

## WEDNESDAY, 27TH APRIL, 2016

The Parliament resumed at 9.30 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

### PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable V.R. Gavoka, the Honourable V. Pillay and the Honourable Ratu N.T. Lalabalavu.

#### Point of Order - Statement in the *Daily Hansard*

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I would like to raise a Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- A Point of Order.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam, can I refer this august House to page 1349 of the *Daily Hansard* of Tuesday, 26th April, 2016, it stated the comments made by the Honourable Attorney-General that the basic home is going to be provided \$7,000, and this is the first time any Government is going to provide this type of assistance.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, the Point of Order is really on the rules and procedures of the House and ...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Clarification, Madam Speaker, on Standing Order 74(2).

HON. SPEAKER.- Yes, the rules and procedures as we are having now, but you can bring that up later in the form of a motion.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam, we are referring to the Minutes of what happened yesterday and it is stated in the Minutes. We are actually in our Agenda, talking on the Confirmation of Minutes and I would like to comment on that Agenda item, Madam.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will bring that up after the Confirmation of Minutes has been seconded, and will ask for any corrections to the Minutes.

#### Birthday Wishes - Honourable Prime Minister

Before I call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament, let me be the first to acknowledge and wish our Honourable Prime Minister Happy Birthday...

(Applause)

... and many, many happy returns of the day. I know others will be wishing you, Sir, with more good wishes today.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- How old?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- 26 years.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- Definitely, you look 26, Sir.

Before we go on to the next item on the Agenda, I invite the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to also give her good wishes.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Members of the Opposition, we would like to wish the Honourable Prime Minister a very happy birthday. We wish him well in his endeavours.

I am not a preacher, Madam Speaker, but I know that the Lord has plans and a purpose for his life. We pray that he will continue to work according to the plans and purpose that the Lord has created him for, and that He will make him prosper and make us all prosper as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Applause)

### MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Tuesday, 26th April, 2016, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- A Point of Order had been raised on the Minutes and I will now give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, the statement stated yesterday in regards to the \$7 million is the first time ever any government has done that. I would like to correct that statement because I could recall way back in 1982 when *Cyclones Eric* and *Gavin* struck within 24 hours of each other in the Western Division, a unit within the Office of the Prime Minister, the Department of Housing, Relief and Rehabilitation, was immediately set up in Lautoka and placed directly under the supervision of the Commissioner Western, to manage Government housing and reconstruction programmes which covered the Yasawas, Mamanucas, Vatulele, as well as the provinces of Ba, Nadroga and Navosa.

This was the first time, Madam Speaker, that the Alliance Government introduced the \$5,000 Housing Assistance Programme, and 34 years later, it had remained at \$5,000, if you remove \$2,000 shipping costs for houses totally destroyed and \$1,500 for houses partially destroyed and the ration supplied for each household at three months interval.

I am shocked to hear that and I would call on the Honourable Attorney-General to withdraw his statement because it is not true. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- It is not a Point of Order really, it is just a clarification on an issue that was mentioned in the Minutes that was correctly recorded. However, we can put in a supplementary to the *Hansard Report* based on your clarification on that particular issue.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, can I comment on that, I think it is a question of debate. What we had said was that, it is the first time ever that you had a Government that is going to engage in such a “Help for Homes” initiative in such a large scale, together with the initiatives through the Ministry of Natural Disaster Management, together with all the other initiatives that we have put in place.

Madam Speaker, for the first time, as the Honourable Member would tell you, in those days the help was also restricted to various ethnic groups. Only one specific ethnic group, Madam Speaker, in those days, and that is how those initiatives were given - specific to only ethnic groups. Now, for the first time ever, Madam Speaker, you will actually have this initiative opened to everyone, as we did in *Cyclone Evans*. For the first time ever, Madam Speaker, you will actually have individual members of our country being given a card where they can go and individually spend that money. That is the first time, Madam Speaker, and nothing like that has ever happened, and I stand by my comment.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you very much, we have heard the comments of the Honourable Attorney-General, however, both comments will be recorded in the *Hansard*.

## **COMMUNICATION FROM THE SPEAKER**

### Acknowledgment of Members and Visitors to Parliament

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to this sitting of Parliament. I also welcome the politics students from the University of the South Pacific. We see that the students from Noco Secondary School are here this morning. We have bright sunshine and I hope you are not bringing the rain back to Suva but you are very, very welcome to Parliament.

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

## **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS**

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications to table his Reports.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the Reserve Bank of Fiji Annual Report 2015 (Parliamentary Paper No. 16/2016) to Parliament.

Thank you.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Pursuant to Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Reserve Bank of Fiji Annual Report 2015 (Parliamentary Paper No. 16/2016) to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

I now call upon the Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration to table his Report.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present to Parliament the Ministry of Defence, National Security and Immigration Annual Report 2014 (Parliamentary Paper No. 38/2016).

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Pursuant to Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Ministry of Defence, National Security and Immigration Annual Report 2014 to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.

Honourable Members, I have been informed that there will not be any committee reports tabled today, so we will move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

## QUESTIONS

### Oral Questions

#### Plans for Treatment - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Question No. 46/2016)

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA asked the Government, upon notice:

*Tropical Cyclone Winston* has left a massive impact on the infrastructure and the environment, which is now being addressed by relevant Ministries. However, can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management brief this House on plans that are there in place to deal with those affected by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

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

Madam Speaker, this question is more a health-related matter but in my capacity as the Chairman of the National Disaster Council, I will be answering in terms of the arrangements that were made during the meetings of the Council which was relayed to all the relevant agencies that are responsible for, not only PTSD, but related psycho-social and psychological first-aid treatment as well. It is also technical in nature but for the benefit of Honourable Members, basically PTSD is a mental health condition triggered by experiencing or seeing terrifying events, such as accidents, disasters or conflicts where there are a lot of PTSD, as it is commonly known.

The PTSD, Madam Speaker, if not addressed properly will cause serious problems, particularly to victims and this is why it is so important. Let me assure the Honourable Members of this House that during all the Council meetings from the first week since the declaration of a State of Disaster in all parts of Fiji, this has been the consistent message given to all the stakeholders in looking after our people. A lot of times, we concentrate on the physical infrastructure and the

reconstruction and we forget the victims or people because people are important, Madam Speaker. They have feelings and emotions, and this is why such a response is critical for us.

Let me go back to the question, Madam Speaker, PTSD is something that does not surface immediately, post/in any disaster. It usually takes the first four to six weeks, then signs of PTSD start coming up from the victims because usually in any disaster or post-conflict, post-accident activities, that is when people (sort of) become withdrawn or in a confused state. That is what we call an ambivalent state. It is very hard to detect symptoms of PTSD.

Madam Speaker, basically it is broken into two major components. Firstly, as I have stated, during the ambivalent state, psychological first aid or psycho-social support is important. What is psycho-social support, Madam Speaker? It is simply talking to the victims (*talanoa*) because in stress management particularly, if you start at a subject, Madam Speaker, they always say that “problem-shared is half the problem solved”, so as you speak to the victims, venting out their frustrations and the dangers they go through, they are opening up, and that is psycho-social support. Hugging victims carries a message, particularly in comforting.

Psychological first aid, Madam Speaker, is more of a therapy-type, and for the benefit of health workers and first-aid responders or providers, there is a package provided by the WHO that is distributed to all the agencies. If I may mention the agencies, Madam Speaker, the *TC Winston* Government agencies are the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Women and Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation. They are the ones that are playing the lead role within the cluster, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this is complemented by international and local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) such as:

- 1) UNICEF;
- 2) UN Women;
- 3) Empower Pacific;
- 4) Medical Services Pacific;
- 5) WHO;
- 6) Women’s Crisis Centre;
- 7) Fiji Red Cross;
- 8) Lifeline Fiji assisted by Lifeline Australia;
- 9) Vodafone and Digicel;
- 10) Fiji Council for Disabled People;
- 11) Youth Champs for Mental Health;
- 12) Australian Aid;
- 13) Methodist Church of Fiji; and ;
- 14) Israel Aid to Vuma in Ovalau.

If I miss out one or two, I do apologise for that, Madam Speaker, but these are the agencies that are more particularly involved in psycho-social support and psychological first-aid response.

What happens after that, Madam Speaker, post six weeks, particularly after the eighth week, et cetera, symptoms of PTSD come up. There is also a package provided by the WHO that is given to health workers, particularly doctors and nurses. Of course, there is a need for psychiatrists and psychologists but because this is common problem the world over and in terms of shortage of these Pacific skills, a package was also developed by the WHO which is called the MH (Mental Health) Gap. To cushion that gap, doctors and nurses are also provided. So, what the Ministry of Health did, Madam Speaker, was that, they have what they call “stress wards”. So, for those who will be identified from the initial responders, they will be referred to the nearest Health Centre and they

should ask for the Mental Health Gap Specialist whether she/he be a nurse, and doctors as well. They will be given some therapy and, of course, given a time to recover in the stress wards as well.

I might as well add, Madam Speaker, that there are Government officials who are also victims; the agriculture officials, nurses and teachers in those areas. All the ministries have been given directive from us at the National Disaster Council to relieve these officials, and most of them have been taken out of the area, recovering, meeting relatives in Suva and for those who are coping well, some of them have gone back to their respective localities. However, for those who are having some problems they are held back in Suva for more critical response before they can be deployed. I will stop there, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Seniority first, I will give the floor to the Honourable Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you. Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, through you, what process is in place for feedback from the various ministries to progress and the result of this PTSD application? In the light of school students who have been displaced, with particular mention of Queen Victoria School (QVS) where the roll is over 600 and they are geographically disbursed throughout Fiji not in groups or clusters but in some individual cases, could that have an impact on their external examinations? Do they have a plan in place to address those who are traumatically stressed from *Tropical Cyclone Winston*? I have received feedbacks that children are still very much affected. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, let me say in this Honourable House that it is not only the students of QVS who were affected, of course, internally or redistributed in the school system, but there are other schools as well. Way back in 2012 during *Cyclone Evans*, most of the students in the Western Division were also relocated to other schools, and there were situations where Muslims students were in some Sangam or Hindu schools. This has been the practice in the past.

However, back to the question, Madam Speaker, in the Ministry of Health and, of course, in the Ministry of Education, there is the cluster approach. I think there is another question by the Honourable Tikoca later on today where I will probably explain more about the Cluster System.

In the Cluster System we have what we call a Humanitarian Action Plan. In the Humanitarian Action Plan, they have strategies on how they look at the critical areas and how they address it, what are the gaps and what are the requirements. So, they have their tracking system, Madam Speaker, where the students will have to go through counselling. In fact, the psychosocial support and the initial psychological first aid that has already been given have segregated data, particularly for women, children and likewise, for those who are attending school because Fiji's issue is a very sensitive one. Of course, we understand the fact that women and children are the most vulnerable in any post-disaster activity, so this is where their tracking system becomes so valuable, Madam Speaker.

The Ministry of Health has figures in terms of the treatment that they have given thus far where they have treated almost about 20,895 cases. I was talking about the cluster, and that is what they have achieved so far. Unfortunately, I do not have the information about the gaps and that is the work that will be continue as we are transiting now from the response phase into the recovery phase.

They will definitely look at the students of QVS. I know for a fact, Madam Speaker, that some of them have already been counselled in the schools that they are in, but I leave that to the Honourable Minister for Education and the Ministry of Health and the cluster, particularly the protection cluster to work on that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his explanation on what PTSD is all about. We have also heard yesterday the contribution from the Honourable Minister for Health on the same topic and previously from the Honourable Minister for Women. What I would like to ask the Honourable Minister is, how is the Disaster Council co-ordinating all these efforts? Also, do you have a written plan which identifies the agencies that are helping out, the resources that are being provided to them and how available are they so that we can refer the cases that do come up to us to those agencies, bearing in mind that I was in Vanua Balavu about three weeks ago and that was like four weeks after the cyclone, no counselling services has been provided to the people of Vanua Balavu?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Minister to respond to the question.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Whatever can be referred to the Honourable Minister for Women can be referred to her later, but let me assure the Honourable Member that Vanua Balavu is in the plan. On 22nd May, Lifeline Fiji together with Lifeline Australia will be in Vanua Balavu specifically again because of the gaps identified. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, for the Honourable Members on the other side, this Humanitarian Action Plan and the Cluster System, are new arrangements and most of them are ...

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Where is your written plan?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- ... not aware of this. I will explain it come the next one.

The Honourable Ratu Tikoca knows it very well. During his days as a Divisional Commissioner, there were only few NGOs around but now, there are more NGOs involved because of cross-cutting issues like climate change, gender, human rights, disaster and ...

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- ... as a result, the Humanitarian Action Plan.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Where is the plan?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- All the clusters have a plan and I can show the Honourable Member, the plans on my computer.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Do not talk about it.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the last supplementary question to the Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his answer this morning. In 1959, we had the Yours Campaign in Fiji, and in every village in Fiji they were allocated a nurse. After 60 days, if the Honourable Minister is closely following the Empower Pacific Report, it has indicated that one in every five students do not concentrate in school because of traumatic effects. The plans as revealed by the Honourable Minister after four weeks, six weeks, what other plans that are there? If there are plans, at district level to have counsellors, then we have NGOs to treat people at that level and refer them to hospitals for stress therapy, et cetera. What plans are there from NDMO that will make people know where to go, what to do and where to be treated?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, we have Disaster Committees right from the village level and these had been established long ago. These Disaster Committees should be giving some directions to the people when they need such assistance, otherwise, as I had already stated, the nearest health centre, because the MH gaps as I had stated are prepared by the WHO, and this has already been in place.

