faith. Both parties must come with an idea that they are here to come up with a resolution to the problem. When you have that there must be a propensity or a capacity to have 'give and take' on your positions to be able to move on your positions and address the issues. I think that is one of the critical things.
2. It is very important also to keep the people who are involved in the mediation constant. If you have new players coming in and out, that does not help you to resolve the issue.

So in the case of ATS, there were substantive movement forward but ultimately at the end it did not move, they were not able to come up with a final resolution but then the matter was referred to the Tribunal and the Tribunal then undertook its decision, made the decision which ultimately resolved that particular case.

That is the mechanism that we have in our legislation. We prefer things to go to mediation where the parties try to come up with a solution, when they cannot come up with a solution, then we refer it to a tribunal, a third party that looks at the pros and cons of the case and decides what the solution should be.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Aseri Radrodoro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister; he has stated the facts and figures about the success rate. I just wanted to inquire with the Honourable Minister, for those who are paid on a weekly basis (weekly wage earners), are those employees also made aware after forcefully been removed or dismissed from the employers, that this is one of the many avenues that they can resort to when they do come through circumstances?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Yes, the information is given out in a number of ways. We have Labour Inspectors and Labour Officers who go out and visit workplaces. I am hoping that as a result of my standing today and talking about this, that all workers in Fiji are aware whether they are weekly or monthly paid, that they can bring their grievances to the Ministry. As much as possible, we always want employees to try to use your grievance mechanism within your organisation first.

In a lot of companies, within seven days, you have to go through certain steps, and once those steps or the internal grievance mechanism has not been successful, then you bring it to the Ministry. We also do this in our roadshows where we go around the country meeting members of the public and we are constantly telling workers that if they do have a grievance, they can always bring it to the Ministry. The role of my staff is try to make sure that we can get them the sort of justice that they deserve, and that they should have.

HON. P. SINGH.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Now that mediation is an integral part of the reconciliation process under ERP, could the Honourable Minister inform this House as to how many qualified mediators you have in the Ministry?

HON. J. USAMATE.- A good question, Madam Speaker, I do not know the exact number of mediators in my Ministry. We have a Mediation Centre, and I believe there are more than 10 mediators in my Ministry. There are mediators also in the Consumer Council and under the Fiji Mediation Centre are the Judiciary, and also in the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission; so there are a number of mediators in various parts of Government. It is good to see that this way of resolving disputes has become more popular.

I know in Fiji we are very interested also in enhancing our reputation to be a place of arbitration. I think there has been some discussions on that in this particular House. I think Fiji also has an opportunity to become a hub for alternate dispute resolution mechanisms rather than just relying on the court, so mediation is now used in the Judiciary. I understand that last week we had training for people in the Family Court, so maybe it will also be introduced in the Family Courts. Civil Cases now, it is being used in the Judiciary, in the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission, the Consumer Council of Fiji and also in the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; the structure of ATS is 49 percent-owned by the workers and 51 percent-owned by Government. The structure itself should help to prevent disputes so that we do not get a problem like the matter in ATS where the workers were shutout and made to suffer a lot, the families suffered a lot, I want you to know that. But the structure itself is designed to prevent disputes and all the money and hours spent and the emotions that the ATS people and their families have been through ....

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Let me finish, please, it is my turn to talk, please, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- One minute left.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- One minute, I am sorry, I did not realise that. All I am saying is that the structure is designed to prevent disputes. While that side of the House talks about the big vision and moving on, the structure has to work.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I could not make out the question. It sounded more like a sermon to me but structures are designed for a particular reason, the important thing is good faith.

The important thing is also to follow processes because what happened in ATS, even though we have the structures, they decided to walk out of the airport during a peak time. People were lined up at airport counters, there were planes there, but all of a sudden people just walked out. Despite all of these things, you abandoned things so that is what I am saying, structures are there, processes are there, unfortunately, I think a lot of politicians jumped on the bandwagon and made a lot of "hoopla" about it and hopefully, we can try to keep the best interest of our country at all times. That was what happened in that particular case, for something completely different, they just abandoned the workplace.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

Land Transport Authority - Taxi Permits  
(Question No. 62/2018)

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

Can the Acting Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport enlighten the House on how the Land Transport Authority plans to conduct its lottery process for taxi permits to select new taxi permits holders?

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

Madam Speaker, as we know, there has been a review that has taken place in respect of the LTA and some of the regulations as was also announced in the Budget too, for example, a number of changes were made to actually empower taxi owners, including bus operators too. Now bus operators get a 15-year permit, they no longer get up-to 10 years. They now, of course, can also mortgage their permit and use that as collateral to go to banks.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, also in the Budget as changes to the regulations, taxi owners previously only get a three-year permit and loans, for example, for taxi or vehicle owners is five years, so they cannot use it as a form of security. Now, they all get ten-year taxi permits, they can use it as collateral, they can use it and go to the banks. Also, if you own less than three taxis, you can get an interest rate of less than five percent, and we have done a similar thing for the buses.

There was also a freeze that had been put in respect to the issuance of taxi permits. Madam Speaker, LTA in the meantime has carried out a review. To contextualise it, previously when LTA used to give out taxi permits, it was not in a structured manner. For years, ever since the LTA had started and even before the Land Transport Act, the Road Transport Authority (I think it was called) there was no structure to it. So we used to get a lot of complaints, people were saying, "I applied for a taxi permit, the other five people also applied for it and they have a permit, I have not got it. Why did I not get it?" so there is lack of transparency. There is also a reason behind why there should be more taxi permits in Suva as opposed to having 20 taxi permits more in Sigatoka, Navua or whatever the case may be.

Madam Speaker, what the LTA has done they have actually come out with different zones. As you may recall, the substantive Honourable Minister for Transport has also given a statement to Parliament regarding the review. A separate Committee had sat regarding the review and what they have done is that, they have identified different zones in Fiji, and I have the zones here. In total, there are about 34 zones:

- Central Division - 6 zones;
- Western Division - 18 zones;
- Northern Division - 6 zones; and
- Maritime Islands - 4 zones.

Each of these zones are clearly demarcated and within each zone, they have identified the different number of taxi permits that will be given for those zones, depending on the population numbers and the requirement of taxis. Based on that, Madam Speaker, taxi permits will now be issued.

As also been advertised that the people who will get the taxi permits must be, and the criteria is that the:

- Applicant must be a Fijian citizen.



- Applicant must reside in and apply for a taxi permit available in their respective transport zones. For example, you have in the Nausori Zone, Naiborebore, Nausori Town, Rewa, Noco, Tailevu, Bau, Naitasiri, Lomaivuna - this is one zone. If, for example, LTA says, "In this zone, because of the population numbers, we need to have 600 taxi permits", then people can apply for their taxi permits. They may already have 400 taxi permits in that area, so if I apply I must be in that zone.
- Applicant must not have been convicted for property or sexual offence. We have a lot of complaints that some taxi drivers have been involved in robberies and they are used as getaway cars. We also (as we know) have had taxi drivers who have committed sexual offences when women get into taxis, et cetera. In fact, (I do not know whether he still is), the former Secretary of the Taxi Association had blamed women for wearing short dresses or clothes, so the applicant must not be convicted of any of those two offences.
- Applicant or any member of the applicant's household should never have held any other taxi permits. For example, if I apply, my wife should not have a taxi permit.
- Applicant's household income must not exceed \$20,000. So we are actually targeting low income people to actually give them an asset so that they can then be given a taxi permit. Using the taxi permit, Madam Speaker, they can get a vehicle. Now they can get interest rate for less than five percent, they can use that taxi permit as a mortgage so that they can go to the bank and use that as collateral. We are actually empowering them by giving them a source of income, so they must meet that criteria.

The reason why this lottery matter has come up is because of this. If, for example, in a particular zone, there are 400 permits that can be issued in that particular zone, but you may have a 1,000 people that have applied. Out of those 1,000, assuming 800 qualified because they meet this criteria, so you have 400 permits to give, 800 applicants qualified.

How will you decide, out of those 800, which of the 400 would get the permit? This is why you have the lottery. It is completely fair, whichever persons' number comes up, and they will be able to get the permit. That is precisely the reason why it is done and, of course, it will be held through independent means where they will have the lottery.

There is also an issue about those people who had actually applied prior to the freeze and during the freeze, they will be given priority. For example, in a particular zone, you have 400 permits that are available. Those people who had applied during the freeze or prior to the freeze and their application has not been processed, they will firstly be assessed against this criteria because some of the people who applied are big business people, who already owned a fleet of taxis, so they will be disqualified. Out of those people, if they meet the criteria, they will be given priority.

If, for example, there are 400 permits available and 200 people qualified from a zone prior to the freeze or during the freeze meet the criteria, they will get the first bite of the cherry. They will be given the 200 permits out of the 400. Then the balance of the 200 will then be assessed using all the people who have applied subsequent to that. It may well be, that in some areas, there could only be 50 applicants but there are 200 permits available, so they will get it in any case, you do not need to do the lottery. The lottery is done only where there are more applicants who qualified than the actual permits available. That is how the system works, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu?

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply to the question. My question is; what happens in the case of individuals or companies that own more than 10 permits, do they fall under this lottery or will they be given a separate kind of a condition, to decide what happens to their existing permits?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for this question. No existing taxi permit holder will be affected by this process. No one's taxi permit will be affected so we cannot retrospectively change anything. If, for example, I am a single owner of a taxi, I already have my taxi permit extended for 10 years, so I am not affected. If I am an owner of a company that owns 50 taxis, I am not affected. This is only for new permits going forward.

For example, let me give you another zone, there are different zones, there are about 34 zones. I will try and pick one, for example, Ovalau, Taveuni and Kadavu. What are the different areas where they have the zones but also these are sort of smaller places but within Rakiraki, there is Rakiraki I, Rakiraki II and Rakiraki III. So all the people, for example, in Rakiraki I we will have "x" number of permits that can be given for that area. So if people have applied from that area and they meet this criteria, they earn less than \$20,000, et cetera, they will be the ones who will be assessed and be given permits.

There are a lot of widows, for example, who see taxi or the minibus permits as a source of income. Their husband may have died, there is a little bit of money in FNPF. They do not have any other means to gain a living, so they apply for taxi permits or they apply to LTA. Some of them actually get the permit, more women are actually driving taxis now themselves, they may drive during the day and at night they get other drivers to drive for them.

There are many drivers in Fiji who have been driving for 15 to 20 years and they have been applying for taxi permits but they do not get it. They will also be assessed under this criteria, Madam Speaker. So, Honourable Member, it does not affect any existing taxi permit holder at all.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Aseri Radrodro?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his explanation on this lottery process but there are people who are making a living out of this taxi business whether it is legalised or not. The issue is whether the people who have applied prior to the lifting of the freeze from 1st January and now it is March, will those people still have to wait for the lottery process? What is the timeline, do you have to wait for? There is no indication of the processing of their applications for the PSV licences.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I have already stated and I have already answered the first part of the question, that those people who have applied prior to the freeze and during the freeze and post-freeze will actually be assessed equally. But those people who have applied prior to the freeze and during the freeze, will be given the first priority because theirs have been pending for quite some time, prior to the announcement being made.

There was actually a criteria, so there is a Committee that will look at the applications. They will have to give their responses within 14 days from the application cessation dates. People actually have a right of appeal too. For example, if the Committee says, "you do not qualify", they will be informed and they have a right of appeal within 14 days of receiving their notification. So all these processes have actually been put in place to ensure that no one is treated unfairly.

There is also an independent Committee that is going to be put in place that will be assessing these applications. We do not have anyone in LTA that is currently doing it. As previously announced, we have had people working in LTA and they also got permits themselves or their close relatives have permits. So, there is an independent Committee, they will do the assessments and once they get the permit, they must start operating their taxi service within three months of the date the permit is issued. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Parmod Chand?

HON. P. CHAND.- Madam Speaker, I wish to ask the Acting Minister, public transport in Fiji is very heavily regulated. I went to Savusavu and I heard a lot of complaints from taxi drivers. I was informed and I would like to ask the Minister, if any Minister from the Government had gone to Savusavu and told those private vehicle owners to continue to operate and also told the police not to do bookings on private vehicles?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member asked the question whether private vehicles were stopped being booked, is that what your question was? So, they are illegal operators?

HON. P. CHAND.- Yes, certainly.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- If they are illegal operators, Madam Speaker, the name itself suggests that they are operating illegally, and there is obviously certain rules and regulations in relation to illegal operations.

Madam Speaker, however, I was also in Labasa in the weekend and there is an issue, for example, regarding those taxis that operate from rural areas and those taxis that are based in Labasa. There seems to be a bit of a 'ding dong' between those two groups. In fact, I have received some submissions on that and we will be sitting down and talking to LTA about that.

The whole process about this is essentially regulating. There are areas, of course, in Fiji where there are illegal operations because of the fact that LTA may not have necessarily given enough permits. There are certain areas, no doubt, where enough permits have not been issued and, therefore, there needs to be more permits to be issued in those areas. Maybe Savusavu is one area where not enough permits have been issued by LTA.

So, they have studied the quota system, they have looked at the various population pockets and they have made assessment as to how many taxi permits should be given for each of the population pocket or the zone that have been established and based on that, of course, many of those people who may be operating illegally will also have the ability to apply to regularise their business.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, Honourable Ratu Kiliraki?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, if you can allow this supplementary question; as mentioned by the Honourable Minister in regards to the review of the buses, whether he can take into consideration that review in terms of rural entities that have RSL carriers and LC carriers, whilst transporting cargo as well as the general public, especially the women who find it difficult to climb at the back of the carriers, whether he would take into consideration and allow these entities to buy coaster buses up to 30 seater as part of this review so that we can have better transportation for the rural people, especially when hiring for churches, meetings, conferences. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The issue does not relate to the question.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, actually I could not understand the question. Whilst it is not related to it, I could not understand the question, about women getting at the back of the carriers? I do not understand that.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- The current regulation does not allow for these LC and RSL carriers to operate or buy a coaster bus for transportation. Currently, they have only the carriers that transport cargo as well as the people, especially when women climb at the back of the carrier. So, for comfortable transportation, they must have that provision to allow them to buy coaster buses up to 30 seater, like the Parliament bus. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- We women can climb also. Anyway, Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member knows that, that is a separate question altogether, but I am sure the bus companies that actually operate on the routes, will have something to say about it. I mean, some of these bus companies on those routes actually buy buses worth \$200,000 to \$250,000.

Madam Speaker, that is a separate application process which existing providers, ask Honourable Parmod Chand, talk to him afterwards, he will be able to explain to you how the bus company actually works and how much capital they outlay.

Madam Speaker, it is a separate question altogether. Basically, what they are asking is whether these people can actually apply for an Omnibus licence. This is the very definition; a 30 seater bus is an Omnibus licence. The Honourable Parmod Chand can confirm that, so I urge them to talk to him and he will explain to them the details.

HON. SPEAKER.- I am afraid we have spent more time than allocated for that question. We will now move on to the next question and I invite the Honourable Alvick Maharaj to ask his question.

Recent Statistics of Tourism Arrivals  
(Question No. 63/2018)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ ask the Government upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources elaborate on the most recent statistics on the source market for tourism arrivals?

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 thank him for his question.

Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to share some insights on the exceptional performance of the Fijian Tourism Industry. Last year, I informed this honourable House on the record during the year of visitor arrivals despite *TC Winston* in 2016. Today, I would like to highlight yet another exceptional year for the Fijian Tourism Industry.

Madam Speaker, looking at the 2017 visitor arrivals to Fiji, we received a record 842,884 visitors.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, this is a 6.4 percent increase, compared to 2016. This is the first time we have reached above the 800,000 mark, which is an achievement. Although as I always spell it out, we are primarily not focussed on the numbers but not only did the overall arrivals reach a record high, Madam Speaker, but for the first time ever arrivals from New Zealand, the USA as well as India, hit an all-time record. Over the past five years, Madam Speaker, on average, visitor arrivals have been increasing approximately by 5 percent, in fact arrivals over the last 10 years have also increased by an average of about 5 percent per annum.

For the information of the other side of the House, Madam Speaker, I wish to reiterate as I have time and time again, that the vision of the FijiFirst Government is to grow our tourism value rather than the numbers. Therefore, Madam Speaker, let me spell this out also, in 2016, the tourism earnings recorded a \$1.6 billion and this is a 3 percent increase compared to 2015, according to the statistics from the Fiji Bureau of Statistics. The International Visitor Survey (IVS) also showed an even greater increase of \$1.7 billion.

Madam Speaker, getting back to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics figures, the earnings have grown at an average rate of about 5 percent per annum from 2012 to 2016. Tourism earnings from January to September 2017, showed a record of \$1.32 billion for nine months, a significant increase of 16.5 percent in comparison with the same period in 2016. In the third quarter of 2017, tourism earnings surpassed a remarkable \$500 million mark for the first time ever in Fijian history.

Madam Speaker, on other hand, the initial assessment of the 2017 IVS indicates that Fiji has already reached \$1.9 billion in tourism earnings. This, again, is a landmark achievement. At this point, Fiji is about \$300 million short of reaching our \$2.2 billion target that we had actually set for 2021. It is expected that we will not only achieve that target, but exceed it by 2021. And for the information of the other side of the House, Madam Speaker, this is what we mean when we say that we want to increase the yield in tourism and focus on quality tourism.

Madam Speaker, there were a couple of comments made on social media and with reference to those social media statements made by a provisional NFP candidate. The comment was made regarding Fiji having dropped its rankings to 10 on Australia's Outbound Visitor Destinations. Let me enlighten this House, Madam Speaker, on how people grossly manipulate and withhold information and social media, and sometimes in this House, Madam Speaker.

What the Opposition obviously needs to understand is that, there is a difference between a rank and an actual number of visitors to a country. A destination's performance, Madam Speaker, cannot be ascertained by the outbound figure of our source markets alone. A little bit of research would go a long way.

Madam Speaker, in 2017, 365,689 Australians visited our shores, which is a 1.5 percent increase when compared to 2016. Compared to 2012, our visitor arrivals from Australia has actually increased by 8.4 percent and Australia continues to be our largest source market.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, the most important component is the ensuing yield from that market, it is not the numbers and I keep saying that. When comparing earnings from Australian visitors between 2012 and 2016, there was a 25.2 percent increase, Madam Speaker. Tourism earnings from Australia has grown at an average of 4.7 percent over the past five years.

It is also worth noting, Madam Speaker, when comparing January to September 2017 tourism earnings within that same period in 2016, that earnings from the Australian market achieved an

increase of 16.6 percent. That average spend again by the Australian visitor has also increased by 3.5 percent. This is what we need to focus on. That, Madam Speaker, is deriving the yield per visitor and we can only do that if we offer better and more tourism products which we are doing in a sustainable fashion.

Madam Speaker, I ask the other side of the House, is increasing yield or earnings not more important than the numbers? It is a simple question, it is all about Fiji. It appears though with the Opposition, as well as the aspiring Opposition, who have a habit of portraying everything in a negative tone, Madam Speaker. It is not a popularity contest. They pull out ideas from their heads, with no basis and no context, Madam Speaker, and they put it on social media and then it becomes a gospel truth.

Madam Speaker, let me say something, when we do such things, this is why young Fijians do not follow you because they like the truth. The tourism Industry, Madam Speaker, needs to be viewed holistically and not obviously with a myopic vision. The Fijian Government has put in place measures to ensure our approach encompasses a national vision that takes into account long term plans.

Madam Speaker, the success of the tourism industry is not dependent on Australia alone and that is already evident in the unprecedented levels of growth and in the earnings from other markets. I would like to re-emphasise, Madam Speaker, that the Government will ensure that the long-term goals of the tourism industry are achieved and the benefits are actually realised amongst all the sectors of all Fijians. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Politini.

HON. H.R.T. POLITINI.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. H.R.T. POLITINI.- Can the Honourable Minister inform the House on what the Ministry is doing to diversify our visitor market?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, as I have been saying earlier on, we do not actually believe in putting all our eggs in one basket, and Fiji is not only about the matured traditional source markets. Fiji is a global destination and the Fijian Government aims to obviously diversify and capture the emerging high-yielding markets whilst maintaining traditional source markets.

Ultimately, Madam Speaker, the competitiveness of the destination is contingent on its ability to sustain itself without depending on just one market. Fiji, adding on to its primary sun, sea and sand products, we are targeting the MICE market; weddings, honeymoons, culture and heritage, dive, cruise, adventure and actually sports market.

According to the 2017 IVS, there has been an increase in visitors coming to Fiji for adventure sports, cultural activities, just to name a few and this is an indication that visitors are seeing Fiji as a destination that has a variety of product offerings that can meet their needs.

Obviously, we are not resting on our laurels, Madam Speaker, we are in partnership with our stakeholders, ensuring that the Fijian brand is robust and fresh in the global market. We have had joint roadshows and expositions through Tourism Fiji that are held with Fiji's international partners to promote and inform them of the diverse products that Fiji has to offer. And these are attended by the key service providers such as our national airline, accommodation, transport and travel operators. This

actually allows our inbound tour operators from our source markets to discuss package offers directly and even make bookings instantly.

Whilst promoting the Fijian products, Madam Speaker, international market is important. We also need to ensure that Fijian tourism operators understand the changing market needs, and in this regard, insight seminars into these markets are held to provide our local operators, the relevant intelligence to meeting the particular market needs. In addition, we actually bring the buyers, Madam Speaker, to the door step of our local sellers through the Fijian Tourism Expo. In a nutshell, that is what we do to diversify our visitor markets.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, as you know, without the *coup* in 2006, Fiji could now have had more than a million visitors. We are still far from a million visitors and, Madam Speaker, if you talk about quality tourism, how come a boutique iconic resort like Vatulele has been closed for six years. If you bring in quality people, how come Vatulele has been closed?

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, we need to maintain our ranking in the Australian market. Can the Honourable Minister tell us today, where do we rank in terms of Fiji being a preferred destination out of Australia? We used to be number four, number five, where do we stand today? Thank you.

HON. MEMBER.- Number 10.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Number 10, Oh!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Inaudible

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I love it when they live in the past. I wish they live in the future. They are almost like young people. Rear vision mirror, Madam Speaker, and not only that, I think Honourable the Attorney General referred to something about law class, was it 101? Maybe, someone should go back to 102, the tourism class, in how you calculate. I just explained it in complete detail with respect to the Australian market, and just for your benefit Honourable Gavoka, let me tell you once again, would you like me to go through all the figures as to how much we have actually earned? I am sure you have heard it.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Please, I urge you to read it word for word. I will give you the response as to how we have grown in terms of what we actually earned out of the tourism market.

(Honourable Gavoka interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, if we decided to suddenly open the skies and we brought in 1.5 million visitors, first of all and most importantly, you have to have the necessary inventory to accommodate those.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, time and time again, the Honourable Prime Minister and the whole of us have actually referred to this; we are actually doing this in a sustainable fashion but at the same time, and most importantly, we are referring to a yield. Australia may go down in the rankings or come up in the rankings but I just gave you the figures as to how the money that comes out of Australians have gone up which means what? Every single person involved in the tourism industry

has made no money. How much more clearer can I be, except to tell the Honourable Member, please, maybe he needs to attend Tourism 102, to actually know how you calculate it.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Dr. Brij Lal.

HON. DR. B. LAL.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; can the Honourable Minister inform this august House of Fiji's new and emerging markets?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

(Hon. Opposition Member interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- You are lucky, I am in a controlled environment.

(Laughter)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, by the way that is a joke.

(Laughter)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- The only person that understands that joke is the gentleman next to you. Thank you. Honourable Dulakiverata.

Madam Speaker, with Fiji's traditional source markets - Australia, New Zealand and USA, they account for a combined 75 percent of Fiji's total arrivals, but the emerging source markets have also shown notable increase which actually includes China, India, South Korea, Singapore and Europe, to name a few.

China obviously, Madam Speaker, has been the fastest growing emerging market for Fiji (Honourable Gavoka would be very happy), increasing at a rate of about 14.6 percent. However, other markets such as South Korea and India are also showing really good growth rates of 15.4 percent and 15.9 percent respectively, over the last five years.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, with the introduction of the flights to Singapore, the route in 2016, Fiji has actually seen a significant growth of visitor arrivals from Singapore. From about 649 arrivals in 2015, Fiji received 124 percent increase in 2016 and 40.5 percent increase in 2017.

Madam Speaker, again shortly, we are about to start flying to Japan which is another great market for us and I think everyone in Fiji knows that the Japanese market was a great market for us.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Like everything else, Madam Speaker, we are fixing up the errors from the past.

As I said, Madam Speaker, the visitor arrivals from India following the direct flight to Singapore have actually increased, we have gone in 2017 from 5,183 million visitors and there is a 30 percent increase in those visitors. You can see, Madam Speaker, we are doing a lot and these are the new and emerging markets.



Again, Madam Speaker, these are tourist numbers that bring a whole lot of dollars to Fiji and as I said earlier on, the 2021 figures were actually looking to surpass what we had actually predicted. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Parmod Chand.

HON. P. CHAND.- I would like to ask the Honourable Minister, out of the \$1.6 billion or \$1.9 billion, how much is retained here? Does more than 50 percent not get out of the country?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I think he is asking a statistical question.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Let me finish, from what I can gather, he is asking me how much actually goes out of the country, how much in terms of the ....

(Hon. Parmod Chand interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Please hear me out, if you want a statistical question you will get a statistical answer but you have to put it to me properly.

But in any event, I would like to know where he gets his figures from in terms of 50 percent going out of the country. What we have given him, Madam Speaker, is what we have on record from the Bureau of Statistics. What goes out of the country, please, if you provide us with proper detail of what you think and where you get it from, just like anything else, come and ask, Madam Speaker, with substantiated facts and I will give you a substantial answer.

HON. MEMBER.- (Inaudible interjection)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, it is wrong, the general public in Fiji are listening. It is wrong to just pluck something out of thin air and suddenly you make it feel like, maybe they should all go pluck chickens, they are good at plucking.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplementary question. The Honourable Minister talked about statistics. The substantive question is on statistics, anyway I will not dwell on that. The Honourable Minister talked about the sustainable growth in the tourism industry, of course, he is not interested in the numbers but more interested in the yield per visitor which we take note of.

Madam Speaker, my question to the Honourable Minister is, how does the Ministry capture or monitor the standard of service of our local operators and resort to entice more tourists into Fiji?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, first of all, I think he is wrong when he said I do not care about the numbers, I just gave you the exact number. If I did not care, I would not tell you. Madam Speaker, he is talking about how we look at the standards of service in the industry. It is pretty much every single hotel chain that has a particular standard of service. If you look at it, Madam

Speaker, we have the Hilton in Fiji, we have the Sheraton in Fiji, we have the Westin in Fiji, we have the Warwick in Fiji and we have Marriott in Fiji. These are all five star and above hotels.

Madam Speaker, they have standards in place with respect to what they do and they are ever evolving. So, it is an internal process that they do but in an event when we do have our forums with all the stakeholders, we do discuss these events on what the requirements are and what we should be doing. Obviously, all the stakeholders are called to always look at what markets we are looking at, what they need to do, and what kind of service that they need to provide.

I think it is probably a question, I do not know where it is comes from but I think the level of service that we provide in Fiji is absolutely phenomenal. Look at the amount of money that is earned from the tourism industry! If we were bad in any shape or form, I do not think the numbers would come in. We are the best people on earth, we are the happiest people on earth, that is why we have the slogan and that does not just refer to every single Fijian, it reverberates through every single employee in the tourism industry.

On top of all of that, as I said, every single hotelier always looks at the process that they have within to provide the best Fijian service which we are world renown for to the best of their ability, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa to ask her question.

Fiji 7s Team – Budget  
(Question No. 64/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications (and this is a very topical question Madam Speaker, with Fiji playing against Kenya in the finals at in the Vancouver Sevens) explain how the Fiji 7s team, which attracts many more followers than any other sport, can be given a proper budget particularly in its bid to host a leg of the World Rugby 7s Series in Fiji? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would know that we make budgetary allocations through the budget that is laid out before Parliament and the practice that we have obviously had is that we make the budgetary allocations to the Sports Commission and the Sports Commission, of course, prior to that accepts any application by respective sporting organisations and then those monies are disbursed through the Sports Commission to the respective sporting organisations.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition is absolutely correct that rugby has not just the largest following respect of people who play rugby but also respect of the fans. And of course, rugby is a much unified force in Fiji, whether Fijians live in Fiji or Fijians offshore as can be seen in Vancouver or Las Vegas wherever they play. So, adequate funding of course has been provided on a number of years, Madam Speaker, to the Fiji Rugby Union whenever the need has arisen including, for example, our successful bid in the Olympics where we won the gold medal.

Of course, the Fiji Rugby Union had the support from the Fijian Government not just in respect of, Madam Speaker, the actual direct budgetary funding but also in respect of ensuring that we have

and many people may actually forget this, that we have over the past number of years zero rated duty on many of the sporting goods in Fiji, for example. So, things like protein shakes, and sporting capsules, sports equipment, boots designed for rugby, soccer, boxing et cetera, spike boots, shoes et cetera, protective gear for rugby, knee and ankle supports; all of these things have zero rated duty, only VAT is applicable.

So, it is a combination of ways that we are able to assist and of course if Fiji is successful in this bid, of course we will support it because it is not just for the fact that we want to only support rugby, but it is also because enormous positive dollar implications for us. Because it again positions us as a sporting destination which we have been building up through other means too. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplementary question. I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply. The question that I would like to raise would be something similar to the Golf Tournament that is being held in Natadola. For the 7s, if we can run something like that by having Government fully supporting the 7s tournament here because they are being one of our champion teams in promoting Fiji abroad; better than the golf. Like golf, they have the Golf Association, the rugby they have the Rugby Association.

But the question that I would like to raise, Madam Speaker, is can the Minister explain as to why can the Government not follow the similar format they did with golf here for the sake of 7s, do the same as well in promoting 7s but not through the Fiji Rugby Union (FRU)? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Speaker, as we know that when we have such international tournaments, they need to be sanctioned by the proper sporting organisations. This is why for example, Fiji Rugby Union has put in a bid through World Rugby. If you hold a sporting event and in this instance in respect of rugby, if it has a sanction and is part and parcel of the international tour leg, then obviously it has that level of credibility.

For example, World Rugby needs to sanction it. This is why the bid has actually gone through the World Rugby. And as we have said in my response to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, that should Fiji be successful, obviously Fiji will need to provide the funding, which means the Government of Fiji.

In fact we are looking in excess of about \$10 million, the current estimation. And also the bid is to have the tournament in the Western Division because the World Rugby's requirement is that, wherever you have such an international tournament, it must be very close to an international airport for the convenience of the players, for the convenience of the teams and also you need to have what we call the "room inventory" and Nadi, of course, has a room inventory. The Western Division has room inventory.

They generally like all the rugby players to be based in one hotel, or hotels next to each other. This is one of the requirements. They need to have fields around it where they can actually go and do their warm up and training, et cetera. These are some of the conditions that are attached to it.

Government of course, if Fiji is successful, we will put in the money to ensure that we host a successful leg of the 7s tournament which will be part of other destinations where we are in fact, Las

Vegas, Singapore or wherever it is, that they are hosting and it will be part of one of those legs and be highly successful for us too.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Honourable Minister, how much does FRU benefit financially from the Fiji team playing on the series? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, Madam Speaker, if I could get the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to repeat her question, please.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Financially, Madam Speaker? How does the FRU benefit from the Fiji team playing in the series? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I assume you are talking about the dollar value. I do not have the figure on me. Of course, we need to look at the accounts or the Annual Report of the Fiji Rugby Union, but most definitely, recently the Fiji Rugby Union has struck a sponsorship deal. I understand it is in a tune of \$5 million with Fiji Airways which is a national carrier and the various other sponsorship deals that we struck. But in respect of the direct benefit or in terms of dollar value as to how much FRU gets from the participation in these tournaments, I do not know specifically but I am sure that information can be ascertained quite easily from the FRU itself.

Madam Speaker, FRU is not part of Government. It is a separate organisation and indeed the World Rugby requires that it will be an independent body which has its own account and its own governance structures which is one of the conditions as to why the World Rugby actually also gives funding to the FRU. For example, they have set up various technical people for high level training and that is part of the requirements of the World Rugby Union.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Jiosefa Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, 7s Rugby holds the country together and creates a lot of interest overseas. I just want to ask the Honourable Minister, how much the Rugby 7s players have been remunerated. What is the value of their contract?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Again, Madam Speaker, Government does not control that. Again anyone who knows about rugby and rugby governance would know that the Fiji Rugby Union is an independent body and the World Rugby requires it to be independent. Government cannot interfere with it. So, if the Honourable Member wants to know exactly how rugby players have been remunerated, he needs to check with the FRU and they will tell you exactly how they have been remunerated.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Did I get that correctly that it is likely to cost the Government \$10 million to host the 7s? Is that the figure that was given here?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the figures have not been finalised as yet. There was some rough estimation that was done that it may cost \$10 million but that is not to actual

host itself in the sense that there may be some need to build some infrastructure to be able to host the 7s itself. For example, if you go to Dubai, they have structures, they have a setup on what they call “a temporary basis”. They have very good stadiums which are actually pulled down afterwards. Of course in other areas they may put up a permanent structure. So, there are obviously various options that may be looked at within the Western Division whether it is Prince Charles Park in Nadi, whether it is Churchill Park or maybe some other place.

Other organisations like the Fiji Holdings has actually looked investing in sports also. The Fijian Holdings wants to actually invest in a permanent structure in the Western Division because they see value or money for them. But of course if Fiji is given the go ahead or the green light to host one of the 7s legs from next year in October, then obviously the stadium will not be built within one year. So, in the meantime we need to be able to look at various options. I am sure everyone in this Parliament is very keen that Fiji actually does become part of the 7s legs, one of the legs, and I think we should all support it. It is not just about the honour or the pride of hosting it in Fiji, there is enormous benefits for our own people, would be rugby players and for those players who are already playing rugby in Fiji.

Of course rugby actually provides also a great source of income. There are Fijian players in France and various other places who get over paid over a million Euros a year for their services. We need to be able to develop that and encourage that as an effective entire industry in itself. So, it has numerous benefits and of course we will obviously be able to see the benefits as far as tourism is concerned, we can package that for people who may want to come from overseas and watch rugby in Fiji. We have a very good brand as in Fiji; it is a good brand. We need to be able to market that and be able to leverage that.

My only gripe with all of these, Madam Speaker, is that I wish it had been done 20 years ago. If people had the foresight that they built actually a facility in the Western Division 20 years ago, we probably would have been hosting this tournament right from the beginning of its inception.

So, Madam Speaker, the reality is that we look forward to a positive response and indeed we look forward to every Fijian supporting this. For the bid, I understand the FRU had this campaign on the social media. If they are still open with urge every Fijian to actually address it so we are able to host one of the legs as far as the 7s series is concerned.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I now give the floor to the Honourable Jilila Kumar to ask her question?

Status of Maintenance – Drainage Schemes  
(Question No. 65/2018)

HON. J.N. KUMAR asked the Government upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Waterways enlighten the House on the status of maintenance of drainage schemes by the respective divisional drainage board?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Waterways).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Honourable Kumar for asking this question.

Madam Speaker, we have got drainage boards in the three divisions - the Northern Division; Central Division; and Western Division. Now, we are working very closely with the drainage boards to ensure efficiency in the work that they deliver and deliverance in a timely manner.

Madam Speaker, in the Northern Division Drainage, we have got the designated drainage schemes. In the Northern Division, so far, we have approved 23 areas for drainage work. Out of these 23 areas, 7 have been completed, 5 still in progress, 11 will be starting soon. With these 11, in some cases the contracts have just been signed, in some cases we cannot start the work because of bad weather and in a few cases the contracts will be signed today or this week because our Permanent Secretary has approved.

Of the seven that had been completed, it includes:

1. Coqeloa - 4 km of de-silting work has been done.
2. Korowiri - 6.5 km of de-silting work has been completed.
3. Malau - we did the fabrication of floodgates.
4. Namara - upgraded the floodgates structure.
5. Qelewaqa - 3 kilometres of de-silting of drains has been completed.
6. Taqanikula - 5 kilometres of de-silting work has been completed. This is only for January and February.
7. Walaga - de-silting of drains, 5 kilometres has been completed.

Madam Speaker, these are the seven areas that we have completed the work of de-silting of existing drains. There are works undertaken in various other places which are underway, these are the five places:

1. Greater Labasa area where we have got floodgates structure, 40 percent has been completed.
2. Siberia, we are undertaking maintenance of the floodgates structure, 30 percent has not been completed; drain that we have undertaking to a new drain so that the water is moved away from the roads where it is frequently flooded.

Madam Speaker, then we have got in the Western Division, 35 areas. Out of the 35 areas, 15 had been completed, 6 in progress, 14 awaiting for contractor to start. These 14, for example, the contractors are undertaking work in a different are. So, once the contractor finishes in that area, it will come and complete in this particular area.

Madam Speaker, the 1 areas that had been completed are:

1. Vunidawa;
2. Waidogo;
3. Barotu;
4. Teidamu;
5. Drasa I;
6. Drasa II;
7. Oloolo;
8. Maro;
9. Lomawai;
10. Qeleloa;
11. Malevu.