In terms of preparing for the future as well, Madam Speaker, we have continued to discuss with the agencies involved, particularly on the training of more Government officials which include the District Officers in particular and the Provincial Administrators. They can be trained to provide the first aid support, and of course, they can be the initial responders as well, so that it is not only limited to the Ministry of Health officials but also to more Government officials who we train for this purpose. They do not have to be specialists but only to understand the subject matter and the symptoms, and how to provide the necessary assistance that should be sufficient, Madam Speaker. Definitely the Disaster Committees in the communities and, of course, with the existing structure, we will try to continue to improve on this. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Alifereti Nabulivou.

RFMF – *Tropical Cyclone Winston*  
(Question No. 47/2016)

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

Can the Honourable Minister inform the House on the full resources that the Republic of Fiji Military Forces utilised during pre and post *Tropical Cyclone Winston*?

HON. CAPT T.L. NATUVA (Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration).- Madam Speaker, firstly, I wish to acknowledge with great appreciation the foreign governments for their significant assistance and huge aid in terms of personnel, equipment and expertise given by their respective deployed Defence Forces, to name a few, Australia, New Zealand, China, India, Indonesia, the European Union and France.

While the rest of Fiji marvels at the invaluable contributions of the Foreign Defence Forces and their vast resources, we must also marvel at the selfless service of our own military personnel, who have also somewhat sacrificed in the same way. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Commander of the Royal Fiji Military Forces (RFMF), the officers and men for their commitment, diligence, as well as their tireless efforts, with the limited resources that they have. The RFMF provided a very high level of participation during and after *Tropical Cyclone Winston*.

It must be noted that pre-*Tropical Cyclone Winston*, the RFMF had already mobilised in readiness for the disaster the RFMF planning team of six senior officers were deployed to the DISMAC Headquarters from Saturday, 20th February, 2016 to assist the daily planning of DISMAC operation. A total of 12 senior Non-Commissioned Officers were also deployed to provide 24 hours duty officers with DISMAC. A total of 276 Territorial Force personnel marched in for operational duty into the RFMF. There was a deployment of up to 650 RFMF personnel daily, both Regular and Territorial Forces. In fact, during operational peak stage, the RFMF deployment reached 285 personnel.

During and after *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, the RFMF personnel were involved and covered the following areas in operation such as:

- reconnaissance and main supply route;
- MSR;
- clearing to towns and cities throughout Fiji;
- unloading and loading of DISMAC supplies at airports, seaports and warehouses throughout Fiji;
- evacuation of patients from hospitals and students from boarding schools;
- ration distribution throughout Fiji;
- clearing of damaged infrastructure all over Fiji;
- engineers rehabilitation assistance to affected areas;
- assisted the Australian Defence Force and the New Zealand Defence Force in school rehabilitation;
- and provided naval ship to assist in the distribution of DISMAC supplies to outer islands.

From day one and the next few days that followed, RFMF personnel were deployed to the various areas of the nation affected by *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, which are in:

- Koro, Ovalau, Gau, Nairai, Batiki in the Lomaitiviti Group;
- Vanua Balavu in Lau;
- Taveuni, Savusavu, Nabouwalu and Labasa in Vanua Levu; and
- Tailevu, Rakiraki, Tavua, Ba and Sigatoka in Viti Levu.

Madam Speaker, I make no mistake in expressing my gratitude to the Foreign Defence Forces and their governments for their contributions to our nation's recovery and re-building. They have now returned to their respective nations with a hero's welcome due to their sacrifice and in particular, separation from their loved ones at home, and our very own RFMF continue to carry on the rebuilding of our nation and are seldom acknowledged for their contribution and identical sacrifice.

Perhaps, the magnitude of this disaster at its heights is considered the worst hitting cyclone in history and has made people forget that the RFMF has been continually deployed during the past natural disasters in assistance of humanity, both locally and regionally. Apparently, the RFMF have even gone further to cut a day's pay from all serving personnel, home and abroad, of over \$100,000 towards funding for *Tropical Cyclone Winston* recovery, and was one of the first Government institutions to contribute to their recovery funds.

Madam Speaker, I recall during the previous Parliament sitting of how we have endured the numerous criticisms from the other side of the House, of the RFMF and its operations. Yet, we now witness how invaluable the RFMF is to our local sustenance and resilience to the rebuilding of our nation from such calamity. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Hon. Samuela Vunivalu.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Madam Speaker, first, I must commend the Commander of the RFMF, Rear Admiral Viliame Naupoto and all the members of the RFMF in regards to the tireless help in terms of helping all the disaster areas in the country. I also want to commend the Australia and New Zealand Military for helping the country in terms of aid and helping the Military in our country.

In previous sittings, on certain occasions, it is always being emphasised by the Opposition that the RFMF should be minimised. My question is, what happens if there is no RFMF?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Hon. Minister to comment on the one minute statement or question that has been made.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, I think what the Honourable Member is trying to emphasise is, what happens if there was no RFMF. If there was no RFMF personnel, after the *Cyclone Winston*, it would be a disaster because they fill in the gaps - from planning, operations into the area, helping the Fiji Roads Authority of Fiji in clearing the roads, with all the assistance that they had because they have the capability to do all those things. It will be a disaster for Fiji if there was no RFMF. We also have the assistance from the members of the Territorial Forces, who had assisted us. They are trained in these areas of helping the people of Fiji during disaster both, locally, regionally and overseas.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his explanation. My question emanates from the answers that he has given. We note that there was no RFMF assistance directed to the interior parts of Naitasiri and some other areas which were also devastated by *Tropical Cyclone Winston*. The question I would like to ask is; why was there no Military assistance given to the people who suffered from *Tropical Cyclone Winston* in the Naitasiri Province?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- They voted him.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, the consultation effort for the RFMF was for the *Tikina* of Gone-ni-Colo where it was classified as a red zone, and also in Rewasau where I was personally there to witness the repairing of schools.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- I do not know whether the Honourable Member had ever visited Naitasiri but I was there three days before the cyclone struck, and I visited all the areas in Naitasiri to ascertain which areas should have assistance.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Anare Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister whether the *Turaga ni Koro* and *Tikina* representatives who were used by the Military for distributing rations in the various areas, especially in the Lomaiviti Group, compensated for their work?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, I will not be able to answer that question because I am not aware at that level whether they were involved in the distribution of ration or not.

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

Total Number of Compensation Cases  
(Question No. 48/2016)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations inform this House on the total number of workers compensation cases that had been paid out so far this year?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU (Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations).- Madam Speaker, I rise to answer the question raised by the Honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, this year, the Government allocated \$5 million towards the compensation of Government workers following the doubling of quantum from \$24,000 to \$50,000. As at 31st March, 2016 the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations had processed and paid out compensation to 13 injured workers with the amount of \$88,401.57.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations also processed eight death cases, totalling \$192,000. This brings the total compensation payout to Government workers as at 31st March, 2015 to a total of \$280,401.57.

Madam Speaker, for the private sector, the compensation of 70 cases amounted to a total of \$216,444.64 as at 31st March, 2016.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations had submitted another Request to Incur Expenditure (RIE) to the Ministry of Finance, totalling \$613,000.17 for additional payments. This is payment for 32 cases, comprising 20 death cases, with a total of \$538,000 for the outstanding injury cases that have been claimed for.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, is it a supplementary question or Point of Order?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations for his answer to the question.

During the period of 2006 and 2014, a lot of workers were unfairly dismissed, some because of false reporting, some for no reasons at all and most for other reasons. Some of them had taken a long time to have their cases heard and I know for one case in particular, that person took five years for his case to be heard and by the time the decision was given he had only two weeks to retire. My question is; how many cases from this period are still pending and when will these be attended to?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, this question is directly to injury and death.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. There being no other supplementary questions, I now give the floor to the Honourable Jilila Kumar.

Number of Dual Citizenship - Citizenship of Fiji Decree 2009  
(Question No. 49/2016)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration inform this House on the number of dual citizenship granted under the Citizenship of Fiji Decree 2009 and the benefits to all Fijians?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA (Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I thank her for her question. I would like to congratulate her for promoting the African dress.

Dual citizenship was implemented in 2009 under the Citizenship of Fiji Decree. Dual citizenship holders are able to reside in Fiji for as long as they want without having to apply for a permit since they now also hold a Fiji passport, the same as residents. They do not need to go through Investment Fiji should they need to set up a business in Fiji which determines quicker turnaround time in processing, given their citizenships. A dual citizenship holder will enjoy the same benefits as any normal Fiji citizen, such as the right to vote in the General Election, access to medical facilities and education without having to pay international fees normally charged to those holding foreign passports.

The total number of applicants issued with dual citizenship under the Citizenship of Fiji Decree 2009 from April 2009 to 31st March, 2016 is 6,051. I will not mention the breakdown because it will take much longer. However, the statistics mentioned are mostly applicants whom are former Fiji citizens and whom have been residing in both, Australia and New Zealand. On average, Madam Speaker, for the past seven years we have been receiving around 836 applicants per year. The highest figure recorded was in 2014 where we received 1,036 granted applicants, and we anticipate that figures will continue to rise in the years ahead.

Madam Speaker, one of the benefits in granting dual citizenship is that, it has allowed the return of numerous Fijian professionals who had migrated for greener pastures. Those professionals are returning through their evident application for dual citizenship. Their return benefits to Fiji is through their investment which encompasses the entrepreneurial opportunities from finance to education. Mostly, these are Fiji residents who departed Fiji after the events of 1987, and they are coming back with their children.

Madam Speaker, foreigners who apply for dual citizenship bring with them their expertise, experiences and their background to instil in wherever they contribute, the relevant regularities similar to their advanced standard abroad, therefore, lifting and benefitting the local standard level. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for the answers and I would like to refer to one part of his answer where most of those who had dual citizenships were former residents. That is understandable because of their link to the country. My question is, can he give us roughly those who are not former residents, those who have made Fiji as their second home by obtaining their second citizenship and most importantly, their impact in investment in Fiji (as he mentioned) in regards to former citizens? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, I would not be able to answer that question now, I have that recorded in a database. I would be able to write to him with the information that he requires.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The question is statistical in nature and the response will be provided in writing. Thank you.

I now give the floor to the Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; could the Honourable Minister explain why certain individuals are not given visas to Fiji under the dual citizenship or otherwise, with the particular likes of Dr. Brij Lal and Padma Lal?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The answer is that for citizenship, we have a committee and there are provisions we have to go through like police reports, et cetera, in order to have a tick in the box. The committee recommends those who are to be recommended for dual citizenship and those ones who are not to be recommended. It is up to the committee to decide on that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Minister advise this august House if dual citizenship holders can also be given employment locally, even though the locals are qualified or are they just here to create new investment so that they can provide employment to our local population?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- Madam Speaker, as I alluded to, the condition of dual citizenship is the same as of the local people in Fiji.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

Audit - Free Medicine Scheme  
(Question No. 50/2016)

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

Would the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform Parliament if the Ministry carried out an audit to ascertain the status of the Free Medicine Scheme as well as how much medicine has expired within that period?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I thank the Honourable Leader of the National Federation Party for his question.

The Ministry had carried out in December last year an assessment of how well the Scheme had gone. That was carried out by a team within, consisting of people who look after pharmacy related matters. As a result of this assessment, they came up with some key recommendations. They

identified areas that need to be improved, areas like procurement, distribution, financing, selection of the medicines that are part of the Free Medicine Scheme and the management of the Scheme. Some of these, especially the management part of the recommendations were to be implemented this year, but with *Tropical Cyclone Winston* coming in, there is a lot more effort that has gone into dealing with those particular issues.

In terms of medicine that have expired, they have not been able to give me an actual figure yet, but I know that it is minimal. However, advice has been given to retailing pharmacists that if there are medicines that are about to be expired, they can be passed back to the Ministry so that we can send it to places where there is high volume, so that things can circulate.

I also understand that some pharmacists are doing this exchange of medicine on their own. Generally, in terms of expired medicines in a country as a whole, WHO has a standard whereby if you are able to have 5 percent of your medicines expiring, that is the standard. In Fiji, we have been able to reduce that to 3 percent of the total medicine stock, and we hope to be able to continue to implement measures to continuously decrease this.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, during post-*Cyclone Winston*, how many of the 142 free medicine were available and which ones were not available?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I do not have the full list of the medicines that are available with me, but I can always make that information available. I know we now have 142 items in the revised medicine list and from that list, 102 of them are already part of our Essential Medicines List, so they are already part of our process. If they are already part of our Essential Medicines List, tenders had been sent out to have this into the country by late July or early August this year, but the stocks that are already in place are those that can be circulated. The other 40 medicine have also been sent out for purchase and they should be in the country towards around August this year.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister; in 2014, the FijiFirst Manifesto specifically stated that all medicine that are prescribed by doctors will be provided by the Scheme. However, there are only 72 medicine that are available, Madam Speaker, under the Scheme and the Manifesto said that it will provide \$8 million in the 2016 Budget. We see that an allocation of \$10 million was given in regards to medicine for this particular Scheme. Can the Honourable Minister inform the House as to why there is some inconsistency in regards to the implementation of what was promised to the people?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I could not get what the inconsistency was. For me, the consistency has been that FijiFirst said that we regard the people on margins of our society as important, we need to make sure that we can provide service to them and FijiFirst has done its best to be able to provide that. Of course, there are some lapses in the effectiveness of how we are able to do this, but we would continuously enhance that because FijiFirst has the best interest of all the people of this country right in their hearts.