Madam Speaker, these are the areas that have been completed, 15 areas, 6 in progress, and 14 awaiting contracted staff.

In the Central Division, it is a smaller area. We have 19 areas that we are undertaking work, 8 has been completed, 7 in progress and 4 agreement has just been signed or will be signed this week and work will commence as soon as possible. Of these 8 completed, they are in:

- a) Koronivia East;
- b) Makosoi;
- c) Muainaweni;
- d) Nakaulevu;
- e) Nasasa;
- f) Togadrau;
- g) Vakabalea;
- h) Valelawa; and
- i) Raiwawa.

Madam Speaker, we are getting submissions on other areas, for example, our engineers are now undertaking a survey and getting quotations in the Lovu area. We have got complaints from residents there through our Members of Parliament as well, so our engineers are undertaking a detailed work on that flat plain area, Madam Speaker. There are other areas where we are getting assessments done to ensure that we can get the work done and completed soon.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply. My question is: the creation of these drainage boards that has come out of the Sugarcane Master Award, the levies used to come directly from the proceeds from their cane to pay for the drainage clearance. Now that the Ministry of Waterways has come into operation, where do you have the balance; what do you finance; and what is financed by the Drainage Board?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I think the Honourable Member does not have the full information. Unfortunately, if you had listened to my initial Ministerial Statement, I had provided in detail about now the scope of the Ministry of Waterways. We have got drainage boards which only looks at designated drainage schemes, they are stated in the legislation and these are the areas which the drainage boards will look into.

Madam Speaker, the Drainage Board was looking at agricultural areas, non-agricultural area was ours. Then you have got the sugar industry; then you have got non-sugar agriculture and then you got non-agricultural areas. Madam Speaker, the non-agricultural areas was totally outside the Drainage Board; sugar was outside the Drainage Board, agriculture was outside the Drainage Board.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- (Inaudible interjection)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- *Wawa!*

Madam Speaker, all these are now under the Ministry of Waterways. The drainage boards are doing only the designated drainage area. We have now provided \$20 million grant to FSC to deal with the water-logged farms. There was a question on that on Friday which I am going to explain what we have done on that.

FSC also, Madam Speaker, gets assistance from Cane Producers Association on a 50:50 cost-sharing basis. So what we have said, Madam Speaker, we will pick up the 50 percent farmers' share, so the Cane Producers Association can do it and we will contribute the 50 percent. Farmers do not have to pay anything to the Cane Producers Association.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, we have got a million dollars for non-sugar agriculture, so that as we get submissions, we go and undertake the drainage work. So, Madam Speaker, then we have got the non-agriculture area, for example, we are undertaking some drainage work in Koronivia now through FRA. Madam Speaker, the scope is quite wide. We still have the drainage boards which we work very closely with, but in addition to that, we are doing these other areas through the other institutions that are on the ground.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Madam Speaker, thank you for your answer but in my mind, as a business person, I am very confused, there is a lot of duplication and wastage. I certainly would like to see more budgeting, and if we could have the budgeting for me to also talk to the people of Fiji who are looking at us now wondering what is going on, there is a lot of duplication.

Madam Speaker, the question is budgeting, duplication and wastage. There is a lot of fancy words coming from that side and while I respect that you have the majority, but for me, I represent a lot of people out there and some of my representation is more than yours so, please, honour mine. Please, honour, out of ten of you people, I have far more people who voted for me, so please, respect that.

Madam Speaker, my question is: I am very concerned as a business person, there is a lot of wastage and duplication and I would like more budgeting and more papers brought out for us to talk to the person, to talk to our people about it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, there was no question, just a comment and the comment was, if I could refer to that “there is a lot of wastage”; wastage where, duplication where? I clearly said that what we used to have before is drainage boards, which used to undertake drainage works in designated areas which was clearly stated in the registration.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Where is your budget?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, on Friday, I lifted up a photocopy of the Budget Estimates. I suggest to the Honourable Member to take time out and read the entire Budget Estimates document so that they do not come and waste Parliamentary time.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, just a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister for Waterways in regards to conflicts between farmers on floodgates and other issues of sabotaging floodgates and other usage by other fishermen, et cetera. How has the Drainage Board been monitoring these structures and how is the Ministry now looking into issues or conflicts that arise from that that particular area?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member is raising an interesting point. There had been cases of sabotage because when the floodgate is closed, then the seawater is not able to come on the other side of the field. So what they do is that, the people around that area will come around and put a small timber, et cetera, to see that the floodgate is not closed so that water can go on the other side for two reasons: firstly, they want to do some fishing; secondly, they want to increase the activity so that creates a bit of a problem because if that is the case then the water overflows and goes to the nearby farms. So, Madam Speaker, we have been educating them.

We want to undertake a national awareness programme going forward to explain to them why they should not do that because not only we have got overflow of the creek or the drain but we also have damages to the floodgates and it is quite expensive to repair them. It is not only \$100,000 to \$200,000, it is very expensive so these issues are being reported to us.



Unfortunately, we cannot have a person 24/7 sitting beside each of the floodgates. There are hundreds of floodgates we have in Fiji so that is not possible, all we need to do is to create awareness about the purpose of ensuring that people do not play around with these floodgates which are Government properties.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, just a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister; in terms of those drains that have been highlighted to have been completed, what sort of certification do you have; do you go through a certification process that it meets the technical standards and technical requirements of the drains that have been completed so that we do not repeat that process year-in year-out?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Two things, Madam Speaker. Firstly, as I said, for example, the Lovu one. At the moment, our engineers are undertaking a detailed scoping so once that is done, that is what is then tendered out to get quotation. So once we get quotations and when we choose the service provider, there is a service agreement that we sign off.

In that service agreement, there is a detailed scope of works. When the work is completed, before the payment is made, our engineers ensure that the scope of works is met, so it is ticked off, ticked off before the payment is made.

Secondly, the Honourable Member said that we do not have to do this year-in year-out when you will have to do it nearly every year because these drains do get silted, so that is something that we have to do and that is happening.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prem Singh?

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, it is a clarification from the Honourable Minister, I think he has come by way of a Ministerial Statement, questions and answers to questions, I think what I am seeking to clarify is, you have Ministry of Waterways which is responsible for waterways, rivers and tributaries. Then you have the Drainage Board, they have designated areas, as the Honourable Minister said. Then you have FRA that is responsible for municipal drains, so these overlaps that are there, how does this affect your Ministry all your course of work?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- There is no overlap. FRA is not responsible for municipal drains. The FRA is responsible for the road, roadside drains and the culverts.

HON. P. SINGH.- Roadside drains are also in municipalities.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- The Municipal Council drains are under the Municipal Council for which we provide grant.

On Monday last week, for the first time ever, I explained that we provide grant to assist the smaller towns, to ensure that they are able to maintain the drains. Madam Speaker, Drainage Boards are part of the Ministry of Waterways. They are dealing with designated areas as per the legislation and something that we are now looking at now is how we can amend those legislations to suit the new Ministry of Waterways.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will now move on to the next item. I now call on the Honourable Semesa Karavaki ask his written question.

Written QuestionsForeign Judges, Magistrates and Judicial Officers  
(Question No. 66/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications inform this House on the number of foreign Judges, Magistrates and Judicial Officers employed by the Ministry of Justice as at the end of 2017 and the particulars of their qualifications and duration of their stay in Fiji?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I will provide an answer as provided for under the Standing Orders.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon Honourable Ratu Kiliraki to ask his question.

2017 OHS Accidents Reported to Ministry of Labour  
(Question No. 67/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations inform the House on the number of OHS accidents reported to the Occupational Health and Safety Section of the Ministry of Labour for the year 2017 and the status of these reported cases?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations).- Madam Speaker, as allowed by the Standing Orders, I propose to table my questions at a later time.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Honourable Mikaele Leawere to ask his question.

Policies Piloted/Implemented by the Ministry of Education  
(Question No. 68/2018)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications inform the House on the number and types of policies now being piloted or implemented by the Ministry of Education in schools since 2014?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I will provide the answers as provided for under Standing Orders.

HON. SPEAKER.- Question time is now over and we do not have enough time to accommodate the next Item in the agenda. Therefore, Honourable Members, at this point we will adjourn the proceedings for lunch. Please, note that lunch is provided for Honourable Members in the Big Committee Room.

I request Honourable Members of the House Committee to make your way to the Small Committee Room for our meeting. Parliament will resume proceedings at 2.30 p.m. Thank you.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.24 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.28 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, before we begin this afternoon's session, I would like to take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Fiji National 7s Team for their gallant performance in winning the Vancouver 7s.

(Applause)

On your behalf, Honourable Members, I thank the Coach Gareth Barber, Captain Jerry Tuwai and all the players for their achievement today, and wish them all the best in the rest of their tournaments to be played.

We will resume from where we left off.

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

HON. SPEAKER.- The following Ministers have given notice to make Ministerial Statements under Standing Order 40, the:

1. Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Minerals Resources who has two Statements; and
2. Minister for Waterways.

Each Minister may speak up to 20 minutes. After each Minister, we will then invite the Leader of the Opposition or her designate to speak on the Statement for no more than five minutes. There will also be a response from the Leader of the National Federation Party or his designate to speak for five minutes. There will be no other debate.

I now call upon the Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Minerals Resources to deliver his Statement.

#### Update on the Tourism Industry

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to take the floor to deliver this Statement.

Madam Speaker, as I had already alluded to earlier, I wish to share with the Honourable Members of this House the positive developments in the Fijian tourism industry, the country's largest foreign exchange earner and a significant contributor for the Fijian economy.

Madam Speaker, as in any tourism sector, quality accommodation and convenient access are key requirements in facilitating visitor stay and travel needs. More than 400 licensed hotels cater to our increasing visitor numbers which reached a record 842,884 last year, a 6.4 percent growth, compared to 792,320 in 2016. Notable increases, Madam Speaker, were recorded from our traditional markets, including Australia, New Zealand and USA, as well as our emerging market, India.

For the first time ever, Madam Speaker, the monthly visitor arrivals topped the 90,000 mark in July 2017, with about 90,108 arrivals. Furthermore, the visitor numbers from New Zealand and the USA were the highest ever in any given year.

The increase in visitor arrivals, Madam Speaker, are the result of the Fijian Government's direct marketing support, an enabling policy framework, together with the necessary investment in

enabling infrastructure. In this regard, we work closely with the industry stakeholders to achieve unprecedented levels of growth in this particular sector.

Madam Speaker, through our marketing strategies, we are reducing seasonality of visitor arrivals and dependence on a few key markets. One of the strategies which contributed to the increase in visitor numbers last year was the increase in direct flights to our key destinations and extended code-sharing arrangements. This was complemented obviously, by the strategic marketing by Tourism Fiji and the key stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, noting the critical role the air connectivity plays in developing our tourism sector, Fiji's national airline, Fiji Airways, through its network and fleet expansion plans has increased the availability of seats across our key visitor markets and, therefore, created the potential for attracting greater visitor numbers from these markets.

The expanded code-share agreements with Jet Airways, Alaskan Airlines and American Airlines, for example, will allow convenient and seamless connectivity with Fiji by maximising returns from the existing direct routes and newly established ones, such as through Singapore, San Francisco and Adelaide.

After a nine-year absence in the North East Asian market, the commencement of new direct flights to Narita in Japan in July this year will further expand our global connectivity. This will contribute to our efforts of attracting more inbound visitors from new and emerging markets, in the fastest growing region in the world.

The Fijian Government, Madam Speaker, through its marketing arm, Tourism Fiji, will continue the implementation of its marketing initiatives focussed on attracting high quality and high yielding in visitors.

Madam Speaker, Tourism Fiji has encapsulated Fijian Government's vision to grow tourism (as I alluded to earlier) to a \$2.2 billion industry by 2021, into its marketing strategies. These obviously include the:

1. Revitalisation of the "Fiji: Where happiness Finds You" brand with an emphasis on adding value to the brand and positioning Fiji as a premier destination.
2. Niche marketing - focussing on high yielding markets in reducing seasonality.
3. Trade partnerships - focussed on equipping our travel trade partners with the right information and tools to market Fiji more effectively.
4. Leveraging the new routes and code share agreements by the national airline.
5. Increasing presence in key and emerging markets such as China, India and Singapore.

Madam Speaker, again, as I mentioned earlier, the visitor earnings reached a record \$1.6 billion for 2016, a 2.7 percent increase from the previous year. Over the last five years, average earnings have increased by approximately five percent. That is absolutely phenomenal achievement on behalf of all the stakeholders that were involved in the tourism industry.

The upward growth trend in earnings has also been confirmed by the International Visitors Survey (IVS). The IVS (as I said) indicates an estimated earnings of \$1.97 billion for 2017.

Madam Speaker, the IVS is actually a robust qualitative and quantitative survey undertaken by the Ministry. The results from IVS are very reliable, as it is collected directly from the international visitors. It is a data collection and research tool used by Governments around the world to develop appropriate tourism and related policies. It is also to equip the industry with the information to strengthen their marketing and business decisions.

Madam Speaker, I would like to share some other facts and figures from the 2017 IVS that provides insight into the industry's strengths and opportunities for growth. The top visitor source markets continue to be a consistent driving force behind the growth of the Fijian tourism industry. It is encouraging to note that the Fijian people and the Fijian hospitality continue to be the most favourable impressions of our visitors. Apart from these, Madam Speaker, the appeal to come to Fiji, including our spectacular scenery, our beautiful tropical climate and the relaxing peaceful atmosphere.

Fiji is obviously considered an ideal wedding, honeymoon, spa and family destination with initial visits by couples who come later with their children. Although group tours are still popular there are high numbers of independent travellers who seek an experience, Madam Speaker and these, Fiji provides through its wide attractions and activities whether in the highlands or by the beach.

Madam Speaker, may I, at this juncture, also acknowledge the efforts put in by the Spa Academic Fiji in acquiring something which is called CIDESCO Accreditation. This raises the standard of beauty and spa therapy in Fiji and providing our young people the necessary training to meet international standards of the spa industry and thus, a step forward to developing this niche market for Fiji.

Fiji remains a competitive destination and the ubiquitous Fijian smile and hospitality remains a unique strength that we capitalise on. In 2017, Madam Speaker, over 80 percent or approximately 670,000 visitors came to Fiji for holiday and visiting friends and relatives. This directly contributed to higher occupancy rates for the hotels, more business for tour operators and service providers, which actually ensures the sustainable livelihoods for Fijians.

Spreading the benefits also of the tourist dollar is also a priority, Madam Speaker, of the Fijian Government and I alluded to this last week, that we are in the process of establishing the Wairabetia Economic Zone, which will accommodate high class shopping complex that will also enhance the tourism experience that Fiji offers.

Other initiatives spearheaded by the Ministry, include those targeted at the grass-root communities. These initiatives, Madam Speaker, encourage Fijians who want to engage in tourism activities, as well as provide support services for the tourism industry.

The Ministry actually provides assistance, Madam Speaker, to the rural-based communities to achieve their ambitions. These include capacity building training for about 54 tourism SMSEs from Nadroga, Namosi, Serua, Wainibuka, Beqa, Savusavu, Taveuni, Navua, Rakiraki, Yasawa, Nadi and Lautoka, Madam Speaker.

A follow-up workshop will be held in May this year which will address among other things, disaster risk management preparedness and mitigation measures and you will agree that having an enabling environment, Madam Speaker, for MSMEs propagates jobs, generates income, stimulates entrepreneurship, eradicates poverty and advances the livelihood of all Fijians.

There are notable increases, Madam Speaker, in local communities hosting our visitors either through day tours, homestay experiences, voluntourism and cultural engagements. Many have the

opportunity to host our increasing number of students who come to either attend our educational institutions through exchange programmes or through voluntourism arrangements with development partners and tourism stakeholders.

The Ministry has other targeted initiatives, Madam Speaker, to help develop our communities and small businesses, and this also includes the Micro Small Business Grant (MSBG) where they get assistance for up to \$1,000 for their businesses.

There is also, Madam Speaker, the Young Entrepreneurship Scheme for Fijians between 18 and 30 where eligible Fijians can apply for funding for up to \$20,000 based on their innovative and unique business ideas.

To ensure policy coherence it should be noted, Madam Speaker, that all these initiatives are in line with the strategic recommendations emanating from the five year and a 20 year National Development Plan and the Fijian Tourism 2021, the National Tourism Development Plan for Fiji.

In addition, Madam Speaker, something new on the market, the launch of the Event Development Fund (EDF) by Tourism Fiji. We have had a phenomena response to it so far with a number of activities already being sponsored for this Fund. The EDF is targetted at events that bring new visitors to Fiji, who otherwise would not have visited Fiji and showcase the best of Fiji to other potential visitors' via media coverage. A case in point, Madam Speaker, I think a lot of us show a lot of interest in the Sabeto horseracing. This is the kind of activities that people around the world are actually quite interested in, they want to come and see.

Key developments in the tourism sector, Madam Speaker, resulting from the vision and foresight of the Fijian Government have contributed to the unprecedented achievements in record visitor arrivals and earnings over the past 10 years. These include, Madam Speaker, the:

- Infrastructure development of the \$105 million Nadi International Terminal Upgrade project;
- New \$7.5 million Denarau Bridge;
- Newly-constructed roads that link up Wailoaloa and Denarau areas; and
- \$165 million four-lane highway from Nasoso to Nadi International Airport in Wailoaloa Junction which is expected to be completed by April this year.

Madam Speaker, the sustainable planning and long-term growth policies of the Fijian Government have complemented these infrastructure developments. This has led to several international high-level meetings, conventions and sporting events being hosted in Fiji.

Fiji will also be hosting a number of key meetings in the next 18 months, which includes the:

- 34th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific in April;
- 30th Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia;
- Pacific and South Asia in June; and
- 52nd Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank Board of Governors in May 2019.

As we continue to attract international events, our hotels re-invest in their properties to include world-class conference facilities that can host national and international conferences. However, whilst we try and meet the changing demands for our visitor markets, we are actually developing our industry, Madam Speaker, as I mentioned too earlier, in a very sustainable manner.

Recent developments obviously, everyone be aware of include the

- Marriott Momi Bay;
- Kokomo Private Island Resort; and
- Nila Beach Resort.

In the upcoming months in the pipeline, obviously the:

- Wyndham Silkroad Ark Hotel in Komave;
- Sofitel So at Momi Bay;
- Ramada Suites in Wailoaloa Beach;
- Pullman Nadi Bay Resort and Spa; and
- Six Senses Fiji Vunabaka Resort which I might add, Madam Speaker, is actually a wonderful place because it is a zero carbon emission resort. That is something really important to us.

Madam Speaker, in terms of major sporting events, we have hosted contrary to what other Honourable Members might believe, the PGA Fiji International has been a success, the Super Rugby has been a success, the Standup paddleboard has been a success or yachting regattas that have been success and Oceania sporting events have been a massive success.

A major event Fiji will host in May this year and which potentially, Madam Speaker, the largest international event ever Fiji has been able to secure and that is, the Fiji Interhash. The event is expected to attract more than 2,000 participants from over the 100 countries competing over a period of four to six days.

Madam Speaker, my recent trip to India to attend the South Asian travel and Tourism Exchange (SATTE) was successful, where I had the pleasure to link up with key operators from the tourism industry. SATTE is as well-known is the biggest networking forum for the travel industry in South Asia, involving about 750 exhibitors from 35 countries and 26 Indian States. In our promotion at SATTE was targeted at attracting the high yield niche travellers to Fiji and new travels to Fiji. During that business week, there was also perhaps, bilateral talks with the Minister for Tourism, Honourable Alphons and also Minister for Commerce and Industry, Honourable Prabhu.

On return, Madam Speaker, on recent visit to Japan, I also met up with Minister for Economy, Trade Industry, Honourable Nishime and the Parliamentary Vice Minister for Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Honourable Takahashi. We did discussed opportunities, Madam Speaker, for Fiji to tap into the lucrative niche markets in the areas of MICE and medical tourism, as Honourable the Attorney-General had alluded to earlier, as well as the commencement of the direct flights to Japan in July 2018.

On our local front, Madam Speaker, the expos such as the Fiji Tourism Expo (FTE) to be held in April this year, that again continues to attract record numbers and we have more than 150 international buyers registered so far. We anticipate another successful Expo this year, Madam Speaker, and I extend an invitation to all the Honourable Members of this House to join us at FTE which will be hosted at the Sheraton from the 10th April to 12th of April, 2018. You will have the opportunity to meet our international travel and trade partners and local tourism operators all under the same roof.

Madam Speaker, to allow us to keep pace with international development and remain a competitive destination, Tourism Fiji has also built a team of specialist marketers based in Fiji and in our key international markets. In this day and age, expertise in Brand Marketing, Niche Experiences, Social Media, Research and Insights are actually crucial in positioning Fiji as a premier destination.



We recognise the importance of partnership and collaboration in achieving the Fijian Government's vision for the tourism sector and in line with the strategies outlined in the Fijian Tourism 2021, Tourism Fiji will also strengthen its coordination with our foreign missions, our trade commissions and industry partners to ensure a concerted effort in marketing destination in Fiji and ensuring maximum returns are achieved.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to take the floor.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition or her designate to speak in response.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to reply to the statement made by the Honourable Minister for Tourism. At the outset, Madam Speaker, let me once again express our concern with the way tourism is developing in this country. As we have said many times in the past, visitor arrivals is way off the mark, and we have always said that we should by now, be welcoming a million visitors to our shores.

We have often talked about benchmarking our tourism in terms of visitor arrivals and in the past, we brought up the example of the Maldives. If we go to the Maldives, Madam Speaker, from 2006 until 2016, Fiji had 549,000 visitors in 2006, the Maldives had 600,000 visitors. By 2016, Fiji was at 790,000, Maldives was 1.3 million.

If we had carried out an exercise, Madam Speaker, in mathematics called the linear regression and start off at 2006, we would have done more than a million visitors in 2016. This is a proven fact, I am sure the toppers on the other side can also do this, but that is the status of play right now, Madam Speaker, that we a way behind other comparable destinations.

Madam Speaker, we spoke this morning about Australia and we said that at one time, Fiji used to be number four or five as a preferred destination. We now learn that it is down to 10. Madam Speaker, this is a very concerning situation and if you are not doing it right in our key market, then you are in big trouble, something is not right and some people should be answerable for this. You lose market share you need to be fired and anyone who works in a private sector will always know that market share is critical in the way you run your operation. If you lose market share in Australia, we have a huge problems in our tourism industry and they talk about yield, Madam Speaker. Imagine if they retained market share and have all the yield that they are sharing with us today, imagine what it would have done for this country.

Madam Speaker, it is almost criminal that we have this situation in Australia where we have lost out a lot of destinations and in the process, losing out on the very important revenue for the country.

Madam Speaker, let me go to the products. I spoke many times about Vatulele Island Resort; a boutique resort, iconic, one of the best in the world. It has been closed for six years and I do not think the Honourable Minister for Tourism knows about it.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I know today that it is not Vatulele alone, there are other comparable products that are in distress. I know for a fact that one iconic hotel could not pay its FEA bills over the last week. The Honourable Minister must make an assessment or the inventory in Fiji and how many are in distress and Vatulele is one. I know four others who are now having problems. I know of one leading resort, beautifully iconic, one of the best in the Pacific, today the rooms are crumbling.

I wonder if the Ministry could do an analysis of the Trip Advisors and find out about all these problems, Madam Speaker. And to make it worse these companies that are in distress, where do they borrow their funds from? I hope it is not from HFC or FDB because if they are, then it is a very concerning situation that these hotels, owned by foreigners, in distress, some in receivership, borrowing money that belongs to the taxpayers of Fiji. I think that should be a way of determining how well our tourism is doing.

Madam Speaker, I like what he said about seasonality because tourism in Fiji is seven months of plenty, five months of famine. If they can improve the plenty to nine and three months of famine, I can salute them and say; "Job well done!" But right now, it is still seven months of plenty and five months of famine, that is not something to crow about. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Leader of NFP on his designate.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his Ministerial Statement and I also join the Honourable Speaker in congratulating our National Sevens Team for their win.

Madam Speaker, the findings of the 2017 IVS may be positive to us but what we are hearing from the tourism sector is that, the visitor arrivals are not translating to tourism earnings, especially because of the taxes - 10 percent STT, 6 percent Environment Levy and 9 percent VAT

Madam Speaker, an NFP Government in power will relook at this and look at the whole implications of the tax so that the tourism industry gets the confidence it deserves. In 2014, our Departure Tax increased from \$150 to \$200, Madam Speaker. A load of tourism numbers that the Honourable Minister has quoted, yet many of them are returning residents, who come to Fiji to visit friends, families and to attend social functions and this is a burden on them, Madam Speaker.

We are gradually pricing ourselves out of the tourism market with these taxes and Fiji is no longer the cheap destination it used to be. The Ministry is being reported as being on target to surpass the targeted tourism earnings of \$2 billion by the year 2021. We are three years away from 2021 so where are we in terms of tracking towards such a lofty target?

The Fijian Tourism 2021, Madam Speaker, Strategic Plan is now like, how are climate change impacts such as our bleached coral and extreme weather events that impact on health, such as airborne diseases, are they being mitigated in this plan?

Madam Speaker, in the absence of any recent study on tourism leakages, we are guided by the former Reserve Bank Governor, Barry Whiteside's saying that \$0.40 out of every dollar is leaked out of this country because the hoteliers and resorts are not locally owned and we import a lot of food and other things that the hotel requires to furnish its guests.

Madam Speaker, I hope and I urge the Honourable Minister not to be easily taken by their own figures and to remember that tourism, for a long time, is being sustained by VAT but the returns here in Fiji are not raking in as fast as it should.

Madam Speaker, tourism has always been a very strong component of our Fijian economy. Every Government in this country, not the FijiFirst Government alone, but every Government has paid heed to that advice and they have made the tourism industry prosper because of employment.

Madam Speaker, the issue at hand now is (as the Honourable Minister said) that tourism is on target. How many of our indigenous resource owners own hotels, motels and are actively involved in

the tourism industry? Apart from being employed as housekeepers, some rise up to managerial levels. This is food for thought that I leave to the Honourable Minister.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor again to the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources to deliver his second statement.

Statement - Ministry for Lands and Mineral Resources

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I am glad I can use one word after what they said, Madam Speaker, what a load of codswallop. Anyway, Madam Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me this opportunity to take the floor to deliver a Ministerial Statement in my capacity as a Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources.

Madam Speaker, the assessment and exploration of existing mineral prospects to facilitate growth in the exploration of the mining industry to boost the mineral sector contribution towards the GDP and improving national economic growth continues for this financial year with three prospect sites namely; Delaikoro and Vunimoli in Labasa and Nasivi in Tavua, with prospects of gold, silver and copper. Should the evaluated prospect proceed to the advanced exploration stages, the project aims to attract potential investors and rake in further economic return.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry remains committed to its advisory role for geo-hazard assessments and monitoring through active involvement in the community relocation programmes. Under the village relocation programme, the Ministry undertakes geo-technical assessment of proposed relocation sites, to ensure site stability and geo-hazard are effectively addressed. Also the Ministry continues to monitor on a 24/7 basis the earthquake and tsunami events, making sure relevant stakeholders and all Fijians are efficiently advised and prepared.

In the administration and regulation of the mineral sector, the Ministry has observed stable growth in exploration and mining. Currently, we have 38 Special Prospecting Licences and 8 Special Mining Licences. As Fiji enjoys the full economic and social benefits of its social resources, the Ministry takes full responsibility in ensuring that mining companies and projects carry out the work in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

Madam Speaker, due to the rise in the portfolio of the global exploration sector, Fiji has also noted an increase in exploration activities from local companies. Currently, approximately five extensive drilling programmes have been proposed by:

- Thunderstruck Company in Serua;
- Vatukoula Gold Mines in Vatukoula;
- Dome Mines in Ono Island in Kadavu;
- Kalo Exploration in Cirianiu; and
- Matai Holdings Limited in Udu Point.

Madam Speaker, Vatukoula Gold Mines, our major gold mining company, will continue to undertake mining exploration activities to ensure mineable resources are available for its mining operations. In this front, Vatukoula Gold Mines has recently partnered with a Canadian mineral exploration company. This partnership, facilitated by the Ministry will allow Vatukoula to further explore minerals within its other exploration licensed area to add to its reserve stock for mining.

Madam Speaker, the iron sand mining project for the Ba Delta is at its development stage as the holder Amex Resources Limited is currently developing its loading port facility and I think it is quite visible to anyone who goes to Lautoka, the total investment of \$US30 million.

In addition, Lion One Limited as the holder of the Tuvatu Mining lease is also at its development stages with late 2018 as a proposed date of production. The company is focusing on stabilising the site to set up its mine mill and is working with the Ministry, as well as other respective stakeholders to ensure that the mining commences as agreed.

In the Northern Division, the bauxite mining is progressing well and in a sustainable fashion and last month, a shipment was dispatched from the Naibulu East mining site. Mining operations at the Nawailevu site have now (as I have mentioned earlier on Friday) actually ceased operations due to the exhaustion of bauxite ore on site.

The mining license to Xinha Aurum is currently under rehabilitation and is being monitored by the Ministry on a monthly basis. Approximately 200,000 pine trees have been planted within the mined licensed boundary with the view to cultivate other potential plants. Subsequently, with this initiative, it should be noted that the leases are not granted for mining purposes only, there is a very important piece of information; it actually includes the rehabilitation of the sites so that they are returned to the landowners in a manageable state so that a return is derived for future generations.

Madam Speaker, allow me to also enlighten to this House the issuance of foreshore leases. In the past six months, the Ministry has issued a total of 130 foreshore leases and in all this, endeavours to again achieve a delicate balance in ensuring sustainable development. These foreshore leases have benefited the traditional fishing rights owners through annual payments of quantum for loss of traditional fishing rights whilst creating employment opportunities for the local communities.

Foreshore tourism leases generate millions of dollars to Fiji's national economy. In this, Madam Speaker, I continue to emphasise the strengthened environment within which the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources manages the critical mangrove ecosystem of Fiji.

As alluded to earlier, the Mangrove Management Committee works with the Resources Management Agencies of Government, civil society organisation and the private sector to ensure the sustainable management of mangroves.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, the Standard Operating Procedures of the Ministry also ensures that awareness consultations are carried out to the TFROs to enable and to be on an informed position when making the decision to waive the traditional fishing rights or not to. At these awareness sessions Madam Speaker, representatives from the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Fisheries are present to address any queries on the environment impact assessment and also on the fisheries impact assessment and other clarifications that maybe sought by the TFRO.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources in collaboration with iTaukei Land Trust Board and the Ministry of Local Government are looking at establishing this in respect of regularising informal settlements looking at changing the process of how we actually ensure that we comply with Section 35(1) of the Constitution, that states, and I quote: "The State must take reasonable measures within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation of the right of every person to accessible and adequate housing and sanitation."

Fiji has more than about 200 informal settlements with 50 percent occupying *iTaukei* land through *vakavanua* arrangements and again, this is a collaborative effort between the two Ministries and also iTLTB so that they can ensure adequate and proper housing is given to all Fijians.

Typically everyone knows that these informal settlements are established through *mataqali* members and occupants agreeing to make some monetary payments to landowners periodically for temporary residence. It actually lacks any formal registration of ownership and for regularisation also

at the same time, Madam Speaker, deals with the complex socio-economic and urban environmental realities and involves multiple aspects of land registration, financial, urban and environmental laws.

Madam Speaker, with respect to regularisation there are other challenges such as the duration of occupation, population, the number of buildings, disaster resistance and existing services. At the end of the day, what will happen, Madam Speaker, it gives the *mataqali* that was involved in the initial *vakavanua* arrangement, a stable income once it is regularised out of their resource, in turn, allowing them to get better returns on their land.

Madam Speaker, with respect to these informal communities, the arguments that are used to advance this, the whole principle of the project is to align it to Government's initiative under the vibrant 20-year National Development Plan. Again, the State has a legal obligation to enable the poor to have access to fair ownership and adequate housing. There is obviously a need for legal titling for occupants which allows access to credit investment opportunities, poverty alleviation and tenure of security and these facts actually work both, for the lessor and lessee.

There is absorption of neighbouring less-populated and high risk informal settlements. In most cases, Madam Speaker, also the occupants demarcate lot boundaries and construct rudimentary dwellings that at first, lack basic public services such as proper access, water and sanitation. Over time, those buildings are expanded and concentration of settlements near to urban areas stimulate more building constructions generally, creating communities with notable homes, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, the provision of State support in enlightening also these landowners in understanding the land market value and utilisation.

The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism (MITT) also gets involved in this matter, in advising the landowners on business investments to assist in the encouragement of development of micro and small businesses. Madam Speaker, the data that has been captured on VanuaGIS, at the moment, shows that 133 informal settlements that exist nationally, and 37 of them actually lie in flood-prone areas which is of an elevation of between 0-10 metres.

With respect to the implementation of the informal settlements, as I said, the project is being undertaken by the iTaukei Lands Trust Board, the Ministry of Lands and the Ministry of Local Government. We also have to collect all the baseline data to programme adequate and subsequent data on programme costs and outcomes are being undertaken by the three bodies. Lastly, to support more research and analysis, and also to determine post-regularisation programmes that we may need to undertake to prevent drastic developments.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry is also responsible for the reversion of land held in trust, that is, State Schedule A and State Schedule B. As of last year, a total of 1,110 leases were transmitted from a total of 3,343 leases. Lessees were notified of the change in administration of their leases and for this year, the Ministry continues to work on the transmission of leases and execute re-definition survey works.

The Ministry also acknowledges the iTLTB and will continue to have a joint collaboration with them in ensuring that vast transmission in this financial year. In doing so, Madam Speaker, the reversion of Schedule A and Schedule B lands will certainly empower the landowning units, opening windows of opportunity for them and investment which will boost economic growth and returns for their future generations.

Since 2014, Madam Speaker, the Ministry has surveyed a total of 40 informal settlements on State land and we have issued a total of 318 Approval Notices; 96 for the Western Division, 133 for

the Northern and 89 for the Central Division. This work will also continue for this financial year as the Ministry anticipates issuing more approval notices and leases that will benefit the families.

Madam Speaker, something was brought up a little while ago with respect to rental arrears. On 2nd February, 2018 that stood at \$23 million and for the past 10 years, the Ministry has been collecting average rental arrears of \$13 million per annum. This has been an exemplary record in comparison to previous Government standards.

Currently there is a six-month waiver of interest period from 1st January, 2018 to 30th June, 2018, to allow State land lessees to pay their arrears interest free. Furthermore, we do not actually have a taskforce but we have a Unit with three project officers, who have been working tirelessly on the ground to consult, remind and discuss rental dues with the respective State land lessees.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Lands obviously will continue to deliver its services with commitment and persevere to ensure accessibility, security and prosperity of all Fijians.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Leader of the Opposition or her designate to speak in response.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- I thank the Minister for his statement and I would like to address some of the issues that he raised. Before I start, Madam Speaker, I would ask the Honourable Minister to find a house that will house all the departments of the Ministry of Lands because the general public are being inconvenienced with the services provided by the Ministry. You have the head office in Nasese, the survey section in Raajibhai Patel Street, another office in the old NBF building, valuation section in Pathik Crescent and another office at Ro Lalabalavu House. They are scattered and it is very inconvenient for the general public to go and get some information from the Lands Department.

Madam Speaker, I think we have been asking the Ministry to review the legislation and we have heard that they have been reviewing all these legislation since 2014. To date, some of the issues that are very concerning to the landowners have not been addressed. One, is the fair share of the royalty under the Constitution. We have finished the Bauxite Mining in Wailevu and they have exported millions of dollars' worth of bauxite. Now the landowners are still waiting for their fair share of the royalty. Madam Speaker, they cannot be paid royalty unless they have come up with a formula.

On the issue of the foreshore reclamation, when foreshore is being developed by the Government, the landowners lose their fishing rights. The compensation that they are given is not enough to take care of the livelihood of the future generation.

Madam Speaker, I urge the Minister to think outside of the box and try to address these issues.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, the issue to be addressed by the Agricultural Tribunal, the Agricultural Tribunal does not have the structure or expertise to address this issue. They do not have the scientific assessment to fairly assess the loss to the fishing rights. I urge the Ministry to look at some other methods of assessing the fishing rights. One, they should take a share from the lease derived from this development so that it can benefit the future generation because they have lost their fishing rights forever.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Secondly, you should also look at the disturbance and the damage caused to fishing rights over streams and rivers which have been exploited by people that extract gravel and sand. This is a big issue.

On prospecting in the mining industry, Madam Speaker, this prospecting licence is given by the Minister for Mineral Resources. The licence is over native land. How do you justify that when the land does not belong to the Government? You should look at this.

Regarding coordination, we have heard by carrying out all these development they coordinate with other ministries. I do not know what sort of coordination they do. I hope all these things will be addressed by the Honourable Minister. *Vinaka Vakalevu.*

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Leader of the NFP or his designate to speak in response.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his ministerial statement. On the issue of Ministry of Lands and its activities, it is concerning that there are unprecedented concerns from lessees in relation to State and Crown land leases applications that normally should have standard processes, timelines and responses from the Ministry. But this is not happening. Despite time and again, the Minister coming to this House and assuring us that concerns would be processed in so many weeks or days, it is not happening.