HON. SPEAKER.- I give the floor to the Honourable Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEL.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. These are the complaints from the small pharmacists who are not registered with the Ministry in this programme. I am asking the Honourable Minister whether they will be compensated, considering the Free Medicine Scheme they are mandated to issue with regard to this policy?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Under the Free Medicine Scheme, Madam Speaker, we supply the medicine to them and they distribute. So, I do not understand what is it that we are supposed to compensate since the Ministry itself will supply the medicine.

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

Sale of Sky Pacific to Digicel  
(Question No. 51/2016)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, this question emanated from the cries of the people, the general public who have been watching Sky Television, and at the same time accessing local contents in terms of *Fiji One News, Shortland Street*. Now, with these new changes, they are not accessing the local contents through Sky Television.

Madam Speaker, my question is as follows:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications inform this House the condition of sale of Sky Pacific by Fiji TV to Digicel?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney General, Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Madam Speaker, Sky Pacific, Fiji TV and Digicel are not Government entities. We do not know what their terms and conditions of the Sale and Purchase Agreement is, we simply look after the regulatory side of the issuance of licence.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, Honourable Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, the CEO for Fiji TV reported in his press release that the condition of the sale was subject to the Attorney-General's approval.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- *Vakamadua sara ga.*

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- So that was the basis of the question. What was the condition?

(Laughter)

Why is it that with the current dish holders, it has been accessed by people in the rural areas but suddenly, they are no longer accessible to the local operations, the local TV? Even this parliamentary broadcasting, they are no longer accessing it as prior to the sale.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, as I have said, we are not privy to the sale conditions and he is the shadow Minister for Telecommunications, Public Enterprises, whatever it may be, and the three wise men behind him.

(Laughter)

The three wise men, *Three Musketeers* or perhaps, the Three Stooges. Madam Speaker, the point is this...

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Oh, come on! Come on!

Madam Speaker, they do not understand finance and commerce....

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- We understand.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- On one hand, he is talking about Sky Pacific and Digicel. They forget that under the Media Industry Development Decree, there was a complete restriction on foreigners to own media organisations in Fiji.

We made an amendment to allow for the sale because Fijian Holdings Limited came to us and said that they want to sell Sky Pacific to Digicel. We made an amendment, here is the Act. This House approved it, but there are certain conditions attached to the regulatory side of it and forced through this amendment to the Media Industry Development Act, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that, the Government does not say how much you must sell it for. If the media organisation reports it for the sale, that is the technical problem, that is their fault. We are here to tell you exactly what Government gets involved in. We issued three licences. There is a licence that was issued to Digicel Fiji under the Television Decree 1992. We have the Media Industry Development Decree, which gives them the licence under the Decree and, of course, we have the regulation, the National Spectrum Decree.

They forget that on one hand, they are talking about protection of Fijian Holdings Limited. Does Fijian Holdings own Sky Pacific now? No, Fijian Holdings own Fiji TV. Should they not want to protect Fiji TV, because it is the free-to-air television? Majority of the Fijian people in Fiji cannot subscribe to Sky Pacific. They cannot afford \$50 a month. Maybe, they can, but ordinary Fijians cannot, they want free-to-air television.

Now, how does a free-to-air television run? How does it survive? It survives by having advertising and generating revenue. Fiji TV is a listed company and it needs a revenue, so it is a protection of a free-to-air television station. If they read the condition of the licence rather than coming and jumping to conclusions, they will see that it says, "television advertising", and as per the Decree, "no local content to protect free-to-air television companies." It says, "All the free to air television companies, if they consent to certain advertising by Sky Pacific, only then they can show it," or if it is advertising that is done outside within the programme.

Within a month or so of the sale taking place, Digicel came forward and said they wanted to add another channel, TV1, which comes from Papua New Guinea, you would have seen a lot of sports. We immediately gave it to them and they started airing it on the date that they wanted, I think it was 7th of April. So, I cannot understand what they are driving at. On the one hand, they want to protect Fijian Holding companies, on the other hand, they want to fly the flag for Digicel. What do they want?

The reality, Madam Speaker, is .....

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- I think the onus is on you, Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I think, Madam Speaker, the logic is suddenly gone out of the House, and that is when I sit down.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Tupou Draunidalo.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister holds office on behalf of the people of Fiji and they are entitled to know, so my supplementary question is, what were the regulatory conditions for the sale to Digicel?

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Answer that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, what else? I have already answered the question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The question is already answered.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Why did you change that Decree, to allow for the sale, Honourable Minister?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the amendment to the law as approved by this House was, there was a niche market available for pure subscription television. There are some people who want to get subscription television.

Subscription television, Madam Speaker, can now be available through terrestrial means or satellite means or through internet means, so there was a market for that. The intention of the amendment was to allow foreign ownership into subscription television for purely entertainment purposes, and there is obviously a growing market with people who may want to subscribe to purely entertainment stations, to be able to subscribe to that. We catered for that, and that was why it was done.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo to ask his question.

Grant to Fiji Airways - Marketing of Singapore  
(Question No. 52/2016)

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

Can the Honourable Minister advise this august House as to why the Government is assisting Fiji Airways in giving them a grant of \$18 million for marketing of the Singapore service when the Airline can meet those themselves from their \$70 million profit achieved last year?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney General, Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for this question.

It is a very significant milestone for Fiji now to be connected to every single continent that rims the Pacific Ocean, except South America. We now fly to Los Angeles, and we will soon be flying to San Francisco. We fly to Hong Kong, we now do Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. We have other Pacific Island Countries and, of course, there are other airlines like Korean Airways that takes us to Seoul.

It is a very significant positioning for Fiji. It helps us to market Fiji, not just in the tourism sector, but also to be able to more significantly highlight ourselves as a regional hub in this part of the world. So, airline connectivity in particular, Madam Speaker, for what are called "isolated island nation states" is very important.

As you would have recently heard, when the Honourable Minister for Agriculture and the Honourable Prime Minister visited the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), they have now moved their regional Head Office to Fiji. There are many other international organisations that are looking at doing so, clearly because of the fact that we have good cost-effective base for business, and also the airline connectivity.

Yes, Fiji Airways, Madam Speaker, made a profit of \$70 million, but \$70 million is for one year. It has increased to the previous year. It does not necessarily mean that suddenly, it is going to be hunky-dory next year or the following year, in particular, if you have a business that is subject primarily to many other denominators that are outside our control. One of them, of course, being fuel prices that are quite significant.

With the reforms that have been carried out in Fiji Airways, Madam Speaker, we have reached to this stage - the labour reforms that took place, the efficiency gains and, of course, there is a lot more room for improvement. In fact, the current CEO, Madam Speaker, is carrying out a number of independent assessments of the various departments within Fiji Airways. For example, we are not necessarily very well known to be very good when we cancel flights in terms of communications to 'would be' customers or customers who are about to travel. We are not very good in that, we need to improve in those areas. In terms of us, we may have the most friendliest staff, there is room for improvement in that section as well and a number of other engineering areas, etcetera.

To answer the Honourable Member and put it into perspective, I have the figures now. When the Hong Kong route started in 2010, Honourable Member, in the first year the loss was \$15.3 million. In the second year, the loss was \$23.8 million. In the third year, the loss was \$19.7 million, and this is 2012/2013. Only after 2012/2013, the Hong Kong route started making money. If you talk to any airline anywhere in the industry you will always find that in the first two or three years, there is a loss making proposition because you are breaking into the market, and the airline industry is so competitive. So, the overall loss for those three years, Madam Speaker, just on the Hong Kong route was \$58.7 million, but you have to have to persevere to build that capacity.

Hong Kong started off by flying twice a week, today Hong Kong flies four times a week, and it is invariably full. Even if you factored in, because in those days they used to fly a 767 to Hong Kong. Madam Speaker, let me tell you that the 767 which was a leased aircraft some years back, they were paying approximately USD800,000 a month just to lease that, they got rid of that. The

747s were being leased at half a million dollars or thereabouts, they got rid of that because they have four engines and burning a lot of fuel. Even if you took the A330, assuming that the A330 flew in the Hong Kong route, the cost would have decreased from \$58 million to \$48 million, which is still a loss. The A330 is a lot more fuel efficient with a fuel savings of about 30 percent or thereabouts.

Madam Speaker, the fact is, we, as Government, have decided in particular in the Singapore route, to partner with Fiji Airways to make sure that we get the connectivity and we build up the capacity in the Singapore route because this is only very, very critical. We cannot simply say to them; "You take the loss, and come what may." We need to partner with them. It is a partnership, it is not a subsidy *per se*. We are partnering with them. There is a formula in which they file remittances like how they file RIE-type of transactions, for example, if they subsidise local domestic flights whereby they bid for it and when they fly in a particular route, we subsidise for them.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, we are working in partnership with Fiji Airways to build their capacity because we need that capacity. We need to break into the Indian tourism market because they will be the single largest outbound market in a few years' time. We need to get into the Middle Eastern market, we obviously need to get into the Business Class Sector to break into that market and obviously, there is pool of people in the South East Asian market. We had recently been talking to some people, and the Honourable Minister for Tourism can tell us better about that. Also in Indonesia, there is an (sort of) upper middle class sector that may want to be able to come to Fiji, not only for tourism purposes but also for business purposes. Madam Speaker, we are now using this relationship with Fiji Airways to also go to the international fora and market ourselves with them.

Recently in the IMF World Bank Meetings, we talked about it and everyone is very excited. We want to, Madam Speaker, break into what they call the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibition) Market which Fiji has never really done in a large scale. We want to be able to bid, Madam Speaker, for the ADB Meeting. The ADB Meeting which is held every two years, the large ones, they have about 3,000 or 4,000 people who come to the meeting. We are currently talking to the developers in Momi Bay to see if they can build a convention centre of that size for us to be able to host those types of events, so we can bid for those kind of events but you need the airline connectivity. If you have an African who is going to come to an ADB meeting or someone from the Middle East or Central Asia, they do not want to go around the world to come to Fiji. We want that airline connectivity and that is why we partnered with them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S. V. RADRODRO.- I would to thank the Honourable Minister for his response and I am always happy to hear him when he says that Fiji Airways is making so much profit, but may I kindly draw his attention back to Fiji in terms of our local airport facilities, particularly those in the maritime islands and all those grassy patch airstrips. What kind of plans do you have in place, bearing in mind we have all this huge profit for the development of those airstrips?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the supplementary question obviously is not related to the substantive question. If the Honourable Member wants to ask that question, she can bring it up at a later time. However, she obviously does not understand how the finances work.

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

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; I thank the Hon. Minister for his answers. In view of the Hon. Minister's answers, the Fiji Airways' profit is largely due to the lower oil prices that we understand. We all know that the Singapore route would be non-profitable for a while, just as the Hong Kong route. This \$18 million that has been budgeted or given to the Fiji Airways for this specific route, how long does the Minister envisage, a term of two, three or four years? How long will it take?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I want to correct the Honourable Member. It is not largely and mainly due to the decrease in world fuel prices.

As CEO of Fiji Airways has already highlighted in his press statement, he stated and set out a number of factors that have obviously contributed to the increase in profits, and I want to hasten to add, Madam Speaker, that a lot of it could not have been achieved if it was not for the management and staff, the ordinary men and women who work for Fiji Airways and who collaborated to help us achieve those profits, which of course, they are the only first company in Fiji that actually gets a share of the profits in Fiji. We hope that it can be extended to other entities in Fiji as well.

Madam Speaker, the question from the Honourable Member of how long it will go on for, as announced in the budget, we are looking at a relationship where we will be able to build and money is being given to market development. Just to add to that, the Singapore Sevens that had now being held for the first time because Tokyo has actually stepped out of it, the Singapore Rugby Union has selected Fiji Airways to be its official carrier for the next three years. It is a big achievement for us to have a national carrier from a Pacific Island country with less than one million people being the official carrier for Singapore Sevens. It is huge marketing. They have potential for us and, of course, that is where some of the \$18 million is also going towards, Madam Speaker, for the market development of Fiji Airways. That will continue to a point where we will be able to then adjust the amounts that is available. It may reduce very much, we will obviously not going to increase it but we would probably reduce it over a period of time, and only once the profitability increases, then we will be able to look at it and reconfigure the figures.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, the Honourable Ratu S. Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- I thank the Honourable Minister for the explanation given, especially when they have foreseen their profit that the Fiji Airways is going to make after consulting with the Singapore Government. The question; the Fijian Holdings Limited was forced by the Military Regime under the leadership of the current Prime Minister to repay to the Government the \$20 million Government Grant that was utilised in setting up the company. Can the Honourable Minister of Finance confirm to this august House that this same practice will also be applied to Fiji Airways under the current Government?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, again if the Honourable Member wants to bring in a new question, he can do so in another sitting.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Honourable Member interjected)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Again like I said, the logic is not there.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to the next question. I now give the floor to the Hon. Ratu Isoa D. Tikoca, to ask his question.