The Clopcott lease issue, which we have continued to press for updates ever since it was rolled out as a Christmas gift in 2014, has only today been advised in this House and been confirmed for 99 year lease by the Honourable Acting Prime Minister. Madam Speaker, perhaps it is time for the Honourable Minister to look deeper into internal process and reassess the procedural viabilities in line with the law so that the people are not unduly burdened.

Madam Speaker, on mining leases, the prospecting exploration and mine licence, we have three different types of licences. The mining leases are upto ten years or the maximum of 20 years, and that is after exploration has been done. In many cases we find that the explorers do not end up with the mining lease because it was sufficient for them to dig. Madam Speaker, what is of concern is when they leave they upset the environment. It is in this respect, Madam Speaker that stringent measures should be included in granting any licences of this sort.

Madam Speaker, on the foreshore leases, the Honourable Minister very elaborately explained the processes that are involved, but I ask this House it is about time the Government looks at regulating these mangroves and its surroundings. The mangroves are being cut on a daily basis under the foreshore licences and today the Honourable Minister has not given any statistics on whether an assessment has been done as to what percentage of the mangroves have been damaged, cut and what is remaining?

What I think should be happening is that we should regulate that, we must have certain areas of mangroves retained. It is no use being compensated for the whole mangroves; replanting is another option which is happening. Madam Speaker this is not only an environmental concern but the concern for the people of Fiji because a lot of our citizens depend on mangroves for their food. Madam Speaker, as I have said whether an assessment has been done, the results of which will go a long way in implementing this legislation. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Minister for Waterways to deliver his statement.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Honourable Speaker, Honourable Acting Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of Opposition, colleagues thank you very much for the opportunity to give my ministerial statement.

Madam Speaker, I thought that it is important that I give a ministerial statement on the causes of flooding in Fiji given the misunderstanding that it is only due to heavy rain. There are other contributing factors Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, flooding in simple terms refers to overflow of spillways or waterways or water making new path ways due to sudden increase in volume or speed of its flow. There is a natural feature of drainage systems on rivers and streams which occurs when drain canals are filled and the rivers and streams can no longer accommodate the excessive water generated by severe weather conditions. The drainage canals then overtook the natural or artificial banks and waters enter the surrounding lands to cause flooding.

Madam Speaker, floods prove that waterway in huge quantities can be an enormously destructive force virtually impossible to stop because of the speed and weight. Madam Speaker, scientists have noted that the total amount of water on earth has not changed over the last three billion years implying that the hydrological cycle is set to be constant. Madam Speaker, hydrological cycle in simple terms involve the evaporation of water from oceans into the atmosphere and back onto the land or earth in the form of rain or snow.

Madam Speaker, in a nutshell what the scientists are saying is that the volume of water is the same. The water that run from the land absorbs by heat after some period of time makes its way back into the ocean.

Madam Speaker, generally, there are three types of floods:

1. Flash floods;
2. Rapid on-set floods; and
3. Slow on-set floods.

Madam Speaker, flash floods commonly occur in Fiji within a very short period of time and is usually a result of heavy rain caused by intense rainfall from slow moving thunderstorms.

Madam Speaker, flash floods are most destructive and can be fatal because people are usually taken by surprise without warning, no preparation where the impact can be, and is very swift and devastated. A recent flash flooding occurred two weeks ago in the Western Division including Rakiraki, Tavua, Ba and Nadi where most of the main bridges were under water.

Rapid on-set floods slightly take longer to develop which lasts for a day or two. It is also very destructive but does not usually surprise people like flash floods. With rapid on-set floods, people can quickly put a few things right and escape before conditions worsen. Slow on-set floods rarely occur in Fiji. It occur as a result of water bodies over flooding the banks. They develop slowly and can last for days and weeks. They usually spread over many kilometres and occur more in plains.

Madam Speaker, when rain falls on catchment, the amount of rain water that reaches the waterways depends on the characteristics of the catchment particularly size, shape and land use. Some rainfall is captured by soil vegetation and the remainder enters waterway trough. River waterway characteristic such as size and shape, land use, the vegetation in and around the river, downstream water levels, the presence of structures adjacent to the waterways all affects the level of water in the water way.



Madam Speaker, the bigger and straighter and smoother a river, creek or other canal is the greater its capacity to carry water and the less prone it is to flooding. Simply put straight rivers speed up water descend while meandering ones slow it down. Any process that reduces the capacity such as the placement of structures in the canal, encroachment by developing or build-up of sediments contributes to increase flooding. For instance, there is more flooding in the upper meandering ridges of Sigatoka valley compared to the downstream straight reach alongside Sigatoka Town.

Madam Speaker, a recent JICA report on the study of four major rivers in Viti Levu noted that land use in Fiji is either covered with forest, agriculture land, urban areas and underutilised land including grassland. We as humans, have certainly altered much of the natural landscape of the planet leading to an increase flood.

Madam Speaker, the consequences of flooding in Fiji in terms of land use are scrambling influence the commercial development and urbanisation. Due to urban drift, an increase in population particularly within urban councils Fiji, new settlements including informal settlements have been built illegally specially in flood prone zones despite knowing their danger.

Informal settlement do not have proper amenities including proper drainage connected to strong drainage outlets and flood retention structures which further increases impacts of flooding. Madam Speaker if the river basin or flood plains has been heavily urbanised, a river becomes much more prone to flooding.

Urbanisation involves laying down of tarmac or concrete in familiar substances to increase surface run out into the river and therefore increase the rivers discharge. Today, many subdivision or urban residential areas face a lot of flooding caused mainly by poor drainage, undersized drains and block drains caused by debris or dump rubbish.

To stop road and streets from flooding, human should often build storm drains that collect rain water and channel into a river or stream.

Madam Speaker, recently in print media, *Fiji Sun*, an article published on 26th December, last year, the Waidamudamu Settlement in Nakasi was noted to still facing major drainage problem as debris and rubbish clogged the drains. Madam Speaker, this settlement is located within the vicinity of Koronivia East Drainage Scheme, which is under the jurisdiction of our Ministry, where most of the settlements, drains are connected to the farm drains within the scheme, to further discharge into the Rewa River. The existing farm drain were initially designed for agriculture purposes where runoff was not as much as today, because we did not have this Waidamudamu Settlement, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, you can see how this new settlement that has come up now but are using the old drainage system which was not designed to cater for this new settlement. This is not only in Waidamudamu, Madam Speaker, throughout Fiji. When the new settlements with new developments came in, there was no separate new provision for drainage system.

Madam Speaker, plants in the river or it banks slow the speed of water flowing into it. The slower water moves, the higher the water level and the greater extent to which flood plains surrounding the river will be inundated. This can reduce downstream flood levels to flow. Plants also reinforce river banks, decrease in erosion and increasing the deposit of sediments.

Madam Speaker, the capacity of waterways can also be affected by water level in the ocean or lake they are flowing into. For example a king tide or storm surge can hamper the release of water from a river into the ocean. A similar effective water near junction of creeks with the rivers where backward effects from river flooding can extend a significant distance up the creek.

Madam Speaker, this is to-date handled by developing or constructing floodgates. This is something that I was alluding to this morning, from a question that was raised by the Honourable Member from the other side about people playing around with floodgates. When floodgates are not able to close, then during high tide, salt water enters into creeks and overflows onto nearby farms. Once that happens, it takes months and months to get the salt water out of that agriculture land and then make it suitable for agriculture growth because once we have salt in the fields then nutrient uptake becomes a problem.

Madam Speaker, structures that are placed in a creek or waterway, for example, culverts in an urban drainage system or bridges in a river reduce the water capacity of the waterway and may contribute to flooding.

Madam Speaker, whenever a structure is supposed to be erected in a waterway, it requires a detailed examination by engineers. We just willy-nilly cannot just go, based on a complaint, start erecting structures in waterways. We need proper assessment, we need people who are expert engineers to undertake the work. That is why, whenever there is an issue or complaint, we send our team down to undertake a detailed scoping and these are expert engineers, at least with a Diploma in Civil Engineering or Bachelor in Civil Engineering so that we willy-nilly do not tamper with the waterway.

Madam Speaker, levees along the waterway are designed to protect areas behind the levee from floods up to a certain level. But their constraining influence in floods prone areas can cause upstream floods to be higher than otherwise could be. Road and railway embankments with insufficient cross drainage capacity can block off parts of the floodplain with similar effect.

Madam Speaker, this is something that we noted in Oloolo about three weeks ago, when we visited that area to examine the issue of flooding. We have similar issues where constructions were made on waterways which are not able to handle the flow of water.

Sometimes bridges that have been constructed over rivers can slow the discharge of water and reduce the rivers capacity to hold more. These bridges sometimes have debris entangled to it and therefore restricting the flow of water resulting in the water finding new pathway on the flood field.

Madam Speaker, dams are considered instalments that contain dangerous flows that can also cause flood. But up to date we have not had any issue of dam failures in Fiji. A dam is a barrier across flowing water that obstructs direct or slows down the flow or often creating a reservoir. It is important, even though, we did not have dam failure here in Fiji, but to have a small distortion there because we have dams in Fiji.

Most dams have a section called field way, through which water flows either intermittently or continuously. An example is the Monasavu Dam, which is both the tallest and largest dam in Fiji and hosts the largest reservoir in the country. The primary purpose of the dam is to produce, as all of us know, hydroelectric power. It supports about 80 megawatts power station. During high rainfall periods, especially tropical cyclones, access water can also be intentionally released from the dam to prevent from breaking which causes flood downstream, Madam Speaker. But to-date we have not had any problem with dam failure and therefore flooding downstream either from Monasavu or Nadarivatu.

Madam Speaker, there has been no history of failure in Fiji, but there has been dam failure in other parts of the world. Let me give some examples, just for us to know that, yes, it could happen and what are the causes of it.

Madam Speaker, in Italy, the Gleno Dam failed once due to substandard construction material used. In United States, the South Fork Dam failed due to steelwork design error. In France, the

Malpasset Dam failed due to geological instability caused by changes to water level during filling of poor survey giving wrong data to design engineers.

In Italy, the Vajont Dam failed due to landslide into the reservoir. In the US, the Long Lake Dam failed due to poor maintenance especially of the outlet pipes. In Pakistan, the Shadikor Dam (Shadi Kaur dam) failed due to extreme in flow, which the dam was not able to handle and the timing of opening up this spill ways was not there. In England, the Diak reservoir failed due to human computer and design error. Whenever the dam failed, there is massive flooding downstream. Fortunately we have not had this so far in Fiji. Despite some people gossip around and saying that the massive flooding during *TC Kina* was possibly due to failure of Monasavu Dam, but that was not true.

Madam Speaker, coastal flooding occurs when normally dry and low line land is flooded by sea water and we have seen a number of places in Fiji where this has happened for a number of reasons. Once the sea level rise due to problems with floodgates, people deliberately playing around with floodgates, and this is something that we are addressing now.

Madam Speaker, storms also caused flooding through storm surges, where waves are significantly larger than normal. If a storm even corresponds with high astronomical tide, flooding can occur, such as the events of 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2016 where 100 percent of the buildings in the island of Koro in the Lomaiviti Group suffered damage. This was the result of *TC Winston* and storm surge which resulted in sea water moving in.

Madam Speaker, floods are also affected by the roughness of the terrain been passed over dense vegetation and artificial obstacles such as fences in households will slow down water flow. We have seen this increasingly in settlements where buildings and developments are encroaching on drains that have been made, which is causing a hindrance to water flow in the waterway.

Madam Speaker, heavy rainfall at river sources where rivers or streams overflow the banks this happens when there is more up streams than usual as it flows downstream to the adjacent low lying areas there is a burst and water gets into the land.

Flow capacity into the Rewa River, Sigatoka River, Nadi River and Ba River in terms of a survey cross section are the smallest at the river mouths compared to the other sections. When we have the river mouth much smaller than the upstream, then the flood plains, closer to the river mouth will get flooded because the wider river upstream gets narrower at the river mouth is not able to handle that volume of water that comes down, Madam Speaker. This was identified by the recent JICA Report that I mentioned, Madam Speaker, for the four rivers in Viti Levu.

Madam Speaker, a study on the Water Shed Management and Flood Control of the four major rivers in 1997 revealed the true characteristics found on the river system. One is that, the sudden drainage areas occupied a greater part of the island, and only small parts remained for the Northern drainage areas, Madam Speaker.

Another characteristic is that, the gradient of the river beds are very gentle from the mouth to the middle ridge and abruptly gets very steep in the upper ridge.

Madam Speaker, climate change is a reality. El Nino and La Nina are a complex series of climate change, combined with global warming caused by pollution only makes disasters more severe. The variations in the atmospheric vertical circulation along the Equator over the Pacific, known as the El Nino and La Nina, Madam Speaker, is also causing rise in the sea level and therefore contributing to the inundation of salt water in nearby coastal areas.

Madam Speaker, to other issues that contribute to the increased volume of water coming into our waterways which I slightly alluded to earlier on, are deforestation and forest degradation.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Forests identifies areas for harvesting which is classified as forest-degraded areas. The forest areas degraded in the last five years, is about 8,000 hectares which is derived from the licensed areas for harvesting alone. This is the area of where the actual hard core forests have been removed.

Madam Speaker, the difference between forest degradation and forest deforestation is that, deforestation is the conversion of forest land into agricultural land, therefore the land is still under some kind of crop but deforestation includes activities like logging where the forest will remain but with less carbon density.

Madam Speaker, the causes of flooding are varied but the effects of most causes can be managed if not prevented. With heavy rain, there will be new volume of water, there is no doubt about it in the waterways. We need to be ready in ensuring that this new volume of water flows out of this to the sea and does not spill out and cause damage to infrastructure or settlements.

In this regard, our Ministry will work with all the stakeholders to develop a comprehensive master plan to minimise any negative effects of increased volume of water that flows into our waterways in the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to highlight to Honourable Members of this House as well as the listeners outside about the full complete dimension about flooding.

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- Madam Speaker, before responding to the Honourable Minister for his statement, just after Fiji's victory in the Vancouver Sevens, someone texted me, "This to be read out that the Fiji declared on the Vancouver Grounds '*Eda sa qaqa, eda sa qaqa, ena vuku ni dra kei na Nona Vosa, eda sa qaqa*'", I leave it to you, Madam Speaker, to translate that.

Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for Waterways for his statement, however, I was trying to keep up with what he was saying. He went from the waterways to climate change to forestry to the deep ocean. I think he spent too many weeks overseas, that is why he was going all over the place, thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is important that we face the effects of both climate change ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Unbelievable.

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- ... and 12 years of their neglect of our drains, it is important that as we face the effects of both climate change and 12 years of their neglect on our drains, roads and waterways, that we continue to work together to improve the lives of ordinary Fijians.

I thank the Honourable Minister for being on that track, however, Madam Speaker, for many families and businesses, his comments come a little bit too late. In fact, it is 12 years late, that is unprecedented, and I hope he is not trying to frighten us about the Monasavu Dam and that they have to check it out because that is part of their core function, Madam Speaker. After 12 years of being exposed to the worst flood-controlled prevention and relief response processes, the issue of floods finally get priority, especially in my part of the country.

Madam Speaker, the new Ministry of Waterways was allocated a sum of \$24.2 million in the last Budget, that is our taxpayers' money and it is no wonder that today, taxpayers from Tavua,

Rakiraki, Nadi, Sigatoka, Ba and even Labasa are disappointed with the inaction of the Ministry where they are blaming it on flash floods and the like.

Madam Speaker, someone saw it appropriate to blame the Fijian people and climate change for the floods in Fiji. That person forgot to mention that one of the reasons we have floods is because of the Government's poor performance in regulating logging, policing their EIAs (Environmental Impact Assessments), issuing contracts to dirty businesses who pollute our rivers and dump their industrial wastes into the Kinoya Sewerage Plant which ends up in our streams and rivers.

We have to clamp down on these businesses like unsustainable logging practices and the dumping of waste water into our rivers.

Madam Speaker, there are some things that the FijiFirst Government should have done already since the creation of the Ministry of Waterways last year. Can I share eight things that should have already happened?

1. We should have already introduced better flood warning systems.
2. We should have already spent our resources on modifying homes and businesses to help them withstand floods that are flood-resilient rather than flood defence schemes.
3. We should have already pumped capital into constructing buildings and building houses above flood levels.
4. We should have increased spending on flood defences instead of wasting millions on useless projects like a Committee to change the Fiji Flag or even large contingents to go overseas with larger per diems or spending millions on diplomatic relations with countries like Indonesia, who are engaged in genocide against the people of West Papua, who are our Melanesian brothers and sisters.

Madam Speaker, we should have spent more money, time and energy in the creation of more wetlands which can act as sponges soaking up moisture and wooded areas that can slow down waters which the Honourable Minister was speaking about when rivers overflow. We could have spent time and research on restoring rivers to their natural courses.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, we should have a government that works for farms and businesses along our rivers and streams to improve certain conditions. Madam Speaker, inappropriate soil management, machinery and livestock can cause soil to become compacted so that instead of absorbing moisture, holding it and slowly letting it go, water runs off it immediately. Well-drained soil can absorb huge quantities of rain water, preventing it from draining into rivers. These are just a few examples of what the FijiFirst Government should have done over the past few years over the type of revolutionary practices that we should have already seen with the Government, thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. P. CHAND.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement and at the outset, may I say this, "The Minister is new, I do not blame him but I blame the Government and those that were in charge of waterways, drainage and all these that have not been looking after these very properly."

First, can I also remind the Minister, on behalf of my colleague, Honourable Prem Singh that he is still awaiting the JICA Report that the SCIA which he assured will be made available to him in

this august House, last week on a similar update related to his portfolio that it would be made available to me and this has not eventuated yet.

Madam Speaker, I believe much of these flooding in the towns and cities could have been avoided if we have had municipal elections, as promised by the relevant Minister way back in 2014. The Special Administrators and Police are not accountable to ratepayers as they were in the past when Local Government representatives were elected, and many of these works needing prioritisation at the Local Government level now fall on the Minister to manage at the national level.

Madam Speaker, in a nutshell, 11 to 12 years of neglect has come home to roost and now that elections are coming, the Government is running around frantically trying to quell the discontent of those who put us here to represent their interest.

Madam Speaker, it is very clear, Honourable Prem Singh's response last week on the need for socio economic and environmental safe guards in the first instant through EIAs and SCIAs, the Honourable Minister said they are beyond that. That JIICA report had two recommendations that were factored in last year's budget at a cost of \$10 million, Nadi River study, yet residents of Nadi are still awaiting work to commence on the river. May I just highlight some very specific points. Many of the places that flooding is taking place in towns, in cities, on roads and in cane fields is because of the 12 years of total neglect of this present Government that is in power.

The Vunimoli Road - the water blockage in Vunika has just recently started about few years ago, Siberia has been like that for about five years. When we go to the Fiji Roads Authority, they tell us that they are not able to go into other people's premises to clear waterways, as the Department of National Roads was doing this before. They talk about big jargon, everything is jargon to them. They will go and do some homework, bring about some quotations and then all this process is just delayed. What we want is a quick action in the places where water is being filled on the roads every now and then.

The road beside the *Naag Mandir* in Nagigi gets flooded every now and then, every time, sometimes two to three times a day when there is flash flooding. People cannot come to school or come to work. When we complain to the FRA, they tell us that they cannot go and clean those culverts, as the road and the tramline is adjacent to one another.

So, we have recurring problems Madam Speaker, because what is happening is just total neglect. Since FRA came into being, the road conditions and flooding is something which is prevalent every now and then. I must say this is an unprecedented situation that has occurred, carried and caused by the Fijifirst Government. A total neglect.

Madam Speaker, every now and then, there is flooding in Nadi Town, in Ba Town and this never used to happen before in Rakiraki. If you go into the Labasa River, you can just walk across the river because the river is so much silted. And we have been hearing that this river will be dredged, it is not happening. The Namara flood gates and the flood gates in Nasekula, do not operate. Whenever you report to Authorities in charge, they are not able to do anything because the different Ministries are not able to collaborate together. I know the Minister has been going around and doing something but mostly campaigning, condemning the NFP.

Madam Speaker, this is the problem and I would suggest that backbencher to tell the Minister that what they should do is that in every place where there is a flood gate, they should not have embankments on the side. These are the kinds of things that he needs to go and tell the people and get it done. I do understand he is new, he was the Education Minister, not able to operate but this is what I would say....

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. I seek leave of Parliament whether to break for refreshment.

The Parliament adjourned at 3.49 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 4.20 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to have the floor.

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, I move under Standing Orders 6:

That so much of Standing Orders 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to sit beyond 4.30 p.m. today to complete all Items as listed in today's Order Paper.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to have the floor.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, we have just a Bill and the two motions that are listed and we hope we can complete that before the House is suspended for tomorrow morning.

HON. SPEAKER.- The motion is up for debate and I invite comments, if any?

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

### **RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016**

In Committee:

#### Clause 1

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments on Clause 1, if any?

(Chorus of "Noes")

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I assume that when we are talking about the Clauses, they are as marked as amended, to the amendments included.

HON. RO T.V. KEPHA.- We do not have the Bills because we do not know what Bills will be debated today. That was not given to us, so we have no Bills here.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The Bill was actually tabled last week.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So as the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- And so as the motion and you should come prepared. Last week, it was given to you.

Yes, according to the NFP, they did receive theirs.



HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You got it?

Yes, I think the rest of the Opposition Members have it. Maybe it is just a section here.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- When it was tabled last week, it was distributed to everyone with the Committee Report.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, Honourable Bultavu. First time, you have got it right.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Honourable Bultavu. It is on the agenda. It was debated and approved.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So, Madam Speaker, just getting back, we are reading it as per the amended Bill.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- So, now to Clause 1 and you look at the amended version of Clause 1, does anyone have any input to Clause 1?

(Chorus of “Noes”)

If Honourable Bultavu has his copy and he says that he has no comments, then that must be ....

HON. M.D. BULTAVU.- Probably, Madam Chairperson, the Committee too had deliberated, most of the amendments that are here was done on a bipartisan.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes. It was a bipartisan decision. Thank you.

I did call if there was any opposition and everyone agreed to, everyone agreed to so there is really no need for vote.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2

The floor is now open for comments on Clause 2.

(Chorus of “Noes”)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No comments?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. There being no comments and no one against, Clause 2 is accepted and approved as is.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Clause 3 is now open for debate, if any?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Opposition?

HON. OPPOSITON MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Vadei?

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Just a comment on Clause 3 regarding the functions of the Council in the establishment of disabilities, if that can be separated from the Ministry once the budget allocation has been established so that they can pursue and peruse those clauses for the disabled expediently. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, the Honourable Member is perhaps misguided in that respect. Clause 3 speaks for itself. The Council is independent and as is the current practice that the Council does get a grant from the Ministry and there is an MOU between the Ministry and the Council, who will still continue to have their place.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There has been no amendment to Clause 3. So everyone agrees to Clause 3?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is open for comments on Clause 4.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chairperson, can we go back to Clause 2?

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- No, no.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- It is a correction. On f(i) the numbering (a), (c), (d), (e), the (h) is crossed then the next one is f(i), (i) is not crossed out. So if you can amend that one.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will have that amended. Thank you very much.

No comment on Clause 4?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I think there is a cross there, but it has been blended in with the (f).

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I think the two members from the disability at the back there are looking very pleased and very happy to hear all these "yes".

There being no amendment, Clause 4 is agreed to unanimously.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being none, Clause 5 is agreed to.

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, unanimous agreement.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 6?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No comments. Everyone agrees to Clause 6?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, unanimously agreement.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 7?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I want to hear from Opposition, is it a no?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Chairperson, Clause 7(d) probably the recommendation by the Committee was to include the Director responsible for OHS. But I think it has been left out in the drafting and also the recommendation by the Committee for the Deputy Secretary. But again only the Permanent Secretary's in the Council, if a suggestion could be considered that if the Permanent Secretary is not available, a representative could be there?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- It is already here.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Very well, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Responsible for employment and occupational health and safety is already there?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, just look a bit down the list.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All of that has been taken care of. So all in agreement?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 7 agreed to.

Clause 8:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you have any comments on Clause 8?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do I hear no from the Opposition?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 8 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 9:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 9?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being none, Clause 9 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 10:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you have any comments on Clause 10?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 10 agreed to.

Clause 11:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you have any comments on Clause 11?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no comments. Clause 11 agreed to.

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 12:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you have any comments on Clause 12?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no comments, Clause 12 agreed to unanimously.

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 13:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you have any comments on Clause 13?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments, Opposition?

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. All agreed to unanimously.

Clause 14:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Opposition all agreed to unanimously?

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Clause 14 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 15:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No comments, all agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Clause 15 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 16:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBER.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Clause 16 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 17:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 17?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Clause 17 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 18:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 18?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no comments, all agreed to unanimously.

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 19:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 19?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no comments, all agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Clause 19 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 20:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 20?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 20 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 21:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 21?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Clause 21 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 22:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 22?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBER.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Clause 22 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 23:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 23?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Clause 23 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 24:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 24?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Clause 24 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 25:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 25 agreed to unanimously

Clause 26:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 26 agreed to unanimously

Clause 27:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 27?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 27 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 28:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 28?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 28 is agreed to unanimously

Clause 29:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No comments on Clause 29?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 29 is agreed to unanimously

Clause 30:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 30?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?



HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 30 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 31:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 31?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 31 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 32:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 32?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 32 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 33:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 33?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 33 agreed to unanimously.

Clause 34:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 34?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 34 is agreed to unanimously.

Clause 35:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 35?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 35 is agreed to unanimously.

Clause 36:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 36?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 36 is agreed to unanimously.

Clause 37:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 37?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 37 is agreed to unanimously.

Clause 38:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 38?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 38 is agreed to unanimously.

Clause 39:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 39?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Clause 39 is agreed to unanimously.

Clause 40:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 40?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 41:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 41?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 42:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 42?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Everyone agree to Clause 42, unanimous agreement?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 43:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 43?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agree to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 44:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 44?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agree to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are you all aware of what you are agreeing to?

(Laughter)

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- This is a bi-partisan approval; *talanoa* session.

(Laughter)

Clause 45:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 45?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agree to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 46:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 46?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 47:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 47?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Unanimous agreement.

Clause 48:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 48?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 49:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 49?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No comments, everyone agrees?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, unanimous agreement.

Clause 50:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 50?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Unanimous agreement.

Clause 51:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any comments on Clause 51?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 52:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any ny comments on Clause 52?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All in unanimous agreement?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Clause 53:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any ny comments on Clause 53?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agree to it unanimously?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

Schedule:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is open for comments on the Schedule, any comments on the schedule?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All agreed to?

HON. MEMBERS.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Unanimous agreement.

Thank you, that brings us to the end of Committee of the Whole Parliament.

The Parliament resumed:

(Honourable Speaker resumes her Chair)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, 53 clauses; this is will be the only Parliament that have gone through this so quickly. Thank you very much, Honourable Members

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- The Committee of the Whole Parliament has agreed to a Bill for an Act to make provisions for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and for related matters (Bill No. 12 of 2016) with amendments by the Committee of the Whole Parliament.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- The Committee of the Whole Parliament has agreed to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, (Bill No. 12 of 2016) with amendments.

HON. SPEAKER.- I call upon the Attorney General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications to move the third reading.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 88, I move that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill (Bill No. 12 of 2016) be read the third time and do pass. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Do we have a seconder?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I call on the Honourable Attorney-General to speak on his motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, it is with a lot of delight that we are now going to debate this Bill that is being read for the third time. As we are aware that this Bill had been referred to the Committee and this Bill actually brings us in compliance with international standards but more importantly, Madam Speaker, prior to that, the Fijian Constitution itself for the first time in the history of Fiji do we have a Constitution under Section 42 that states “Rights of Persons with Disabilities”.

I think it is only appropriate that I actually read out this section in the Constitution. Section 42 states and I quote:

- “(1) a person with any disability has the right;
- a) to reasonable access to all, places, public transport and information;
  - b) to use sign language, Braille or other appropriate means of communication; and
  - c) to reasonable access to necessary materials, substances and devices relating to the person’s disability.
- (2) A person with any disability has the right to reasonable adaptation of buildings, infrastructure, vehicles, working arrangements, rules, practices or procedures, to enable their full participation in society and the effective realisation of their rights.
- (3) To the extent that it is necessary, a law or an administrative action taken under a law may limit, or may authorise the limitation of, the rights set out in this section.”

Madam Speaker, before I go into the specifics of what has actually taken place, I would also like to highlight that many people have actually perhaps not understood the full grasp of the provisions of the Bill of Rights in the 2013 Constitution and for the first time, we actually have the application of rights under this Constitution as being applied not only to what we call “vertically” but also horizontally. In other words, previously rights have only been enforceable against the State and it was also in the previous constitutions, you could not apply those rights in the private space.

A case in point, Madam Speaker, the Defence Club I as you know for years has had a section at the bar where women are not allowed. Under the 1997 Constitution that discrimination could continue and indeed did continue. Under the 2013 Constitution that discrimination could not continue because the law and specifically the Bill of Rights actually applied to even clubs and other various places where the public actually engaged in and with.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, the Bill of Rights under the 2013 Constitution as far as the application of the Rights of Person with Disabilities also applies, Madam Speaker, to private places or buildings, for example, that may be owned privately. It is not only about wherever there is government, so if you, for example, are working in a bank or various other organisations, you also have the right to be able to demand your rights as provided for under the Constitution and indeed they are enforceable against those types of organisations. I think it is very important for us to be able to understand that, Madam Speaker.

Just to recap what has actually transpired and as highlighted by the Chairperson of the Committee, when this Bill was referred to the Committee, they received a total of 19 submissions from various organisations and NGOs such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights, Regional Office for the Pacific, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia Pacific, the Pacific Office of United Nations ESCAP, the Fiji Society for the Blind, Hilton

Special School, Fiji Disabled People's Federation, the Government Ministries, the various private sectors and of course the general public.

Madam Speaker, there was a survey that was carried out that according to the National Baseline Disability Survey in 2010 they identified about 11,402 persons with disabilities which included about 5,022 females and 6,110 males. According to the survey however this figure would have increased by 10 percent if more and all areas in the above-mentioned divisions were covered which included the Eastern, Central, Northern and Western Divisions. This figure at that point in time represented 1.4 percent of the Fijian population.

Of course, Madam Speaker, many people also in Fiji do not necessarily see certain conditions as a disability. For example, Madam Speaker, we recently had the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on Albinism. Albinism, Madam Speaker, is also a disability and in Fiji we have not necessarily taken that disability seriously. In fact these people have actually been laughed at, made fun of and indeed when we were in school too when we were young children, we actually used to make fun of them, and that was the culture that was taught to us and indeed in some areas it still continues. However, they have some serious problems and this is precisely the reason why we call the special rapporteur with persons with disabilities in particular to be albinism.

Madam Speaker, this Constitution also is one of the very few constitutions in the world that is actually translated into the Braille language; in the Braille English language and the Braille iTaukei language.

Madam Speaker, it is very important for us to be able to understand as we have said on numerous occasions that we are only judged by how well we treat those people who are on the periphery of our society. People who are on the periphery of our society need to be always brought into the centre and our ability to understand things like treating everyone with dignity, with the care, the love and the respect and indeed, Madam Speaker, what we call the democratization of our social fabric of our society is very critical to be able to bring everyone on a level playing field.

This is why Section 26(1) of the Constitution is critically important for us to be able to understand and indeed to be able to have it practically applied, in a very practical sense.

Madam Speaker, without boring everyone into the so detailed and the other background we have an Act that exists at the moment and once this Bill that we are going to debate and hopefully vote for unanimously, will supersede the existing law which the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons Act 1994. It is 24 years old, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that, that Act is minuscule of protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. In fact many will argue, it does not even do so. Madam Speaker, as I have highlighted the Fijian Constitution, for the first time actually represents a specific right for persons with disabilities and you have seen a lot of work prior to that that has in fact taken place. Of course, this Parliament has also approved the United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities. This Instrument was ratified by us then Fiji later formally ratified the CRPD on 7th June, 2017 when we deposited the Instrument with the United Nations.

Madam Speaker, as we have been through the Clauses, the respective articles that we have just approved or the clauses within the Act actually is in fact an enforcement of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities International Convention. I do not necessarily want to go into all of that, Madam Speaker, however it does provide the specific enhancement of the application of this international provision and the domestication of those international provisions into our local law and that is very very critical.



Just by way of information, Madam Speaker, let me highlight apart from the fact that we have for the first time a Constitution that recognises specific rights for persons with disabilities. We have introduced a number of other provisions, Madam Speaker, for example back in 2015 we provided regulations and amendment to the regulations in the Land Transport Authority and Regulation 20(a) of the Regulations states that drivers of the public service vehicles must not refuse to transport persons with disabilities; drivers of public service vehicles must take reasonable steps to assist persons with disabilities when boarding or disembarking vehicles; owners of public service vehicles must ensure that their vehicles are user friendly for persons with disabilities; and persons with disabilities must be given first priority when boarding a public service vehicle.

Madam Speaker, there is also details regarding how they must be given priority when for example you get on the bus, if you are sitting on the first seat and a person with disability comes on board, you must actually get up and give them that seat.

Also, Madam Speaker, under Regulation 21, recognising the fact that some people may actually require what we call “companion animals” to help them. Regulation 21 states that a driver of the public service vehicle must not without reasonable excuse relating to the capacity of the vehicle refuse to carry in the vehicle a companion vehicle that assists the person with disability to travel, Madam Speaker. There is obviously various fines related to that.

Madam Speaker, we have also for example provided in the 2016-2017 Budget the 300 percent tax deduction on wages paid in the employment of a disabled person who will be employed continuously for the period of three years. This, of course is to encourage the employers to see persons with disabilities as people you should not only employ but also devote full rights and as we have discussed in this Parliament last week, that many persons with disabilities fall into the poverty trap because of the fact that they are not given access or the opportunity to sustain livelihood by giving them employment.

There are many people still in our society, Madam Speaker, who are quite prejudiced about persons with disabilities. Just because someone may see someone as looking a bit different to them or walking differently to them believe that they do not necessarily have the capacity to be able to fulfil the duties or be able to fulfil the functions of what people may consider to be a person who is not disabled. So, we have also got now students in special schools, the funding has increased for special schools, we have increased the funding quite exponentially.

We today, Madam Speaker, of course have now specific welfare payments for persons with disabilities and this started off course in the 2017-2018 Budget, Madam Speaker, where a sum of \$7.9 million has been allocated. Indeed, of course, Madam Speaker, we have the bus fare for old and disabled persons, the administrative costs we actually have for that, the bus operators have come on board regarding that and we would like to thank them for that.

Of course they get to keep the VAT, but the reality is Madam Speaker, that we have specific provisions provided for in the Budget with hitherto has never been done. So, it is the first time that we have actually engaged in with this and we have given an increased grant funding.

The other issue, Madam Speaker, and I think that we would like to greatly enhance too is what we call the Early Intervention. This year's budget, Madam Speaker, we have allocated \$850,000 to the Frank Hilton Organisation. We have been told, Madam Speaker, that some time children are born and if there is some form of impediment, if you have an early intervention you are able to get over those impediments. So, for example if there is a problem with auditory impediment, if you make the early intervention, you may be able to get that child or the baby as it develops to be able to get full auditory functionality.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, there are other types of interventions that can be done as we have said repeatedly in this Parliament that we do not necessarily have all the right trained people in Fiji. Fijians were not trained necessarily, for example, in speech therapy. If you go overseas, Madam Speaker, you will find that a lot of speech therapists and various other persons who specialise in early childhood intervention actually roamed the corridors of the hospitals, in particular, the maternity wards to ensure that the babies are actually checked, that there are no impediments, for example, all the functionalities are there and if they are not then they actually make those early interventions.

This is why, Madam Speaker, our TOPPERS scholarship is very much based steered toward science, it is a holistic approach. If people want to go and study speech therapy and various other related fields of study, we actually give them a TOPPERS scholarship because we need more of those local people to be able to ensure that our children are given that early intervention, so they actually become not only productive members of society, but they themselves individually have the level of satisfaction to be able to develop as individuals who can participate in the full mainstream of our society, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, of course these are some of the interventions that Government has made even prior to the Convention being ratified by this Parliament. We have identified, we have in fact round about in 2012 we have started making these types of interventions. Of course, as the ladies in particular who are sitting in the public gallery and the gentleman there who is there, they have been attending Parliament for a number of months on end in anticipation of this Bill being passed by us. In anticipation of the Convention being approved by us which actually has happened, Madam Speaker.

So, it is only our responsibility, Madam Speaker, to provide that legal framework to be able to give them the level of comfort, the level of solace not just from the regulatory perspective but also to be able to give that practical assistance to them. We have, Madam Speaker, as you know and as announced in the Budget, for example, all the new footpaths that are being done around Suva, Lautoka, Nadi and various other places, they have all been made wheelchair friendly.

We also have, Madam Speaker, an allocation of \$0.5 million to the FRA to what we call “retrofit” existing footpaths that were built years back but do not necessarily have the ramps so people cannot cross from one side of the street to the other in particular if you were in a wheelchair.