*TC Winston - Rehabilitation Work*  
(Question No. 53/2016)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management explain how Government is co-ordinating the *Tropical Cyclone Winston* rehabilitation work with NGOs and civil societies?

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

Of course, I need to again acknowledge that Government's work on disaster response rehabilitation and recovery has been complemented by the assistance of donor agencies. This includes international organisations, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations, Faith-Based Organisations, et cetera. They have done a lot for us and I wish to acknowledge them. Definitely it is not an easy work, coordinating the work of the various agencies, particularly when they are not part of the Government machinery, but this is something that I have explained in the Monday sitting on the challenges that were faced in the response phase post-*TC Winston*, Madam Speaker.

How is Government coordinating? Madam Speaker, there are two systems in place in which the co-ordination is synergised. One, Madam Speaker, local NGOs - as mandated in the Act are coordinated by the Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS). There are only two agencies that are members of the Disaster Council - the FCOSS and the Fiji Red Cross. So, the responsibility of the FCOSS is to co-ordinate all the activities, assistance and support provided by local NGOs.

Of course, when I am talking about local government organisations, Madam Speaker, they also have their partners like Lifeline Fiji and Lifeline Australia. So, if their sister agencies from abroad are here as well during the disasters, they all come under the umbrella of the FCOSS, and it is the FCOSS that reports to the Office of the National Controller.

Then we have the question of international partners. Madam Speaker, this is where the role of the Resident Co-ordinator, United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) are responsible for organising the international agencies involved.

Madam Speaker, I have already talked about Cluster Arrangements in the previous question. Let me bring this again for the benefit of the Honourable Members. I have talked about how the local NGOs are organised and how the international NGOs are organised. They are all brought together in what we call the Cluster Arrangement.

Madam Speaker, in *TC Winston*, there are about 130 organisations altogether involved; local and international. The history of the Cluster Arrangement in Fiji, it is new as I have stated. During the Honourable Member's time as Divisional Commissioner, and even when I joined the Civil Service as a Divisional Commissioner, there was no such thing as the Cluster System. However, time has evolved, a lot of cross-cutting issues and because of the involvement of the various partners

and humanitarian assistance, there are no restrictions particularly post-conflict or post-disaster. This is why a lot of agencies are involved.

The system that has been set up by the United Nations is under the Cluster Arrangement. In Fiji, Madam Speaker, we have eight clusters. I will name the clusters, as follows:

- 1) Health and Nutrition;
- 2) Education;
- 3) Water and Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH);
- 4) Logistics and Communications;
- 5) Shelter;
- 6) Public Works and Utility;
- 7) Safety and Protection; and
- 8) Food and Security.

Madam Speaker, in the clusters, Government is always the lead agency. Then appointed from the other organisations are the co-leads within the agencies. Say, for example, in education, Education is the lead agency and may be ACAP or one of the other stakeholders are the co-leads.

It is in the Cluster System, Madam Speaker, where they have what they call the Humanitarian Action Plan, the point that was raised by the Honourable Salote Radrodoro. The Humanitarian Action Plan looks at the assessment made by the cluster, what are the needs, what are the activities, what are the resources required and what have they done in, sort of, the timeframes.

Madam Speaker, last week I sat with the UN Resident Co-ordinator, UNOCHA, again the briefing was given to us on the gaps. That gap, as I have stated, we are transitioning now from the response into the recovery, the gaps identified by the clusters will be taken on by Government and, of course, the clusters as well as we continue. We are not only talking about the response phase, they will be partnering with us as well when we transition into the recovery.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, you have heard about the Flash Appeal. The Flash Appeal again, Government only came to launch with them. It was all the initiatives of these organisations under the umbrella of UNOCHA because they are internationally recognised, and that is definitely their role. So, that is how it is co-ordinated in *TC Winston* and, of course, it will continue to do so.

I need to mention here, Madam Speaker, that we only adopted this system after the cyclone of December 2012 - *TC Evans*. We developed the Cluster Arrangement with Mr. Peter Muller, who was then the UNOCHA official here. He is now in Geneva. This is the first time for us to implement and test the Cluster Arrangement in Fiji. Of course, we are looking at the gaps and how it can be better co-ordinated as well for the future. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- All these, at the end, we will see our financial books. At this time, you would have a knowledge of how much money NGOs and civil societies have contributed, and how much Government have contributed. You mentioned *TC Evans*. With *TC Evans*, that rehabilitation phase is still not completed after four years now, and I am sure there is still a lot of money to be handled in that regards to handle that problem. Can you inform the august House if your tracking system also tracks our expenditures, as the taxpayers want to know?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, definitely that is the responsibility of any Government. Tracking system, we have an aid tracking system and as well as the finances.

Madam Speaker, tomorrow in this Honourable House, I will deliver a Ministerial Statement to talk about the aid and, of course, the finances as well. However, let me assure this Honourable House that stores, finances, and everything are well recorded and, of course, it will be subject to the normal process of auditing and other scrutiny exercises as well.

Madam Speaker, for *TC Evans*, let me assure this Honourable House that the rehabilitation for *TC Evans* has been completed but what is emerging are those that were left out in the list, and that will be dealt with in the normal process. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Bilitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his answers this morning. In regards to UNOCHA that he has already said, I think a simple diagram was published by them – who's where, doing what. In every province they will have a list of NGOs providing all those services that they are specialised in.

Madam Speaker, my question to the Honourable Minister, in Government taking the leading role as the Chairman of Disaster, there were some areas in Fiji like in Navakawau, Taveuni where rations and tents arrived late. What can be done to improve on this, Madam Speaker, in the future, if this climatic problem does arise again – the need for helicopters and boats to transport these materials immediately after disaster?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I talked about the challenges the other day - logistics. It would be good to have 20 helicopters but we cannot afford it. Post-disaster, now the Divisional Commissioners are working on the agency de-briefs. So the problems or gaps that are identified definitely will be looked into, and we will continue to see our way in which we can improve on those. Again, I have given assurance in this august House, based on the supplementary question by the Honourable Ratu Tikoka the other day that the Government definitely is doing its best to be proactive, preposition stores, and of course building on the capacity and the capability as well.

Definitely, Fiji geographically is a very challenging environment and we need to have the right capabilities, but all these costs money as well, Madam Speaker. Of course, when the time is right for Government, definitely it will be addressed.

HON. SPEAKER.-Thank You. I give the floor to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to add my welcome to yours, Madam Speaker, to the political science students who are here this morning from USP, and also to the parents, teachers and students from Noco Secondary School, who are also here this morning.

Madam Speaker, my question to the Honourable Minister is that after the withdrawal of these aid agencies that are there in the affected areas, what measures are they putting into place for these people to take control over their lives and their livelihood into the future?

HON. SPEAKER.-Thank you, Hon. Minister

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.-- Madam Speaker, Government is always prepared and, of course, ensures that the transition is smooth and with minimal implications and effects on the local communities. As I had alluded to earlier, Madam Speaker, in the clusters, they are not only looking at the humanitarian response phase. Let me again emphasise that. Most of these agencies will remain with us for as long as there is funding from their financiers, and that has always been the commitment and the practice as well. So, for all the clusters, the members of the eight clusters that I have stated, Madam Speaker, even there are already considerations whether there will be another appeal to the donor agencies. We have launched the first appeal, about USD14.7 million, if I remember correctly, has been provided by the funding agencies

However, should they for financial reasons are unable to continue with the work that they do, Madam Speaker, that is where the recovery framework of Government kicks in, based on the post-disaster needs assessment that is currently being undertaken by the agencies led by the World Bank and ADB , as I have stated the other day, Madam Speaker. It is evidence-based and based on that, Madam Speaker, we will have the timeframe and the resources so that, again, minimal implications on the people affected and, of course, a smooth transition as well, taking into consideration that there is still humanitarian needs and the reconstruction plan. So, that is how it is co-ordinated and implemented, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.-Thank you, Honourable Members, that brings to the end our question time and it is time for refreshment. I will now adjourn Parliament until 11.30 a.m., when we will resume.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.04 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.45 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, we will resume from where we left off and going on to the next item on the Agenda and that is Ministerial Statements.

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

HON. SPEAKER.- The Minister for Youth, and Sports; the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations; the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport; and the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management have all given notices to make Ministerial Statements under Standing Order 34.

Each Minister may speak up to 20 minutes, after which I 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 NFP or his designate to also speak for five minutes, and there will be no other debate.

I have been given notice that the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism will not be giving his Ministerial Statement today.

I will now give the floor to the Minister for Youth and Sports to deliver his statement.

#### Strengthening the Development of Youth and Sports

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Madam Speaker, I rise to deliver a statement in accordance with today's Order Paper on Strengthening the Youth and Sports Development. There is enormous work that needs to be done in my portfolio, the Youth and Sports sector that needs the attention of this august House. There is an African Proverb that says, and I quote: "It takes a village to raise a child." We need all the citizens of this village we call Fiji to play their part in nurturing our youths, to take on the reins of leadership in our communities.

Madam Speaker, people under the age of 40 make up 70 percent of our population. Fiji's Population and Labour Force Estimates of 2014 reveal that youth accounted for about 45 percent of the labour force. While 89 percent of the youth were employed, unemployed youth accounted for a higher proportion than that of the national unemployment rate of 6.2 percent. Madam Speaker, 67 percent of the workforce are men which indicates that we have a real challenge in getting more women into the formal economy.

Madam Speaker, our strategies for youth development need to be relevant, not only to the requirement of our labour market as we grew into the global village with a view to modernisation, sustainability and export-led initiatives, but also be able to support the growth of youth enterprise. This is why the Ministry is reviewing all its youth development programmes so that we can also "build back better". Our young people must be empowered and equipped to develop their skills and talents using local resources.

Madam Speaker, young people need to be surrounded by positive support in an environment that unlock their latent potential and capabilities.

Madam Speaker, the review of our training programmes includes building the capacity of our training centres to deliver marketable training that is relevant in this modern age. This will guarantee that the young people who exit our five training centres around Fiji can pursue either options; firstly,

accredited training that provides a bridge to mainstream higher education, and secondly, more quickly to develop the skill sets required for youth enterprise and improved livelihoods in their communities.

Madam Speaker, the reform of our youth development programmes also focusses on the need to improve health, wellbeing, and ensure our youth are well-rounded citizens who can be role models in both our communities and the economy. The inclusion of youth with disabilities and young women is also a clear target to ensure that no one is left behind in the development process.

Madam Speaker, the need to revitalise and reshape our youth development strategies to meet the needs of Fijian youth has reaffirmed the need to engage donor partners and counterparts from foreign Youth Ministries under existing MOUs. The need to benchmark our strategies with what has been successful elsewhere and engage donors is now work in progress. The “Cash for Work” Programme with UNDP currently underway in the most affected *Cyclone Winston* areas demonstrates the important role that donors play in developing our communities.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report that the Ministry of Youth and Sports has now appointed and, from February this year, put into the field 15 Youth Administrators following Cabinet Decision No. 217 from September, 2015. The Youth Administrators have already contributed to strengthening the co-ordination of youth development work in Fiji, as outlined in the Cabinet Paper.

The fulltime nature of these appointments ensures that the Ministry of Youth and Sports, as well as other Ministries have ongoing access to the youth in their villages. The voices of our young people across all our communities are being channelled through to us as policy makers for further action. This has really improved our national youth service, and supports our ongoing revitalisation process.

Madam Speaker, MOUs for youth development with bilateral partners are in place with India, Indonesia, Vanuatu and an international Japanese NGO called OISCA based at the Nasau Youth Training Centre in Sigatoka. The Ministry has footprints in its work with UNFPA in the area of youth, sexual reproductive health and gender based violence while work with UNICEF continues to strengthen the need to protect our young from societal ills.

Madam Speaker, His Excellency the President presided at the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Awards for young people in the Western Division yesterday (Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2016), for those who have successfully completed the requirements of the Award. Madam Speaker, I wish to thank His Excellency for accepting the invitation and taking the lead role in supporting our development efforts for young Fijians. His Excellency’s keen interest in visiting and engaging with the young people sets the standard to show how important it is to work together to nurture our youth. The onus is on communities, schools, churches, villages, families and service providers to work collectively towards youth development.

In this vein, Madam Speaker, Fiji has recently been recognised by the IMF as a country where we have achieved a more equal society. To contribute further to this, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is co-operating increasingly closely with other Ministries at a national and divisional level, to ensure that we maximise the use of scarce resources to achieve maximum impact.

We have committed to working with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to promote our wellness and anti-NCD agenda. We are working with the Ministry of Tourism to develop a sports tourism strategy which will complement their overall tourism strategy. Similarly, we will now co-operate with the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs on combining our respective networks

to ensure young people in our rural areas are trained and that physical activities at the village level are promoted.

Madam Speaker, we will work with the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Education to undertake an audit of sports facilities around the country. This is to enable us to plan the location of new facilities more effectively. We continue to work with the Ministry of Agriculture on IRDF and to co-operate on seed and cutting distribution. We are working with the Ministry of Employment in supporting the overseas seasonal worker programme and getting our youth data to the Ministry, and controlling the recruitment process of athletes who want to study and compete overseas. In relation to other Ministries where our work can support theirs and vice versa, we will soon finalise our joint approach.