Madam Speaker, these are some of the initiatives that have been undertaken as far ensuring that we have people who are given a more user friendly environment in respect of them gaining the access to services and various other facilities as far as dealing with the disabilities are concerned.

So, with those introductory remarks, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank everyone, in particular the Committee for the work and I also would like to thank the other organisations that have helped us refine this particular Bill and bring it up to a particular standard that should be approved by Parliament and I am sure that all Honourable Members of this Parliament would agree that we need to support this Bill. We need to be able to give the level of comfort that is required.

Of course, Madam Speaker, even your institution, you are the embodiment of Parliament. Your proceedings are now conveyed in sign language, we have never had that. We now have budgetary consultations, for the past two years. We actually go specifically and consult the disabled associations both, in Suva and also in Lautoka. And again, this is to mainstream people like we do with students and various other young people in our society.

Madam Speaker, with those introductory remarks, I would like to commend this Parliament actually votes for this Bill in the positive and we bring that level of comfort and, indeed, that level of

support to persons with disabilities or Fijians who live with disability in Fiji, to be able to enjoy life to the fullest of their capacity and, indeed, accessibility to various services. Thank you very much.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Bill is now up for debate. Please, debate must only be on whether the Bill should pass, not on the content of the Bill. I now invite Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, I rise to contribute and comment on the Bill that is before the House. From this side of the House, I think we are all in agreement that this is a very important Bill that needs to be passed and given that the measures that should accompany it, it should reflect the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and also other international standards.

Madam Speaker, we also thank the Committee for their work in trying to bring this particular Bill in compliance with international standards and also the parliamentary Secretariat for engaging United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), especially Professor Ron McCallum. I think with his expertise, technical support and advice, who guided and assisted the Committee to scrutinise the Bill thoroughly and make amendments to the original Bill that was tabled before the House.

With that, Madam Speaker, the various provisions also that were amended in the Bill which has just been passed in regards to the increase of representative in the Council from three to five members of the National Council, I think that will better represent the various groups that are there, representing the disability community that we have.

In addition, Madam Speaker, given that the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy has also said about the Government's focus on disability in regards to budget provisions, we also ask the Government if the disability allowance could be increased in the upcoming Budget which is currently at \$2.79 million, so if that could be increased for the benefit of the recipients of that allowance.

In addition, Madam Speaker, for the Fiji National Disability Association, probably a \$1.2 million grant that is given by the Government, if that could also be reviewed and Government can provide an increase of funding to reflect the capabilities at the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons, the functions and roles that they play with the Hilton Early Intervention Centre.

Given the statistics that you had corrected this morning that was provided by the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation and that there is an increase in the number of our population who live with disability, there is a need that our budget provisions must clearly reflect the measures that should be taken to address the increasing number of our population and also the various measures to fulfil the provisions of the Constitution which the Honourable Attorney-General had alluded to.

There is plenty work to be done, given that there are certain areas and certain places which are still not disability friendly which there has to be agreement and consent between the municipal councils and other laws that come into play. Probably there could be other measures considered for the acceleration of the full realisation of what the CRPD calls for.

Those are few things, Madam Speaker, in regards to the contribution of this side of the House as we are in full support of this particular Bill. Again, we would like the whole House to support the Bill. Let us focus and talk more in our communities as Members of Parliament on the needs and various things that our people will disability face. If we can advocate that as Members of Parliament, that will provide a profile for the issue that is at hand.

With that, Madam Speaker, I support the Bill before the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Alvick Maharaj?

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Speaker, I find it a bit confusing and I would like to actually put in my contribution as to why this particular Bill should be passed today. I have the following reasons for it.

I believe this is a very important piece of legislation which is in front of us. Anyone living with any form of disability should not be discriminated in any way and they should live their life with full dignity, like anyone else. It should never be portrayed that they are a separate group in the society but, in fact, they should be part of the society.

In the past, Madam Speaker, and this is the part which actually confuses me a lot, some selfish parliamentarian commented on the FijiFirst candidate during the 2014 General Elections. It was stated during the election campaign that FijiFirst had run out of candidates and that is why FijiFirst is resorting to disabled people for candidacy. What a discrimination, Madam Speaker?

This is how cheap some politicians can go. This is what was happening in 2014 General Elections. Today, these Members are all for this particular Bill. All of a sudden there is a change. Why, Madam Speaker or is it just to show the people that they support and come 2018 General Election, they will be again out there, discriminating? It has been done in the past.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, I think you are campaigning. I thank you for your speech and now I give the floor to the Honourable Veena Bhatnagar.

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR.- Madam Speaker, I rise to fully support the motion of adopting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2016, tabled by the Standing Committee before this noble House.

As a country, noteworthy changes in recent the Government-led programmes, obviously with strengthened collaborations with civil society organisations has brought about positive changes to the lives of Fijians living with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, it is well known that the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons (FNCDP) Act 1994 is archaic and it was exclusively an administrative legislation, focussing on the establishment of the Council and the Secretariat. The primary objective of the FNCDP Act 1994 has been achieved and the Council is in operation. Before today, Madam Speaker, there was no legislation that directly relates to persons with disabilities in Fiji, apart from FNCDP Act 1994 and, of course, our Constitution and the rights.

Madam Speaker, in the past, persons with disabilities have tended to be viewed as objects of charity, medical treatment and social protection. The Convention moves towards the idea that persons with disabilities are subjects with rights, who are capable of claiming of those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent, as well as being active members of our own society.

Madam Speaker, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2016 aims to provide, uphold and enforce the rights of persons with disabilities in Fiji. But let me remind the House that Fiji ratified the UNCRPD in June 2017 as already alluded to by the Honourable Attorney-General. And by the time we ratified the Convention, Fiji already had compliant laws and policies nationally which were driving national initiatives in this sector.

Madam Speaker, the political will and commitment to address the rights-based and inclusive-based approach began with the ratification of the UNCRPD. This international commitment must be supported by coherent and complementing national laws.

In Fiji, this national commitment is found in our Constitution which specifically protects the rights of persons with disabilities. The constitutional protection ensures that every other law, policy or procedure adopted by Government in whatever sector of economy, accords with a constitutional protection for persons with disabilities.

In order to accelerate the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities in Fiji, Madam Speaker, my Ministry recently established a dedicated unit which is solely focussed on this.

The realisation of the aims of national policies and laws on the rights of people living with disabilities must be complimented by adequate resources. The Fijian Government has done this by making specific budget allocations to the relevant Government Ministries, Authorities and NGOs to make the right real for persons living with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, in highlighting the value of multi-ministerial and multi-stakeholder approach to accelerate the implementation of the UNCRPD, the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation through the Department of Social Welfare and all collaborating agencies emphasises advocacy work and community-based awareness that involves our communities. We believe that maximum involvement of families, community, faith-based organisations and stakeholders, we received a holistic progress of such initiatives achieving positive results.

Our 2013 Constitution will be a reality as stated in the Bill of Right section 240 (2), the Bill will open a new chapter and horizons for persons living with disabilities in Fiji, that they can fully understand the broad meaning of inclusion at all levels of our domestic governance.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is the Fijian Government's reassurance to our disabled population that we are adamant to maintain or mainstream their needs, welfare and rights into the nation's development as a whole where their voices and options will be heard and respected at all levels.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that all human beings regardless of their differences have an equal and an alienable right to health, education, employment, housing, transport, accessibility and all other opportunities available to the general population. To safeguard these rights, the Bill speaks volumes that protection promotes the principles that disabled persons must have a strong voice, representing a majority share in the decision-making process at all levels on issues impacting their lives.

Today, we shall make history with this gigantic leap in the right direction whereby we can uphold the rights of persons living with disabilities and their carers.

I clearly remember, Madam Speaker, in the last Budget, the disability allowance was announced. We can feel the joy, the happiness, I mean, people found, especially by disabled people and their families. Madam Speaker, I am confident that this Bill will empower and allow persons with disabilities to exercise their rights under a sound legal framework. Like the Disability Bill 2016, I stress that this legislation requires the unity of the House as political differences will not bring out to life the commitments and range or types for persons living with disabilities.

I stand here today, Madam Speaker, to offer my full support to the Rights of Persons with Disability Bill 2016. This Bill is long awaited one, and clearly demonstrates the Fijian Government's

vision and commitment for people living with disabilities and gives recognition to their existence in society.

Madam Speaker, I fully support the Rights of Persons with Disability Bill 2016.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Professor Biman Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I rise to support the Bill. I think this is a very good example of the role of bi-partisan committees and I can see that a lot of the changes that have been made are very relevant.

One that I can quickly point out is in relation to the functions where the Committee actually recognise the need for the collection and collation of data because without appropriate data, Madam Speaker, we would not be able to use the laws effectively and implement policies which will be effective in dealing with the enforcement of rights of persons with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, laws are as good as its effectiveness in terms of implementation and efficiency and I do hope that the Council would be appropriately empowered and resourced because sometimes, Madam Speaker, you can have very good laws, very good legislations but to be effective, those laws and legislations would not only need the support of Government and those of us here in Parliament but also we need to empower the Council so that the Council itself can broadly master support from every section of the society and every aspect of what is the usual neglect of people with disability.

Madam Speaker, I think this is a very, very important piece of legislation and we are delighted support this and I do hope, as I have said, that the Council would be appropriately empowered and that it would be able to garner support from every section of the society so that the laws governing the rights of persons living with disabilities are effectively and efficiently implemented at all times. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPKA.- Madam Speaker, we fully support this Bill before the House and I agree with the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad that we need more data, particularly in terms of the young girls who are coming now into being single parents because they are not getting the proper nutrition in the first trimester and second trimester. They would need to be monitored and supervised and assisted.

I think that is where the Ministry of Health will need more funding in terms of these young women who are coming into motherhood. We see them on the streets with young babies and this is something that we need more data on. I think the Council would need to do a lot of it on their own, to ensure that we are currently knowing what it is that they really need instead of them relying on other people to supply them with the data. They can come up with it themselves. Thank you, Madam Speaker, so we support the Bill.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Sudhakar?

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- I thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to make my small contribution in support of the Bill.

Madam Speaker, for me, I have particular interest in Clauses 32 and 33 of the Bill which reads that special measures can be made by Courts to support person with disability in legal proceedings. What we have experienced or some of the practitioners of law must have experienced in court is that

the Family Law Act of 2003 has a missing fact, perhaps, where we have seen that sometimes people do come to Court and they are not of very sound mind or they have some speech impairment and they are not able to fully express themselves before the Judge.

It does not only happen in the Family Court but it also happens in other Courts as well. When they come out, they come to us and tell us with some assistance of family members that they were not able to express themselves. It happens that some adverse Orders are made against them, not opening up any legal proceedings but I am just letting the House know what actually sometimes happens.

There is special provision made in the Clause 32 of the Bill which provides, and I quote:

“All persons with disabilities have the right to enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life.

Special measures to promote such equality and to support access to justice for persons with disabilities must not be considered as discrimination.”

Further, Clause 33 - Access to justice, means as highlighted in Clause 33(2), I quote:

“Special measures in court proceedings for vulnerable witnesses must be available for persons with disabilities.”

These albeit being very generally stated, can have some very profound effects on court proceedings where people, as I said earlier, who may not be able to express themselves because of some disability or some impairment, can now ask the court for appointment of *guardian ad litem* where someone, a family or a friend could assist them. When the regulations come in, they will explain upon these Clauses and provide for facilities where vulnerable witnesses who are in support of disability can be assisted in court proceedings where they can achieve full access to justice as the Bill provides. So this was an area which was not fully covered, particularly the Family Law Act and this Bill now adequately fills in that space.

With that, Madam Speaker, I fully support the Bill and I hope that the Bill actually achieves the access to justice for disabled people who are equal to anyone in society. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Iliesa Delana?

HON. I. DELANA.- Madam Speaker, I would also like to join you in congratulating our gladiators in beating Kenya in the final of the Vancouver Sevens a few hours ago.

Madam Speaker, I wish to rise to show my support towards the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2018, the purpose of which to strengthen Fiji's position to the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The lives of persons with disabilities living in our beloved nation had always been faced with challenges and uncertainties over the years. In 2008, we welcomed the first National Disability Policy 2018 that provided some direction for us in addressing 12 key strategic areas.

We were able to conduct a baseline survey report in 2010 and we identified 11,402 persons with disabilities. In the latest 2017 population census, there was a whopping 113,595 persons with disabilities, which is about 13.7 percent of the total population.

During the years 2012 and 2013, the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons reviewed the existing legislation relating to disability and found that only one legislation existed - the Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons Act of 1994 which was only an administrative Act.

In the formulation of a new Bill for the Rights of Person with Disabilities, we incorporate the salient features of the UNCRPD. Fiji signed the UNCRPD in 2010 and ratify it in 2017.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2016 will create a new and exciting pathway for the lives of persons with disabilities that will create the sense of belonging and privilege identified for persons with disabilities living in Fiji. When enacted, this legislation will bring about changes to a range of legislation which will have a real effect on the lives of persons with disabilities.

I give particular support and emphasis to Article 48 on Page 23, item 4, that all persons with disabilities actual have opportunities to:

4. Participate to the fullest extent possible in mainstream sporting activities, organise, develop and participating disabilities specific sporting, recreational activities and for children with special needs to have equal access with other children to participate in playing, recreation and leisure in sporting activities.

While sport has a value in everyone's life, it is even more important in the life of a person with disability. This is because of the rehabiltee influence sport can have, not only on the physical body but also the rehabilitating people with disability into society.

Furthermore, sport is just independence. Now there are people with disability participating in high performance, as well as in competitive and recreational sports. We, at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, through the assistance of other Government Departments have been trying to promote equality in all sporting activities where each individual, regardless of their physical ability get a chance to equally participate in sporting and recreational activities.

In conclusion, this legislation is good news for not just those who are directly affected by disability but for all members of society as it seeks to make it more equal and inclusive.

I look forward to engage in further activities from all sides of the House and ensuring that an effective Bill is passed. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I fully support the Bill. *Vinaka Vakalevu.*

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Usamate?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I rise to support the Bill and in particular, I like us to appreciate the fact that we continue to move towards the progressive realisation of the rights that we have in our Constitution. The one that I have been looking at in particular is Section 32 of the Constitution which talks about the right of everyone in this country to choose their own work, trade, occupation, profession or other means of livelihood.

Other things that we have been talking about today, take a significantly down that particular path of allowing people to be able to do the things they want to do in their lives, in particular as it pertains to employment. Everyone should have the right to be employed in the kind of activity that they want to be employed in.

Looking at the particular provisions of the Bill, in particular in terms of Section 45 which talks about whole lot of things in relation to employment that:



- All persons with disabilities have the right to work and equal basis with others. That has been something that is always important as a fundamental principle that we have in the Employment Relation Act.
- The right to be free from discrimination on the basis of disability with regard to all matters concerning all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuance of employment, career advancement and safe and healthy working conditions.

I think one of the mantras that we all have, whether we are talking about climate change or anything that keeps people back, is the idea that there should be no one left behind as we progressively we move towards developing our country.

I have also noticed that in Clause 45(6), it talks about all persons with disabilities have the right to have effective access to general, technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training.

I know that we have specialist training providers that do this but I am also glad to see that some of our larger tertiary providers, who integrate people who are physically challenged into the normal programmes are going out of their way to provide assistance to these students.

I am familiar with the programmes that they have at the University of the South Pacific (USP) but they have a special sector unit that does this and I hope that as a result of this Bill, there will be more a lot more programmes and institutions that set up particular services that help people to be able to choose the kind of employment that they want to have. So, we look forward to this Bill coming into play and levelling out the playing field for everyone that is physically challenged that they may also have the standard of life that they need, that they want to have, and they can get the kind of employment opportunities that they have always wanted. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viam Pillay?

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, as the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I rise to support the Bill and contribute to the motion before the House, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill. The Bill seeks to provide for, uphold and enforce the Rights of Persons with Disability in Fiji as provided for under the Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities and also as provided for in the 2013 Constitution.

At the outset, while the Standing Committee on Social Affairs had examined the Bill, we found that the 24 year old existing Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons Act 1994 is the only legislation which relates directly to persons with disabilities in Fiji, has been outdated and does not sufficiently address the needs of persons living with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, the Committee in its scrutiny process engaged a total of 19 stakeholders from different backgrounds and had a study visit to China to observe China's best practices in terms of services provided in its legal aspects. Professor Rodan McLuan was also engaged to provide technical support and enquires. In this regard, Madam Speaker, I believe that this law will empower and allow persons living in disabilities to realise their rights.

Madam Speaker, I support the amendments made to the Right of Persons with Disabilities as it will strengthen the Bill. This, in terms of protection, promotion, reconciliation of persons living with disabilities in the social, economic political, cultural, civic and all other relevant facets of our society.

Madam Speaker, these amendments have been verified and justified by the Committee's consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, I fully support the Bill.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. There being no other input, I invite the Honourable Attorney-General to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all the Honourable Members who have spoken in support of the Bill that is before Parliament. I am sure those who have not spoken also support this Bill.

Madam Speaker, a lot of these issues that we are dealing with today, in fact, are to deal with the many of the prejudices that we may have in the number of years. As I had mentioned at the beginning with the introduction, for example, our views on albinism is actually changing in Fiji.

Our awareness about that is changing. Similarly, maybe even four or five years ago, the fact that the issues of disability was not mainstream, many people may have had prejudices but what the Honourable Maharaj was referring to did actually occur but the fact is, hopefully people are now changing their attitude. And that sense of awareness mainstreaming these issues, whether it is to do with disability, whether it is to do with other aspects of our society, need to be continuously done. Whether we speak openly about, for example, sexual assaults not just by outsiders in the home but within the home. How we deal with domestic violence, having those laws. These are very critical issues that we need to discuss openly and freely and areas that were seen as taboo subjects need to be actually mainstreamed, very important, Madam Speaker. That goes to show our level of maturity, the ability to mainstream such issues that are pushed to the margins.

Madam Speaker, I wanted to also highlight, which I had not done earlier on, all the equipment in Fiji that are important because all of these equipment that disabled persons use, for example, wheelchairs, hearing aids, et cetera, are all duty-free and in fact VAT exempt also. There are a few areas that are completely VAT exempt are much easier to control.

Madam Speaker, as highlighted by the Honourable Minister for Employment, section 26(3) of the Constitution also disallows unfair discrimination on the basis of a person's disability. So apart from section 42, that has a specific provision on the Rights of Persons with Disability, it has what we call a double-whammy, in the sense that it cannot discriminate persons with disability.

As we have seen discrimination, Madam Speaker, can also be cross-cutting. So a person may be disabled, but there are also basis on which they may be discriminated against because of their gender or because they are pregnant. Also the provision under sub-section 26(3) does have that provision. Many people, till today, if they see someone who is disabled and pregnant, they do not expect women, for example, who is disabled to be pregnant, it is a fact.

We are not able to digest that, but as we have seen, persons who are disabled also have the right to live a fulfilling life, also have the right to have a relationship with people so, Madam Speaker, it is very important for us to be able to understand that.

Similarly, there is a provision of unfair discrimination on the basis of a person's economic, social or health status. All of these are cross-cutting issues actually, I should say, Madam Speaker, and therefore we need to be able to show that level of maturity and to be able to approve such laws and also at the same time as highlighted by certain Members on both sides, there needs to be a practical application. There is no point going and lodging these documents for ratification of various international conventions, there is no point about us approving this law if there is no proper enforcement.

Indeed we, ourselves in this Parliament must also change our attitudes too because as Members of Parliament, people look at us as to how we actually carry forward the practical application of these laws that we have actually implemented. So I would urge all Members that once this becomes law and obviously we appear to all have unanimous approval of this Bill, but please, create awareness. Let us change it, let us start in our own homes, our families, our friends and communities and indeed as a nation, because once they are able to mainstream these issues and be able to talk about such matters, we will have a lot more inclusive society.

We will actually have Fijians who will not feel marginalised and be able to participate fully in a country that treats everyone equally and fairly and indeed with dignity and justice. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote.

The Question is:

That pursuant to Standing Order 88, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2016 (Bill No. 12 of 2016), be read a third time and do pass. Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of “Noes”)

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, the Bill is approved.

Motion agreed to.

A Bill for an Act to make provisions for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and for related matters (Bill No. 12 of 2016), enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call on the Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs, I wish to clarify that the wording of the motion allows the Parliament to debate the contents of the Report.

At the end of the debate, we will be voting merely to note the Report. Once the vote is taken, it ends there and the Report will not be debated again in Parliament.

### **REVIEW REPORT ON THE MINISTRY OF ITAUKEI AFFAIRS 2014 ANNUAL REPORT**

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Review Report from the Ministry of *ITaukei* Affairs 2014 Annual Report which was tabled on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to speak on the motion.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Acting Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers, Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Members of Parliament, on behalf of

the Honourable Members of the Social Affairs Standing Committee, I take this opportunity to speak on the motion in regards to the review that was made to the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs 2014 Annual Report and tabled in Parliament on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016.

The Committee, during its scrutiny processes invited the Ministry and acknowledged their participation towards the presentation of the performance and responses towards the issues raised by the Members of the Committee.

At the outset, I wish to highlight that the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs had continued to make significant progress in the delivery of services in 2014 towards improving the wellbeing and good governance of the *iTaukei* people. The committee was satisfied with the overall conduct of the Ministry for its performance targets which was set at a challenging level in order to drive improvements. These involve the following:

1. Increase demarcation of unsurveyed *iTaukei* lands.
2. Increase surveyed and registration of *iTaukei* lands.
3. Increase registration of village boundaries and villages.
4. Reviewing of the institutional laws and regulations governing traditional leadership, VKB and the appeals tribunal process for appealing chiefly titles, MPA Risk Management 2014 Policy endorsed, Child's Protection Plans Development, TOT Technical Manuals and Workshops.

Madam Speaker, these are the key output indicators that were achieved by the Ministry and the Committee commends the amount of work shown by the Ministry throughout 2014.

Whilst the performance of the Ministry was commendable, however, the Committee believes through its findings that the performance could be further improved.

The Committee feels that in general, the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs takes note of all its recommendations which is imperative at this stage for continuous improvement and further developing, implementing and monitoring policies and programmes for the good governance and well-being of our *iTaukei* people.

Furthermore, the Committee noted the following recommendations:

1. Any future reports to present a detailed breakdown of issues in figures that are resolved, unresolved and the pending issues that are with the Ministry with justification.
2. Any future reports to articulate a breakdown on gender analysis and participation in the positions held.
3. Attain well-trained transport officers to maintain a daily register to record pertinent issues.
4. Use and replacement of Ministry fleets.
5. The Ministry to look into liaising and administering for its fleets and an option if it is economical so that the vehicles are regularly maintained.
6. The Ministry's budgetary allocation. In future, the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs to improve its Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 Performance since financial year has been changed. That future financial report from the Ministry provides a detailed breakdown of its allocated funds, expenditure and outputs under various budgetary segments.

Madam Speaker, with those few comments, as the Member moving the motion, I thank you for this opportunity.

HON. SPEAKER.- The motion is now open for debate and I invite input, if any.

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for their Review Report, just three points, Madam Speaker:

The first one is on the *Vola ni Kawa Bula* which is a very important document for the indigenous community as relationships going back to 1800s are contained in it.

The fact that the Committee was told that the scanning of the VKB was completed for three provinces and it was done by NEC (National Employment Centre) volunteers to fast-track the VKB computerisation. To me, that is very worrying, Madam Speaker, as to how that is monitored and supervised, so many things can go wrong.

There is no offence to the NEC Volunteers but why did they do not get qualified or experienced people to do it, may be retired civil servants and teachers who have expertise in the field. How is the VKB filled in terms of the new births from the BDM Office? Is the name checked by an official from the Native Land Commission (NLC) before the registration is checked off as there are many complaints from various provinces like from the province of Rewa, Serua, Namosi, Nadroga, Kadavu and Ba et cetera, Madam Speaker, sometimes they do not even know the names of those in the VKB that are entered onto the Birth Certificate from the BDM Office. For them to rectify that error is very difficult. That is my first point.

The second point that the Social Affairs Standing Committee brought up was on child protection. It was noted that some of the key output areas that the Ministry administered were not budgeted for and one of them is the child protection. This is a very important national issue, Madam Speaker, because of the high statistics in this regard it needs to be more crucially placed in terms of the Agenda from the Provincial Council to the *Bose ni Tikina* to the *Bose va Koro* and even to the various committees down the line to address this very important matter on child protection.

On my third point, Madam Speaker, something that we had taken for granted is the *Soli va Koro*, the *Soli ni Yasana*. It is something that we do every year in terms of funding the projects in our province. For it to be unusual was not something that we thought about until we started discussing this with our new relatives from the *Girmit* Group whom we term in Rewa *Luvedra na Ratu Mai Bure o Noco*. Some of the things that we take for granted, as I said we have this *Soli ni Yasana* every year and there is a certain budget that we have to meet in terms of the various villages and the people who live in those villages.

Now the budget for the Provincial Office, Madam Speaker, comes from the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs by way of a subvention. This subvention includes the staff salary which includes the *Roko*, the Assistant *Roko*, the Environment Officer, right down to the different staff in the office. This subvention also includes allowances for the *Turaga ni Koro* which this year is \$300 per quarter and the *Mata ni Tikina*, and it also includes the travelling costs for the *Mata ni Tikina*.

However, Madam Speaker, our new relatives noted that we had the *Soli ni Yasana* the villages contributing to the various meetings that is the *Bose ni Yasana*, *Bose ni Tikina* and *Bose va Koro*, not only were they contributing to these meetings but they also had to feed them and also to transport them. This is something that we take for granted but we have to rethink this and the Agenda is set by the Chair of the *Yasana*. Looking at the other costs that come into play is the Provincial Council car which

is also mentioned in this Budget Review the running costs, the tyres et cetera are all contributed from the *Soli ni Yasana* including the development projects and all the scholarships.

Madam Speaker, what we were told and it suddenly came to our thinking, they told us no wonder you people are poor, you have no money, you are paying VAT, you paying STTC, you paying environmental and adaptation levy, your license and also the *Soli ni Yasana*. So you see how expensive it is to be an indigenous Fijian living in the village, we have to fund all our own development projects, right from the top and across the board. We are trying very hard to make life more attractive for people to live in the village so they are not thinking that it is too expensive to live there and want to run away to the urban centres.

This is my contribution, I hope that the other side is listening to this so that in terms of the Budget they will think of how they can make life better for those living in the village so that they are not funding everything that the Provincial Council should be funding. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I just like to make some comments, we note the recommendations that have been made by the Committee. There are some anomalies in respect to the comments that have been made. Obviously the digitisation process has a number of verification processes within it, actually check with those people who have been registered in the VKB, check by TLTB, and also the positions initially they started off with NEC volunteers and they have actually been regularised. There is no danger of any adulteration of the information and people have the ability to be able to recheck those names.

Madam Speaker, I could not frankly understand what the Leader of Opposition was saying about Environmental & Climate Adaptation Levy (ECAL) being a burden on those people who live in the villages. They do not actually have to pay ECAL, which is a very different matter altogether. ECAL is only paid by those people who use the services in the respective areas that have actually been put in the Regulations just the way ECAL will be made available. We note of course the contents that have been noted by the Committee and they will continue to note them and obviously there are changes that are being made to ensure for example, things like gender, break up and identification and that will be continued to be done.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise to do make a small contribution in regards to the motion that is before the House in regards to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, 2014 Annual Report. I agree with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition on the budgetary allocation and the various programmes that are listed in the Budget Estimates for the Ministry for iTaukei Affairs.

Madam Speaker, the iTaukei Affairs as we all know is run by a Board which is now accordingly appointed by the Minister responsible. One of the major projects that they undertook was the village boundaries which they went all around Fiji, and that has raised some issues with the *i Taukei* community and also advised on the issue of land boundary probably the village boundary could be clarified with the *i Taukei* communities and even the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs.

In that process probably things can be more clarified through the provincial Administrators and the *Rokos* in terms of the real purpose and intention of the village boundaries. The other expensive exercise that we all know that few months back I think there was budgetary allocation in regards to the village by-laws which the Government has now suspended and again that has created even some agitation in the *i Taukei* community. Most of them were disagreeing but we thank the Government had come to realise that it is not right at the moment given the various issues that will come up, given

that the control of Government into the affairs of the *Vanua* which will be enacted in the by-laws and probably administered we will facilitate with the Rokos and the Provincial....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Point of order!

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of order!.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member is actually speculating as to how the by-laws would have been put in place. He is also speculating as to how they are supposed to be stopped by Government and it is a complete misrepresentation regarding by-laws. It is false to say what he is saying. It is false, do not speculate.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point to note on the comments that have been made.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, let me continue, those are the few things probably the Ministry can take on board given that this is a debate on the recommendation and the Government can take on board most of the things.

But back to the VKB Digitisation which the Honourable Acting Prime Minister and the Acting Honourable Minister for the iTaukei Affairs has already alluded to that the digitisation processes has been completed given there were few rollouts in the few Budgets that came after 2015, 2016, 2017-2018, but again, Madam Speaker, the errors that have come out.

In particular case, Madam Speaker, a case in Labasa which is currently being dealt with at the iTLTB, the NLC and the iTaukei Affairs Board. These are issues that come up due to the problems of the VKB Digitisation Programme.

There were two twins, Madam Speaker, so they were entered at the same time in the VKB and they both turned 18 in 2016. According to the Ministry of iTaukei and iTLTB their lease allocation will be kept until the age of 18 and at the age of 18, Madam Speaker, one received \$11,000 and the other one received \$1,000. The parent had written to iTLTB querying why there is a difference because they were twins.

Again it was identified that during the transfer of the VKB from manual to the computerised system, the officer that was doing the transfer thought it was the namesake so he crossed the name off with red pen saying that he died. After verification iTLTB officers were able to identify the problem and tried to rectify but again, the policy stands that the period that he was crossed out he will not receive the lease payment so he received only \$1,000.

We have re-written to the General Manager for iTLTB and was also referred to the NLC Commissioner, they were pushing this case around and no one wanted to take the blame, given that iTLTB said they cannot give out what was owed to the person that was labelled dead, and again they said it was the problem of FAB, FAB blamed NLC, NLC blamed the company that came to do the digitisation but the company is no longer here. These are certain issues, Madam Speaker, that the Government can take on board to at least review the system.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, Point of Order!

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I do not understand what the Honourable Member is saying that the company is not here, it is the software product which is being developed by the company. It

does not mean therefore that it cannot be corrected, it is false to say that. He is saying that the reason why it cannot be corrected is because the company is not here.

The software is here, maybe he is correct the input was not correct. Now, whether we actually have it digitised or you do not have it digitised if the input in the records are not correct obviously it is not correct. What he fails to say is the fact of the matter is there is a process to be able to correct it. But it is completely false to say the company is no longer here therefore it cannot be done.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Comments are noted.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, that was the answer given by officials to the parents of the two that I have mentioned, I just repeated what they have said. The issue of the company and the software it is for the Honourable Acting Minister for iTaukei Affairs to clarify.

Again, Madam Speaker, those are few things that the Ministry can take on board and also increase allocation for other activities in regards to the land dispute, land demarcation and boundary and other unsurveyed lands; those issues have also been raised in the Committee. Those are few things, Madam Speaker, on my contribution to the Report which is before the House at the moment, I thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viam Pilly, please speak in reply.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have no further comments.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

The content of the Report.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of “Noes”)

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no Opposition, the content of the Report is noted.

### **REVIEW REPORT ON THE ITAUKEI TRUST FUND BOARD 2014 ANNUAL REPORT**

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call on the Chairperson I remind Honourable Members that at the end of the debate we will be voting merely to note the Report, and once the vote is taken that is the end of Report not be debated again in Parliament.

I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to move his motion.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I move that Parliaments debate the review report on the iTaukei Trust Fund Board 2014 Annual Report which was tabled on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2016.

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to speak on his motion.



HON. V. PILLAY.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Honourable Acting Prime Minister, the Honourable Ministers, Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Members of Parliament on behalf of the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs I take this opportunity to speak on the motion with regards to the report on the *iTaukei* Trust Fund Board 2014 Annual Report.

At the outset, this Committee review report is a bipartisan one with the comprehensive contributions from the Honourable Members of the Committee from both the Government and the Opposition side. The *iTaukei* Trust Fund Board was established by the Fijian Government to foster investment of Indigenous Fijians and Rotumans in promoting initiative to a better standard of living and enhance appropriate cultural traditional and values.

The Committee noted that in 2014 ITFB had increased its shares with additional amount of 7,863 shares purchased which was valued at \$7.08 per share. Overall, the market value of ITFB investment portfolios has increased from \$84,415,236 million to \$89,688,839 million which is an increase of 6.25 percent. The Committee is content with the overall performance of the *iTaukei* Trust Fund Board after a round of consultation with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Moreover, the outcome of the consultations was positive in which the Committee has noted, identified core responsibilities and mission of ITFB that involved the promotion initiative that will strengthen the *vanua* and enhance appropriate cultural, traditions values and well-being of the *iTaukei* and Rotuman people.

Madam Speaker, with those few comments as the Honourable Member moving the motion I thank you for the opportunity.

HON. SPEAKER.- I invite comments on the motion. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for his review report, Madam Speaker. Just briefly, in terms of the objectives of the Board, Madam Speaker, the Board was established in 2001 and things were a bit different at that time. I believe, Madam Speaker, it needs to widen its functions where it says on Page 6 of this Report that one of the objectives of the Board was intended to be charitable in purpose.

Why I am saying wider, Madam Speaker, is that last year when we had the Rewa Festival in Nausori which was a provincial initiative in line with COP 23 that was having its meeting in Bonn at a time. In terms of climate change issues we were just unable, Madam Speaker, to attract or access any funding for ITFB fund. We saw then that the objectives of the Board need to be widened to also incorporate climate change issues since this is in terms of our villages and settlements are impacted in terms of climate adaptation and mitigation factors.

I believe that ITFB needs to be more visionary and forward looking. The widening of the functions will capture Recommendation 3 where a portion of ITFB revenue is experienced right down to the grassroots level through funding assistance to economic activities in all villages, which is just not happening, Madam Speaker.

Lastly, also Recommendation 3 in its review report states that future reports should be to capture grants distributed to each of the Provincial Councils and how they are being utilised in each Province. This is not happening, Madam Speaker. As what ITFB is doing mostly in regards to training programmes for the Provinces is they are organising and implementing, and there is no economic activities down to village level as is stated in the report. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. There being no input I now give the floor to the Honourable Viam Pillay. Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- A point of clarification in respect of climate change activities. The Honourable Minister for Natural Disaster Management and Agriculture has a budgetary allocation in respect of that. So does the Climate Change Division within the Ministry of Economy, for example, the relocation of the three villagers has been funded through government together in partnership with other development partners.

The assessment for example of the other 42 or 43 odd villages, will also be carried out by government. So it is government's responsibility to provide the funding to them, together with other development partners that want to participate in that space, for example, the European Union. So I think it is incorrect to say that it should be only coming from this particular fund, its government's responsibility to do that, which government is doing, Madam Speaker. We note the contents of the report. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Bulitavu?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, just a small contribution in regards to the *i-Taukei* Trust Fund. I think the history of the Trust Fund has to be clear to us, even it was not with the SDL government and the other previous governments, SVT government the Trust Fund would not have come into Bill.

The Trust Fund was the idea of the then Prime Minister to move towards an autonomy, given the Great Council of Chiefs to have its own commercial arm, and we now have evidence in the complex we have and the various investments that are there and are now managed by the Trust Fund, but the original intention has now been lost. Madam Speaker, my request to government is how this can be realised by the indigenous community, the investments are growing but how does this trickle down to VKB members? How does this trickle down to the various communities? How they would be able to become partners in development in regards to various projects that will suit the resources that are available to them?

This is where the Trust Fund should be looking into, not only investment, but also engaging the beneficiaries on how they can become entrepreneurs in future and not only as passive land providers and resource providers. How they are able to use the platform that is there through the Trust Fund to accelerate them, into the commercial sector, into the commercial world. That is the important thing that the policy makers that are there in the Trust Fund and the Board should be looking into, on how *i-Taukei* people can be empowered to narrow the disparity rate in regards to the economic ability of the *i-Taukei* community.

Although, we are resource rich, but we are cash poor. The policy that needs to be coming from the *i-Taukei* Affairs Board and also the *i-Taukei* Trust Fund should enable the various provinces to move into the Commercial Sector to be able to compete fairly with other ethnic groups that are in Fiji. . These systems were already there and I pay tribute to previous governments, especially the SVT government under the leadership of the then former Prime Minister and now SODELPA leader Mr Sitiveni Rabuka, for opening up those ventures that enabled *i-Taukei* people to own properties in commercial areas in town.

Those are some of the things that are lacking at the moment and I urge the government to really relook at those provisions on how the various investments that were made for a purpose will actually benefit the *i-Taukei* community. It goes back to how it will develop the various communities that we represent as VKB members. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Viam Pillay.

HON. V. PILLAY.- I do not have any other comments, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote to note the content of the Report. Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

Motion agreed to.

That comes to the end of the item in our Order Paper for today. I would like to thank you very much for your input, being very productive, very comprehensive and I thank you all for your contribution.

Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.30 a.m.

Thank you Honourable Members.

The Parliament adjourned at 6.04 p.m.