Fiji is undoubtedly a sport loving nation that takes pride in competing in the international sporting world against the best. Sports in Fiji has demonstrated over the years its power in uniting the Fijian people, whether it is watching our Sevens Team compete in the 7s World Series or cheering on our athletes at the Pacific Games. These moments truly show our patriotism for our country.

Madam Speaker, this Government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports and its statutory arms, the National Sports Commission and the Fiji Sports Council, has reformed our approach to sports development to ensure that our sporting men and women fully benefit from the opportunities provided in sports.

Madam Speaker, there is an ever increasing need to professionalise sports in the county, and this needs broad consultation with all national sporting organisations and stakeholders alike. In light of this, we are making progress through numerous programmes implemented by the Fiji National Sports Commission throughout the country, many with an increasing focus on rural areas.

Fiji is increasingly well positioned to allow all Fijians to pursue their dreams of a livelihood in sports. A number of sports have commenced four and eight years development plans, to ensure our youth get the required training to take them on to the 2020 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.

Madam Speaker, as more athletes turn professionals, equally professional sports officials and administrators are required. Train The Trainer Programmes are conducted to certify coaches, referees, technical officials and administrators throughout the country. A number of these programmes have been successfully conducted in the country in recent years to upskill our officials in the vicinities of Suva, Dreketi, Serua, Ba, Ra and Taveuni, and a few other places around the country.

Madam Speaker, the Fiji National Sports Commission staff have been specially trained by overseas experts to take sports to our special schools in Labasa, Suva and Lautoka. The Commission is now working with all sports organisation to ensure their individual sports are fully inclusive of young and old, men and women, rural and urban, as well as including those with and without disabilities.

Madam Speaker, the 2016 National Sports Day to be held on 24th June is earmarked to celebrate the achievement of sports and its social and economic contribution to the country. This day will also allow Fiji's citizens to be aware of the benefits of participating in sports activities as a means of acquiring required physical fitness for a healthy lifestyle.

Madam Speaker, this brings me to the issue of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Fiji which is never ending, so to speak. Active participation in sports, physical activities and the right lifestyle choices will effectively contribute to combating the prevalence of NCDs. Fijians are in dire

need of being steered away from their usual norms, and should be educated tirelessly on the perils of unhealthy lifestyle habits, and encouraged to take up a physical activity and sport to improve their health status. NCDs, as we have heard throughout the years, is the number one killer in Fiji and that is truly alarming. The health benefits of partaking in sports are numerous and should be the main reason to appeal to all to engage in it.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry is going to harness the potential in sports by coherently reviewing the National Sports Policy this year to enhance the delivery of sports in Fiji. As such, we will work on safeguarding policies for our athletes - minors, students and player alike, and we will also work on the establishment of an inter-ministry co-ordinating committee to support the organisation of hosting international sports event and with the Ministry of Tourism, to develop a long-term bidding strategy.

On that note, Madam Speaker, Fiji is on the verge of winning its first ever gold medal in the Olympic Games this year in Rio, with the superb performance to-date of our National Rugby Sevens Team in the HSBC World Sevens Series. This is a testament to the development currently being undertaken by the Government with our local sporting organisations as Government continues to provide funding to meet the salary of several international coaches.

In addition, we have been able to increase substantively the 2016 Sports Grant to cater for the Rio Olympics, Fiji's U19 World Cricket Team and our hosting of the Oceania Weightlifting and Swimming Tournaments in Suva, both of which are qualifying events for Rio. You need not look too far since right across from this very Parliamentary Complex in Suva, we are currently undertaking a \$7 million redevelopment of Albert Park grounds, including an outstanding new stadium that will again bring world-class sports back into the centre of our capital, coupled with the numerous developments which are sure to boost sports in our rural areas with the construction of 10 new rural playing fields in and around the county.

Madam Speaker, our sports loving public and our allied sportsmen and sportswomen have benefitted from sporting reforms. Our sports facilities administered through the Fiji Sports Council have also undergone their fair share of refurbishments to meet international standards, and more needs to be done, particularly after *Tropical Cyclone Winston*. This is in addition to the three new integrated sports complex in Kadavu, Gau and Vunidawa where preliminary works are currently underway.

Madam Speaker, this year, the Ministry will also present the National Anti-Doping Bill which will allow Fiji to comply with the world Anti-Doping Code and support Government's obligations to adhere to the requirements of the UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sports.

Madam Speaker, participants, spectators or volunteers, people are attracted to sports, arguably more than to any other activity. This popularity transcends national, cultural, socio-economic and other boundaries and can be invoked with success in virtually any community in the world. Sports popularity derives in large part from the fact that when done right, it is fun and enjoyable for everyone - participants and spectators alike. In the context where people are faced with difficulties and unrelenting challenges in their day to day lives, as can be said following the devastation caused by *TC Winston*, the value of this dimension of sport should not be underestimated. It is a pity that we were not able to provide sporting opportunities in all our evacuation centres and villages affected by the cyclone due to limited resources.

Madam Speaker, the 2015 Fiji Sports Awards also saw Athletics Fiji being awarded the Good Governance Award which is a testament to the organisation's commendable efforts to improve the

sport of athletics in Fiji. It also poses the challenge to other national sporting organisations to do the same. With the ongoing governance scandals we see internationally, it is critical that we take this opportunity with both hands to implement good governance across all our sports organisations.

Madam Speaker, Fiji is heading towards a bright sporting future and we will continue to make inroads as we collectively set our sights on what is to come.

As I conclude, Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that we will collectively rise to the challenge and improve service delivery to all Fijians. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Leader of the Opposition or her designate to respond.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the Honourable Minister for his Ministerial Statement this morning. At the outset, there is a lot of work to be done for youth all over Fiji, youth in the provinces, youth in the urban centres and peri-urban centres.

Madam Speaker, I want to start by saying, “thank you” to all the youth of Fiji and to the many young people who volunteered after the tragedy of *TC Winston*.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Young people filled the ranks of charities like Red Cross, Sanatan, church bodies and youth organisations. They helped restore hope and peace throughout Fiji, Madam Speaker. The Messiah lives in actions, and the actions of Fiji’s youth after *TC Winston* show a Fiji that is ready to rise above a tragedy.

Madam Speaker, since 2006, we have been hearing of changing youth strategies and models, but all we have seen is a growth in the direction of sports. The Ministry of Youth has the potential to do more increasing youth entrepreneurship, youth volunteerism and youth leadership programmes. The Ministry should have come into this House speaking to us about how they are building good leaders; how they are using activities like Youth Parliament to empower young people.

Madam Speaker, the youth of Fiji want to know how their organisations like the National Youth Council of Fiji is going to be funded and operated. The youth of Fiji want to know how it is possible for the Youth Assembly of Fiji and the Provincial Youth Forum of Fiji to still not feature in the Ministry of Youth’s plan, or are they just props!

Madam Speaker, young people are also wanting to know how training centres operate, like the Honourable Minister had elaborated, by the Ministry of Youth and calculating competency and measuring their success on based skills. Instead, we hear an overwhelming desire to fund sports. After *TC Winston*, Fiji needs to build young empowered people. Fiji needs to build young businesses. Fiji needs to build young leaders.

Madam Speaker, these are some points I hope the Honourable Minister can take home, and at the soonest, come to Parliament and update the nation on these concerns that come from the youth of Fiji. To be honest, that speech sounded like a discussion of what other Ministries and individuals are doing for the youth of today.

Madam Speaker, on sports, I just wish to raise one concern, our Sevens Heroes. One of the players was injured from Hong Kong, the FRU through the Ministry of Sports failed to look after

their representative. This is the case of Rawaca, who was injured and assisted by the Fijian Teachers Association for his medical treatment at the Suva Private Hospital.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Where was the Government?

HON. CAPT. T.L. NATUVA.- You are getting wrong information. Do not listen to the press!

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Madam Speaker, as we prepare for the Coca Cola Games Fiji Finals which will be taking place at the ANZ Stadium tomorrow, Friday and Saturday, I wish the participants the very best in this sport. *Vinaka*, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I did give you an extra two sentences for the time that I disturbed you. Thank you very much. I will now call upon the Leader of the National Federation Party or his designate.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, I largely agree with the comments that have been made by the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua and I wish to thank the youth of this country for their forbearance and patience with those of us who are older, and also for all that they do towards national development and the young men and women who fly the flag overseas. We are very grateful to them for giving a good name to Fiji, and I join my Honourable colleagues in thanking them for that.

Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. I really commend the work that he is doing to try to make the lives of the youth in our country better. However, Madam Speaker, if I may say with all due respect, listening to the emphasis on sports and in the rural areas and development there, it was almost as though I was listening to proposals for national planning and development from the 1970s.

Madam Speaker, as the Honourable Minister has said, we are now in a global village, technological advancements are vast and the emphasis of our parties, as the Honourable *Tui Namosi* has already communicated in the House, we would like to encourage the Minister to branch out in his work and development with the youth, and we are dismayed with a large number of unemployment and the lack of opportunities there are to our youth.

In terms of the sporting facilities, youth enterprise and skills that the Hon. Minister has mentioned, we would encourage him to please go out to the Western Division and the North, as well and the maritime areas, they also need sporting facilities of the highest standard because we are sure that they can also excel as the young people do on Viti Levu.

Last year, Madam Speaker, we had asked during the Budget Debate for an increase of \$10 million to fully fund scholarships, especially overseas scholarships, and I did say at the time, if we could have asked for more, we would have asked for more. We know that resources are limited but we can export the expertise of our youth, give them these opportunities to study in higher institutions of learning and overseas. They go overseas, get excellent jobs and we know that remittances are large part of the income to our country. Looking to go forward, we should encourage that and I look sometimes with envy at my colleagues who I studied with overseas, they just travel from one high flying job in Hong Kong to London to Sydney almost as though it was an entitlement, Madam Speaker. I do not see why students from Fiji cannot be encouraged to do the same, if we gave these building blocks and we can.

Madam Speaker, yesterday, there was a petition by our side of the House from the SODELPA Party, the majority of the Opposition Party, that tuition fees, free scholarships be given as a matter of a right to all students in Fiji but that debate was deferred until a later time.

In terms of leadership, Madam Speaker, young people learn the most from those who are older than them. What we learn at home or what we learn on the television screens and the newspapers, that is what we emulate and I would ask all the leaders in this House to bear that in mind, in terms of teaching our young people about where to put their priorities when they grow up and what they do when they do grow up into positions of leadership.

Madam Speaker, again I emphasise that our party would like the Honourable Minister to work on programmes that move his areas of focus out from sports, but the same emphasis on sports to higher education and give our young people that opportunity to be excellent. We can export them to the world and I am sure it will do great good for Fiji in the future. Thank you very much.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations to deliver his statement.

#### Seasonal Work Programme - Australia and New Zealand

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, my Ministerial Statement will highlight Government's effort to understand the issues in relation to the Seasonal Work Programme and the Recognised Seasonal Employment which had a lot of media attention in the last few months.

Madam Speaker, last Sunday our Ministerial Delegation returned from a successful visit in Australia and two weeks earlier in New Zealand. Madam Speaker, our team visited New Zealand from 2nd to 9th April and last week, a subsequent visit was made to Australia from 16th to 22nd April.

Madam Speaker, our visit to New Zealand was on the invitation of the New Zealand Government with the primary intent to better our understanding and appreciation of the stakeholders' expectations under both the New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer, as well as the proposed new pilot for eight carpenters to the Christchurch Rebuild Project.

Madam Speaker, our New Zealand Ministerial visit was fully funded by the New Zealand Government of which the Fijian Government and our Ministry is very grateful. In the visit, we learnt as much as we could from the farmers, workplaces, government officials, politicians and workers on the real issue on the ground and their expectations. Understanding these expectations will better equip our staff at the National Employment Centre, and enhance our working relationship with both the Governments of New Zealand and Australia.

Madam Speaker, Fiji is grateful to the assistance provided by the New Zealand Government, where two officials from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment travelled with us during the week. We were also accompanied by our High Commissioner in Wellington. In Auckland, the delegation was officially received by the Hon. Matua Shane Jones, the Ambassador for Economic Development in the Pacific.

Madam Speaker, we started our week in New Zealand by visiting farms in the South Island, namely in Blenheim and Nelson. These farmers are mainly grape farmers and we had the opportunity to discuss the real issues and expectations of the farmers. We then drove from Nelson, and again visited more grape farms and farmers. We also visited a winery that employed some of our pilot workers who were sent to New Zealand in 2015.

Madam Speaker, we left Nelson for Christchurch, where we had the opportunity to see the damages caused by the earthquake in 2009. Madam Speaker, the damages was devastating, where

some 185 individuals lost their lives and several thousands were injured. On that note, the entire city of Christchurch is being rebuilt.

Madam Speaker, to assist in the Christchurch rebuild, the New Zealand Government is starting a new pilot for some 24 carpenters from Fiji, Tonga and Samoa around mid-year for a period of one year. In Christchurch, we met the two employers who will participate in this pilot project, the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology that will be screening workers, as well as the Pacific Trust, an institution that will provide pastoral care to our workers in Christchurch.

Madam Speaker, we were extremely impressed by the arrangement done by the Pacific Trust, which employs many of the Pacific Islanders who have gained New Zealand citizenship that provide pastoral care to our workers. The pastoral care services include among others, getting our workers to and from the airports, providing transportation for the first week in New Zealand, assist in the provision of accommodation, provision of medical services including counselling, as well as providing an overall safety network within Christchurch. Madam Speaker, like the RSE Work Scheme, the Christchurch Rebuild Pilot is employer-driven where the two employers will interview and make their final selection of the 24 pilot workers.

Madam Speaker, from Christchurch, we departed for Wellington where we met the Hon. Michael Woodhouse, the Hon. Minister for Immigration. Our team was briefed on the Pacific Labour Mobility by Government officials from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on the success of Pacific Labour Mobility and the overall rationale for and why it is fast becoming an integral component of PACER (Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations) Plus negotiations.

Madam Speaker, from Wellington, we visited Napier, as well as Tauranga. Both places are renowned for apples, oranges and kiwi fruits. We visited farmers, pack-houses and our workers, and discussed their expectations.

Madam Speaker, we also had the opportunity to meet and discuss with the National Coordinator for Horticulture New Zealand, Mr. Jerf Van Beek, who was energetic and excited of the many opportunities available to Fiji through the RSE, which include many corporate social responsibility projects undertaken by the New Zealand employers in the Pacific labour sending communities. Madam Speaker, overall, we had lively discussions, built relations and learnt from the expectations of these key stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, we also had the opportunity to visit some of the big fruit packing houses, like EastPack, Turners and Growers, Trevelyan's Pack and Cool, Apata Group Limited and SEEKA Kiwifruits Industries Ltd. Madam Speaker, at SEEKA we met its Chairman, Mr. Fred Hutching and the CEO, Mr. Michael Franks. We connected straightaway and mutually agreed to start a pilot for Fijian workers with its Australian operation in Shepparton, Victoria.

Madam Speaker, our excitement about this special relationship with SEEKA was that the company, apart from hiring Fijian workers, wants to buy tropical fruits from Fiji namely; pawpaw, banana and pineapple. Madam Speaker, this wonderful opportunity will be taken further with relevant agencies, namely the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture. We will explore further this opportunity with our counterparts in New Zealand, and establish this as a pilot project for the development of Pacific labour supplying nations.

Madam Speaker, with lessons learnt, building relationships, networking and listening to each stakeholder expectations, including discovering new opportunities in New Zealand, we decided to visit Australia last week.

Madam Speaker, given the huge land mass of Australia, we decided to cover only two States namely; the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Victoria. Madam Speaker, we were accompanied in Australia by our High Commissioner, Mr. Yogesh Punja, and two senior officials from the Ministry. Our intent of the Australian visit was the same as New Zealand, where we took the opportunity to discuss, listen and learn from stakeholder expectations to be able to improve our operational efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

Madam Speaker, we met and discussed with the farmers through the CEO of National Farmer's Federation, Mr. Mahar, and according to the National Farmer's Federation, farmers are supportive of the SWP in Australia. At the same time, we noted that there is room to market the SWP opportunities to more farmers, given the challenges of the massive landscape of Australia.

Madam Speaker, we then met and discussed issues with the Senator, the Honourable Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, the Minister for International Development, and the Pacific and Chief of Staff to the Senator, the Honourable Michaelia Cash, the Minister for Employment. Madam Speaker, we held open discussions and Honourable Wells expressed her commitment and full support to the SWP and Fiji's participation.

Madam Speaker, we also met with Steve Whan, the Manager of the Australian Chamber of National Tourism Council, and discussed the opportunities in the tourism sector for both countries, particularly in the utilisation of Fiji's excess labour during our low seasons to the Australian market.

Madam Speaker, we then had a roundtable meeting with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Employment, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and Fair Work Ombudsman, who are the Australian Government's key stakeholders in the governing and the operations of the SWP. The government stakeholders expressed full support and commitment towards SWP, and at the same time, had the recognition for room for improvement.

Madam Speaker, we met with the Honourable Julie Bishop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, who reaffirmed the Australian Government's support and assistance towards *Tropical Cyclone Winston* rebuild, as well as providing opportunities under the SWP. She further expressed her full commitment towards any initiative to improve and add value to the SWP.

Madam Speaker, from Canberra we then travelled to Melbourne and were met by Mr. Reg Hodgson, the Fiji Honorary-Consul. We had a fruitful discussion and his insight and comments on the issues around SWP was quite useful.

Madam Speaker, on Thursday and Friday, we were accompanied by an Officer from the Department of Employment, as well as one from the Department of Foreign Affairs. This intervention was highly appreciated by the Team, given the fact that some issues raised in the regional consultation can only be best addressed by the Australian Government Officials.

Madam Speaker, we also travelled to Robinvale and met our first employer, PlantGrowPick management that recruited some 123 Fijians in 2015. This employer was where the first group of seven Fijians walked off their accommodation. The investigation on this case is still pending with Fair Works Ombudsman. We also visited some workers in their accommodation and workplaces, and listened to their expectations.

Madam Speaker, based on the individual performance report by the company, we basically need to improve our selection process, to ensure that the right people with the commitment to work and make a difference are selected, rather than those who need to take advantage of an opportunity to go and visit Australia.

We also met with the Social Co-ordinator in the local area, the Robinvale Network House. These officers were very eager to assist, and suggested valuable viewpoints from being in the local community which will be included in our pre-departure briefing.

Madam Speaker, we travelled to Mildura and met with Shaun Leesue, the Manager of MADEC, a labour hire company, who has a number of Fijian workers with them. The employer raised the same expectation that we need to send the best and ready to work workers with the right attitude.

Madam Speaker, we then met Mr. Ryan Donovan, the Operations Manager for SEEKA Australia PTY Ltd in Shepparton which is one of the employers that we had further negotiations with to accept more Fijian workers in their farms.

Madam Speaker, we then travelled further to meet the last employer which is AFS (Advanced Farming Services), the proprietor is Tony Yanankol at Tatura. This employer was televised in the ABC News earlier this year with our workers complaining about their working conditions. Madam Speaker, this case is pending in the in the Fair Works Ombudsman. While there, we met the people and spoke to the Fijian workers who were all happy with their work conditions and decided to remain with their employer.

Madam Speaker, we travelled to Melbourne from Shepparton and met the two Union representatives. Both representatives from the Union supported the SWP and also have a case pending with a Fijian worker from Plant Grow Pick and is pending judgment.

Madam Speaker, our ministerial visit to both New Zealand and Australia was a success. We met our objectives to hear the expectations of SWP stakeholders, learn from the reality by looking for evidence on the ground and utilise these learning experiences to better prepare and re-align our Ministry process to meet our customer expectations.

Madam Speaker, we had the opportunity to talk to politicians, senior government officials, community-based institutions, umbrella bodies and associations, union representatives and our workers, and listened to all their expectations. One thing that is very obvious, Madam Speaker, we need to send the right people. To make this happen we will need to improve our processes and focus to target these opportunities through an integrated manner, where we get commitment from our key stakeholders here in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, at my level I have started consultation with key stakeholders and I will take this down to the operational level.

Madam Speaker, at this juncture, I express sincere appreciation and gratitude for the support that we received from both the New Zealand and Australian Governments under their respective labour mobility schemes to make the scheme work.

Madam Speaker, both the New Zealand RSE and the Australian SWP, including any future labour mobility schemes for Fijians gel well with the Reformed Employment Creation Framework within the National Employment Centre. Thus, we only need to improve its operations through building better relations with key stakeholders in Fiji and our labour receiving partners to realise the dreams of the unemployed. I thank you, Madam Speaker, for your indulgence.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. At this point I would like to seek the leave of Parliament to extend this session to accommodate the two responses from the Opposition before we break for lunch. Does anyone oppose?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, thank you so much. I will now give the floor to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition or her designate for his response.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Speaker, first of all, on behalf of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Minister and the explanation given regarding the Government initiative that is briefly in front of us this morning. First and foremost, I would also like to thank the Government of Australia and New Zealand for providing all the necessary backing, funding, as well as guiding the Honourable Minister while in those two countries to visit all the areas that we have heard he had explained to us this morning.

Unemployment is such a big problem in our country, Madam Speaker, and we thank the Government again, for providing that initiative to enable some of our unemployed people to be employed under that Scheme, because at the moment we see that our economy is not really robust enough in order to accommodate the 40,000-odd people who are currently being unemployed in our country, despite the Government enjoying the acceptable growth rate that we have experienced so far in the last few years.

The Scheme as being highlighted to us this morning is still in its infant stage, and surely it will meet up with some of the problems as highlighted earlier on by the Honourable Minister, as well as some of the concerns that we have heard from the media that were faced by the people who were sent there under the Scheme. On that note, Madam Speaker, I think we have to relook at some of the criteria that were used in the assessment while trying to mobilise people to be sent to those two areas.

First, as mentioned by the Honourable Minister, is the selection of people. I think we all understand that before when the Scheme was brought up, it was earmarked for people from rural areas that they will be targeted to take up this opportunity in working in this two countries.

This morning we heard from the Honourable Minister, may be the expectation of these two groups of people - the people that we are going to send from here and the farmers or the owners of employment from that side were not fully matched before they were sent over. I think that may be one of the areas that the Honourable Minister can look into in order to try and satisfy that locally before the groups are sent overseas. Otherwise, when the two groups meet with different expectations whilst out there, it will be hard to satisfy the needs that they are coming up with.

Secondly, I think it is also wise that the groups that we are going to send from here, ensure that the trip is viable. All the costs or the income that they are expecting to gain from this Scheme should be fully explained to them, all the deductions that is going to be taken out from their income, so that at least at the end of the week they should really know what is the net income that they are going to receive under the Scheme. I think this is one of the areas that people do encounter, and that was one of the causes of the problem.

Luckily, the Government has taken proactive measures in visiting the two countries in order to actually work out what was the problem and we hope that by now, the Honourable Minister will know how to address this properly in the future in order for the Scheme to be fruitful.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Leader of the NFP or his designate to have the floor.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, I also want to thank the Honourable Minister for what he has said and all that he is doing in this area, and also the Australian and New Zealand Governments.

Madam Speaker, having said that, and as we have said last year when this Scheme was discussed that here we are discussing in this national House of ideas a scheme that existed in the 1970s and that is where it should have stayed.

Australia and New Zealand, Madam Speaker, have a lot of interest in Fiji and our region and we, in this Party, believe that our Government has not leveraged that enough for the benefit of Fiji. Our worth cannot be the seasonal worker programme, Madam Speaker, with all due respect. Thousands and thousands of Fijians migrated after 1987, 2000 and 2006 to what they saw as greener pastures, casual workers, teachers, doctors, nurses and other professionals, Madam Speaker. We would encourage the Honourable Minister to push through Cabinet ideas and plans to open up the other migrant visa programmes or worker permit programmes in Australia and New Zealand to the citizens of Fiji.

We are not just people who can pick apples and pears in Australia and New Zealand, we are worth so much more, Madam Speaker, and we would encourage the Honourable Minister and his Government to work harder towards that.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you.

As we have said yesterday, Madam Speaker, if we put as much focus as we can on Australia and New Zealand with their combined GDP of AUD\$1.6 trillion, our Trade Consulates in the cities of Australia and New Zealand, Madam Speaker, would very much help in moving our exports up the ladder a great deal in terms of money and qualifications.

We would also encourage the Honourable Minister to push through Cabinet ideas and plans for the improvement of the fundamentals for investment in Fiji to encourage private investment to grow our economy and employ people here especially, Madam Speaker, graduate employment opportunities. We can recite all of the wonderful figures as many of them as we want to and foreign governments will lap it up and their entities. They will accept it for their own political reasons, Madam Speaker. However, private investors do their own calculations on whether to invest or not. Madam Speaker, basic fundamentals like properly passing laws and not watching them through, Standing Order 51 is fundamental, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of Interjections)

Private investors do look into these things when they calculate whether they should invest in Fiji or not. Madam Speaker, there is a letter from one such private investor that has been sent to the Honourable Members today, and I am sure we will hear about more of that later. However, I would encourage the Honourable Minister to focus on those two things. I am pleased to hear from the other Honourable Ministers that they have already started work on that and we are going to move up the ladder. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. 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. The Women MPs are reminded of our meeting in the Small Committee Room.

We will resume proceeding at 2.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.41 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.38 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members, for your presence this afternoon. We will carry on from where we left off before lunch and I will now call on the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport to deliver his statement.

Effects of *Tropical Cyclone Winston* on Towns and Cities

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, I would like to make a Ministerial Statement on the effect of *Tropical Cyclone Winston* on towns and cities. At the outset, Madam Speaker, I wish to record my sympathy for the thousands of Fijians who are affected through *Tropical Cyclone Winston*. My prayers are, to every citizens affected, a speedy recovery to normalcy.

Madam Speaker, yesterday I was shocked to hear from the Honourable Semesa Karavaki who said that victims should not to take the assistance provided by the Government. Madam Speaker, I only wish he had said this outside of this Parliament.

Towns and cities in Fiji play a significant role in social and economic development. According to the 2014 World Bank figures, Fiji's towns and cities population stands at 472,957, being 53.4 percent of our nation's population, and the population growth rate, an average of 1.4 percent for town centres.

City and Town Councils, following cyclone warning, were prepared for the worst and history will show that *Tropical Cyclone Winston* dealt Fiji a severe blow. Despite the best of warnings and preparation, Madam Speaker, *Tropical Cyclone Winston* showed us that we can be climate ready but not climate proof.

Madam Speaker, Saturday 20th February, 2016 will go in the history books of Savusavu, Levuka, Rakiraki, Tavua, Ba, Lautoka and Nadi Towns as their worst in damage and loss of lives and property from the second most severe cyclone in the record globally. Residents of the affected towns and cities had many stories to relate to us during our tour of the affected areas.

Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the various sections under my Ministry for their immediate and considered response, following a general assessment on Sunday, 21st February, 2016. A workable plan was drawn up on Monday, 22nd February, 2016. This was after the National Disaster Management meeting held under the Chairmanship of our Honourable Prime Minister. Madam Speaker, the Action Planning in brief outlined:

- 1) In reference to the general environment, organised a one month 'Free Green' waste collection in all towns and cities and to be reviewed after 30 days.
- 2) In reference to the Health Sector organised food inspection and general inspection as well.
- 3) In reference to the utility and road infrastructure, refer to NDMO and allow central co-ordination.
- 4) Prepare daily reports and present them to the National Disaster Management Office and Divisional District Office.
- 5) Ensure that town centres are open up for the business at the earliest.

Madam Speaker, Post-*Tropical Cyclone Winston* clean up exercise by town and city councils has been massive. A total of 12,520 tonnes of solid waste, mainly green and white goods, had been collected by the towns and cities as of 31st March, 2016. The main objective was to allow ratepayers and citizens to clean surroundings and reduce risks of related disease outbreak. This special clean up exercise will go in the history books as one of the biggest municipal clean-up campaigns to be organised in the country, and one of the most successful.

Madam Speaker, if there is to be anything to learn from the effects of *Tropical Cyclone Winston* is that while we cannot climate or whether proof ourselves, we can better prepare ourselves to such major events. Even more important is the response we have from all stakeholders to move quickly in post event damage control.

The cost of the operations stands at an estimated of \$832,580. The cost of the exercise was reduced by the volunteer assistance that was provided through disciplined institutions, namely the Fiji Military Forces, the Fiji Correction Services, National Fire Authority also provided immense service in cleaning our affected towns and cities.

Madam Speaker, financial supports were given by the Ministry for Local Government, Housing and Environment through the Environment Trust Fund to the councils most affected by *Tropical Cyclone Winston* amounting to \$220,000.

Madam Speaker, due to electricity disruption, a record of 119 tonnes of food have been condemned in all town and city centres over a span of three weeks post-*Tropical Cyclone Winston* by the Council's Health Inspectors.

For the purpose of economic recovery, every town central business district was cleaned and opened for business in within four days after *Tropical Cyclone Winston*. All town centres were allowed flexible trading hours to ensure that the general public is able to be served. I give credit to all concerned and all my Ministry's Section Heads and staff for working with local councils to make this possible.

Madam Speaker, as the towns and cities were nearing clean-up campaign, *Cyclone Zena* visited us, having a flood impact on Nadi, Ba and Rakiraki. The town centres were cleaned and within few days opened up for business again.

Madam Speaker, the great damage and recovery periods allowed us to step back and examine some of our priority areas. It is now time to move beyond recovery and rebuilding to innovative changes to provide positive, social and economic growth.

Madam Speaker, one of the long-term micro-business and agriculture promotion activity for our Towns and City Councils has been the municipal markets. Towns and City Councils have been operating at a reduced rate to ensure that the grassroots are given a chance to do business in within the corridors of towns and cities.

My Ministry's survey shows that some municipal market vendors, apart from business activity losses, had also incurred personal losses, including homes. To assist vendors who had lost even personal assets, one month waiver of vendor's fee was allocated and allowed to ensure that the vendors would be able to recover in the areas affected. These applied to Savusavu, Levuka, Rakiraki, Tavua, Ba, Lautoka, Nadi and Sigatoka Municipal Markets. No vendor's fees have been charged up to 31st March, 2016. An estimated 3,820 vendors have directly been assisted under this waiver policy, effective from 22nd February, 2016 to 31st March, 2016.

Madam Speaker, one of our markets, Rakiraki Market, was very badly damaged. I am happy to announce that the new design for the new market, bus station, taxi carrier stand and a women's accommodation are in progress. There will also be a provision for a commercial outlet space so that it can generate revenue for a small council like Rakiraki. This project will commence this year and after completion, the people of Rakiraki will have a modern and a friendly market and bus station facilities like other towns and cities.

Madam Speaker, in our assessment, we have also identified certain areas to better manage disasters in towns and cities, and certainly reduce impact. Madam Speaker, for the general information of the House, the Town Planning Act Cap. 139 and Sub-division of Land Act Cap. 140 is under review. The general public are more than welcomed to make suggestions as these two Acts have a bearing on disaster risk reduction.

Madam Speaker, may I at this juncture, also thank the UN Women for their timely assistance, the National Fire Authority for their assistance provided during the *Post-Tropical Cyclone Winston* clean-up and economic recovery process, towns and city administrators, staff and general workers' efforts placed during the *post-Tropical Cyclone Winston* recovery exercise is very highly appreciated.

I also wish to thank the Ministry of Regional Development and the National Disaster Management Office for the general support provided. Ratepayers, citizens and business houses are all acknowledged for all efforts made in the cleaning and economic recovery process *post-Tropical Cyclone Winston*.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Leader of the Opposition or her nominee to deliver their response.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I thank you, Madam Speaker, and I also thank the Honourable Minister for his presentation.

Madam Speaker, I still feel that the presentation does not really tell Parliament on how best you could have gone in to service your ratepayers under the municipalities. If you really want to run the municipalities effectively, then there should be a great partnership with your ratepayers.

By saying that, you are in-charge of looking after your ratepayers in the time of need. You have no control, neither your office have any control, but it is all centrally controlled in Suva. How do you effectively attend to the needs of the people who are providing you finance to be registered under a municipality if you have some difficulty in there? Not that it is only during your time but it is also of the past. We intend to centrally control the services of disaster management in one place, and then we try to reach out. No wonder New Zealand and Australia arrived first to many of the places that you cannot even reach! Why? Because disaster management is not decentralised.

In Fiji, you have municipalities under your charge, and then you have local government or peri-urban areas, and you have rural areas. Either those three divisions can be isolated and if it was be given to establish their own disaster management office, you would have reacted to any disaster in within the first 24 hours when it hits your areas of responsibilities. Those areas do not have disaster management office to run their own municipality or in peri-urban areas, neither at the rural. Rural is better organised because the Commissioner is there and he has his Provincial Administrators, right down to the *Roko*, who actually service those people. The mechanism and everything is ready there, but you only need to give them more responsibility, give them power to actually make decision on

the ground. This time around, what we used to have before, you do not have it now. Things seem to be centrally controlled.

However, if you can also do that to charge your municipality with a special disaster office and charge it with good resources - human resources with logistics and the administration required, you could have done better. Then you would be the champion decider, to decide what is happening to the area under your control, but now, you are reporting on something but you are not telling us how best you could have made it better. Well, of course, it is centrally controlled but to decentralise, you need to remember what you promised this nation; "I will now run the election of the municipality", but that did not happen.

(Laughter)

That could have resolved a lot of things. However, I am suggesting to the Honourable Minister for Disaster Management if he could consider that, that we decentralise and you charge them with all the required structures and logistics, they could easily assist you while you control it from the central control in Suva.

The authorities from NGOs and those who come from the international community would identify where to go to, and the distribution of forces to come and assist would have easily hit the ground and a much better fluid operation rather than what we had experienced. They arrived first to the disaster area when we were still playing around with our jigsaw puzzles. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Leader of the National Federation Party or his designate to respond.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. Let me also say that the Honourable Minister has a lot of experience. He is probably the longest-serving Mayor of Ba Town Council, in dealing with disasters. Some of the things that he has quite rightly highly, reflects his own experience in dealing with the issues faced by people after disaster.

However, Madam Speaker, invariably the most affected people in the towns and cities after a disaster are those in the lower income category, those living in squatter settlements, and I think when we are looking ahead as to how we are going to plan for long term reconstruction in terms of appropriate infrastructure, housing and serving those who are in the fringes of the urban towns and centres, apart from the fact that ratepayers are the ones who are badly affected, those who live in the urban fringes, Madam Speaker, are also very very vulnerable. In fact, if you take a long term view of what we should be doing, I think in the next 10 to 15 years, we would be looking at about two-thirds of Fiji's population living in towns and cities. In fact, already 40 percent of the total urban population is between Suva and Nausori and I think in the next 10 years, between Navua and Tailevu. Majority of those living in the urban centres would be around those areas.

Madam Speaker, it pains me to see squatter settlements. I know Government has provided notice of leases. There are good intentions for providing appropriate housing for those living in the squatter settlements but the fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, that large number of people living in squatter settlements still do not have the basic water and electricity. If you walk into Nanuku Settlement in the outskirts of Suva, you will see people without water and electricity. I think in times of disasters, these groups are the most vulnerable and I, Madam Speaker, cannot understand why we cannot provide basic water and electricity, even to those who do not have proper titles and are living temporarily in squatter settlements.

I mean, Madam Speaker, there are very good experiences of places around the world, for example, in Brazil. People have talked about giving those who are living in the squatter settlements appropriate authority to improve their dwellings, to make sure they are able to get electricity and water. I find the excuse given by the Fiji Electricity Authority (FEA), I mean, FEA which has grown to be an organisation which always has excuses about not being able to do things, I find it actually quite difficult to understand as to why they would not be able to supply electricity into homes around Suva areas.

What we need to look at, Madam Speaker, in the long term and in the wake of *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, is to create what I call 'creative towns and cities' because what is also happening now, the developments are directed towards larger commercial industrial activities. Tourists arrive into the country, get into resorts, they never see many of our towns and cities, and I think to be able to reap better benefits from tourism, we need to look at the idea of creating those kinds of towns and cities.

The final point I want to make, Madam Speaker, before I finish, I think Ratu Isoa is right, there is a bottleneck and I think the Honourable Minister ought to look at some of the decision making processes. I think at the moment, without councillors, without democratically elected structures in towns and cities, there is a bottleneck. A lot of decisions get to the Permanent Secretary, Director and probably to the Minister, issues are not being dealt with and what we find is, many of the people's concerns are not dealt with in a timely manner. I can give an example, there is a settlement in Dawa where land was purchased by people living in those areas. They paid all the amount and the co-operative has not provided anything. I have written to the Honourable Minister to do that, and I hope that he will respond to that.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management to take the floor.

Effects on the Agricultural Sector - *Tropical Cyclone Winston*

HON. LT.COL. I.B. SERUIRATU - Madam Speaker, before I give my Ministerial Statement, may I just clarify on the issue raised by the Honourable Ratu Tikoca. Let me assure the Honourable Members of the House, Madam Speaker, that in December last year, Cabinet endorsed the review of the Disaster Management Act of 1998. We have identified the gaps. I think 1998 was when the Honourable Member was still the Divisional Commissioner, so this is the gap from his time that we are working on.

(Laughter)

Definitely, governance is a cross-cutting issue in disaster management, Madam Speaker, and the focus now is resilience at the nation level, resilience at the Local Government level as well, particularly our towns and cities and, of course, resilience in the community. When that review process is completed, it will then, of course, end up in this Honourable House. That is the opportunity for us to look at the Act as it is, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon to deliver a Ministerial Statement before the Honourable Members of the House on the losses incurred by the agriculture sector in the aftermath of *Tropical Cyclone Winston* and the initial responses by Government, coupled with the recovery plans. We all know how important the agriculture sector is, particularly for food and nutrition, security and, of course, the livelihood and the economic well-being of our people and our country as a whole.

Madam Speaker, let me begin by offering my heartfelt condolences to those who have lost their loved ones during *TC Winston* and also the words of encouragement specifically to farmers who have lost their crops, livestock and properties during this disaster. This episode in our country's history has revealed a very important element of the nature of our people, the very fabric that makes us Fijian. In the hardest of times it has brought out the urge to overcome, to move ahead with confidence renouncing the negativity and pursuing a new beginning. This is not the first time we have fallen and risen, and this will not be the last time either, such is the Fijian will.

Madam Speaker, it was extremely shocking to witness the severity of the damages and see first-hand the destruction of assets that took decades to build but destroyed within a matter of a few hours. The images of livestock washed away by flood waters, vegetation damaged by sea spray and ruined infrastructure would still be clear in our minds as I speak. However, we need to move on as a nation and the Ministry of Agriculture continues to play a leading role in ensuring that the agriculture sector effectively contributes to national food security, economic recovery and the continuation of agricultural exports.

Madam Speaker, the total losses to the agriculture sector is estimated at around FJD\$208.6 million of which losses to crops is about \$193.8 million, losses to livestock is \$9.9 million and losses to agriculture and infrastructure is about \$4.8 million.

Looking specifically at the different industries and its effect on the food security, Madam Speaker, as I have stated, *TC Winston's* impact on food security will be experienced for some time in the affected areas, as well to the country as a whole. Our farming communities along the cyclone path will have significant reductions in their supply of root crops, fruits, leafy vegetables and tree crops. This short supply will be realised within the three to four weeks after the cyclone and will continue for the next four months or so. Cassava and breadfruit are, of course, part of our staple diet and very susceptible as well. Of course, there has been increased demands for these products as well, particularly breadfruit and cassava as well into the export markets. The coastal areas and the maritime islands were particularly the worst affected when it comes to these commodities.

Next to sugar is *dalo*, Madam Speaker. In terms of our export levels, the standing value of crops before the cyclone was estimated at around \$83.1 million, but we have seen extensive damage to the *dalo* crop during *TC Winston* and was estimated at around \$55.7 million. Particularly in the *dalo* growing areas, I am not only talking about *dalo* for the export markets, but most of these *dalo* end up in the domestic markets as well. That is why the value of \$83.1 million is very low, let alone that the export level is about \$30 million or so per year. So, areas particularly that rely on *dalo* are Koro, Taveuni, Bua, Ovalau, Naitasiri, Ra and, of course, mainland Cakaudrove on the Savusavu Coast and Wailevu. Communities in these areas will be affected for a while in terms of their forms of livelihood and their food purposes as well.

Madam Speaker, I did mention last year during my 2016 Budget contribution that *yaqona* is again picking up because of the new market segments and the new products, but unfortunately most of the *yaqona* in the areas affected, particularly in Taveuni, Koro, Bua and likewise in Ra, Tailevu and Naitasiri were badly affected. The value of the crop before the cyclone was valued at about \$498 million and the damage was worth around \$116.1 million. Perhaps, the major concern at this stage is the lack of planting material.

We would love to get back immediately into our recovery process so that we, again, intensify on the efforts to get back to production immediately, but unfortunately it is the lack of planting material at this stage. We are trying our very best to coordinate between the areas that were spared,

particularly Kadavu, Serua, Namosi and the other areas that were spared from *TC Winston* in terms of the provision of planting materials from these specific areas as well.

Madam Speaker, again about 120,000 of our people depend on coconuts in terms of their livelihood, next to sugarcane. The coconut industry was again badly affected. Out of a value of about \$8 million of the crop, the damage was around of \$5.05 million. Again, the concern in here is not only the loss of trees and loss of production over the next few years, but there are other industries that feed from the coconut industry. We have products like copra oil and virgin coconut oil which most of our women, particularly in the rural areas, who are involved in these micro enterprise businesses will also be affected for a while.

Another worrying trend in as far as coconut is concerned, is the by-products that is used as a feed for livestock. As we speak, Madam Speaker, there is an increased demand in the market but unfortunately, the supply is very low because of the limited copra being crushed in the mill, and that is a worry for our livestock farmers, particularly, for those who depend on crushed coconut for their animal feed.

Particularly the dairy sector, as we are trying our very best to revive this sector and improve production, unfortunately feed supplement is affected because of *TC Winston*, and it will be as such for a while in the domestic market. We are looking at our opportunities, we are working with the Bio-Security Authority of Fiji (BAF) on the possibility of us importing from our neighbouring island states particularly Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and maybe, the Solomon Islands.

Assorted vegetables, again, as I have already mentioned, was badly affected. The standing value of the crops before the cyclone stood at around \$47.5 million and the total value of damage was \$8.8 million. After *TC Winston*, we have quickly gone into the distribution of vegetable seeds, but we again lost some of these vegetables as a result of the flooding brought about by *TC Zena*. Of course, one would see the increase in vegetable prices in the market and again, this will be expected in the next three to four months. So, hopefully during that period, we should also be able to get our supplies back to the normal level, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, these are particularly in the areas that were badly affected, and I did mention that food security and nutrition security are equally important as well. Of course, our people in the affected areas need to take seriously the need for them to start planting the seeds that they were being provided with so that their nutritional needs can be addressed immediately.

Madam Speaker, although I have selectively highlighted the losses in a few of the key commodities, may I also mention the losses in other crops as well, particularly yams, of about \$2.066 million; loss to *kumala* is about \$1.3 million; for ginger, we have lost a bit of ginger in Naitasiri, Tailevu and Ra which comes to about \$64,000; papaya or pawpaws have again picked up but we had a loss of about \$603,000, and the list goes on. Madam Speaker, this is to again highlight how it is affecting us in terms of our export levels, our domestic food security needs and, of course, the livelihoods of the people.

Madam Speaker, in the livestock sector, let me start with dairy. The impact on the livestock sector is evident, particularly not only to the animals but infrastructure as well. Most of the damages to the livestock sector is on the infrastructure.

On dairy, Madam Speaker, there is a total damage loss valued at around \$445,000 in the Central Division and in the Western Division as well, where we have started the Dairy Extension Programme. This includes the mortality rate on calves which resulted from injuries, particularly during the peak hurricane force winds and rain.

Madam Speaker, the Fiji Cooperative Dairy Limited has noted a significant reduction of about 7,000 litres per day of milk, which is valued at around \$112,000. So, this is how it is affecting our people, particularly our farmers. That loss of 7,000 litres per day translates to about \$112,000 daily.

In the poultry sector, damage comes to about \$1.25 million and about 67 percent of this, Madam Speaker, was in the Western Division and, of course, followed by the Central Division of around 24 percent and the Northern Division 8 percent respectively. Again, the strong winds caused devastation, particularly to broiler birds and sheds, resulting in the loss of feed and the high mortality on four of our private sector growers, particularly with rooster and, of course, the other small holder farmers.

Hatchery as well, Madam Speaker, particularly in the West was severely damaged, resulting in the loss of about 20,000 fertile eggs. That will mean affecting the supply of a day-old chicks as well, for those who require a day-old chicks.

Piggery, Madam Speaker, the total loss is around \$357,000. Again, animal mortality and, of course, the piggery sheds that were blown away and, of course, animal feed exposed to wet conditions. Hence, the quality deteriorates and incurs additional costs, Madam Speaker.

Bees or apiculture is one of the growing industries as well, it is just picking up lately, Madam Speaker, and the loss is around \$325,000 for the loss of about 647 beehives. This damage incapacitated the production capacity of the industry by more than 10 percent, Madam Speaker. The Western Division is the most affected, again, which lost a total of about 554 hives out of the 647, with the cost of about \$250,000. Next was the Northern Division, in the loss to the apiculture sector, Madam Speaker, with a total loss of 75 beehives, followed by the Eastern and the Central Divisions as well.

Sheep and goats, Madam Speaker, total number of 500 sheep valued at \$148,000 and about 3,241 goats valued at about \$160,000 has been estimated to have been lost. So, the significant number of animals lost were lamb which died because of the chilling effect. However, there were also reports of ewes and doe mortality due to injuries, Madam Speaker. Again, most of these losses were incurred in the Western Division, then followed by the Northern, Central and Eastern Divisions.

Madam Speaker, the sheep and goat industry is made up mostly of small holder or backyard farmers, who keep these animals for food security and surplus for income-generation as well. The larger farms sustained damages to infrastructure, such as on the feed lines.

I have already talked about how these affects our export levels, Madam Speaker, again, it is sad that as the markets are picking up and we are penetrating into new segments, unfortunately, we have lost most of what we have, but we will rise again, Madam Speaker.

On the rehabilitation and relief programme, Madam Speaker, this was done in three phases. Phase 1 was the awareness, particularly with the preservation of matured crops and the immediate response plan, Madam Speaker. That response plan includes the distribution of *kumala* cuttings. We have distributed more than a million cuttings in all the four Divisions and about 500 plus thousand in terms of seeds, Madam Speaker. Seeds were packaged, and we supplied farmers with cucumber, okra, eggplant, French bean, long bean and English cabbage seedlings. This is, firstly, for their food security and, of course, they can sell to the market as well. With that packet which is worth about \$10,000, when we calculate the income if all those seeds were planted, it can bring a return of about \$1,000 to the family as well.

Madam Speaker, the short-term response plan, as I have said, also involve the provision of machinery for land preparation, desilting, and the clearing of debris. We have started with a few communities in the Western Division, particularly in the Ra Province.

Phase 2 was the establishment of nursery and the organising of market and infrastructure development, the continuation of land preparation and the mid-term rehabilitation. We have calculated the costs at around \$9.5 million.

Phase 3, Madam Speaker, is awaiting the PDNA, the Pre Post Disaster Recovery for the Agriculture Sector and it is calculated at a cost of \$8.4 million. The key message, Madam Speaker is for our farmers to recover quickly so that we can get back to normalcy immediately.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to address this august House.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Leader of the Opposition or her nominee to speak in response.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I take the opportunity to thank the Honourable Minister for that explanation on the agricultural sector and because agriculture is very important to Fiji, I would request, Madam Speaker, if I am also given 20 minutes to respond to his Ministerial Statement.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Since we are only given five minutes, I will just highlight issues which the Honourable Minister has failed to include in his presentation. First, I would have expected a post-*Tropical Cyclone Winston* Agricultural Sector Report, a written report to be tabled with the Statement.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- It is important that that report is tabled because you cannot talk about recovery plans if you do not have a post-*TC Winston* Agricultural Sector Report. Honourable Minister, if that Report is available, I would request if we could be given copies of that because what is said here may change tomorrow, and when we have your Post-*TC Winston* Agricultural Sector Report, we have a reference to refer to.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Tell them, tell them!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Most importantly, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister talked about recovery plans from each agricultural product, from crops to animals. When he was talking about the recovery plans, I was also wondering, how have you formulated your Recovery Plans because you have failed to table a Post-*TC Winston* Agricultural Sector Report? In that Recovery Plan, Madam Speaker, he should have tabled there how you are going to....

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- This is the Report. It's here.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- You should have done that before you sat down.

(Laughter)

...fund this Recovery Plan?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Tell them, tell them!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- How much of the \$76.2 million in the 2016 Budget is going to be used for the Recovery Plan? That is why you need to also table that Recovery Plan.

Madam Speaker, on the whole, from what I have witnessed, the response has been very slow.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Yes!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Also, it is inadequate.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Yes!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Also, it needs to be better coordinated.

(Chorus of Interjections)

Madam Speaker, I was in Vanuabalavu and the distribution...

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- It will do well if you just listen.

... of *kumala* toppings which the Honourable Minister highlighted was done in my home yard. I saw a man walking away with only two small bundles of *kumala* toppings. Madam Speaker, this is the truth, I saw that for myself, only two bundles of *kumala* toppings which had almost withered.

(Chorus of Interjections)

Madam Speaker, that was it. For the two times that I had been there, I mean, that was what I saw. So, I would request the Honourable Minister because he had correctly said that *Cyclone Zena* has done the damage again, if this could be followed up with more assistance.

Madam Speaker, in terms of food security, because of the damages and their inability to do crop farming, the people are asking; when will the Government assistance on food ration distribution cease? People would like to know when will the Government assistance stop and what is going to come in to compensate or assist them because nothing has grown from that time up until now? Like the Honourable Minister had rightly stated, *TC Zena* had taken away what the people had tried to plant in the first instance, Madam Speaker.

In terms of food security, that is a big issue that I am requesting the Honourable Minister, if that could be followed up urgently, may be with more assistance in terms of agricultural crops to assist the people to continue with re-planting. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. I now call upon the Honourable Leader of the National Federation Party or his nominee to respond.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his explanation and the outline of his Programme for recovery, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, agriculture is the lifeline of the country and is ranked second to tourism. Having said that, I totally agree with my colleague, the Honourable Radrodro, that an agricultural assessment report needs to be presented to Parliament, not only for our sighting but to use it as a basis for phases of recovery and long term effects.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. P. SINGH.- First, you concentrate on education. You should go and look after the schools, if they are still abandoned.

(Laughter)

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, the aftermath of *TC Winston* left trails of damage on all the crops, and I am surprised that the Honourable Minister did not touch on sugar. He has plans for non-sugar sector but he did not mention anything about the sugar, except that he twice mentioned that *dalo* and *yaqona* ranked second to sugar.

Madam Speaker, the reason we are asking for a Needs Assessment Report so that it provides means and ways for us to promote recovery at all levels, and in this instance, Madam Speaker, it would deserve a lot of questions. We have a lot of questions from this side of the House to the Honourable Minister. On a personal note, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister to make available those reports so that we (at least) know the extent of damages and how we can go about doing our recovery work. The post-disaster needs assessment report on all sectors need to be presented. To-date, Government has not presented any report. There have been different outlines. How then do we make references to these when we go into the actual recovery mode?

Madam Speaker, it will also reflect the areas where we have to prioritise our recovery efforts on. One area that remains unattended, according to the Honourable Minister's statement, is the sugar industry. In the 2016 Budget, it allowed \$5 million for replanting purposes, and the planting season comes to an end in May. If people are serious about replanting, then they need to prepare land, and that would take almost three to four weeks, before they can actually plant. So, the \$5 million that was allocated is still sitting there. I do not know what will happen to it, and I hope that there is a Ministerial Statement on sugar so that we can know what the Government's intentions are in terms of assistance.

Madam Speaker, I raise this because the \$5 million that was allocated to the sugar industry for replanting will go towards the wider approach that the FSC wants, to have 24,000 hectares of cane land replanted as part of the reform because those 24,000 hectares with ratoon crops are becoming uneconomical. This is in line with the Government's policies, but we have not seen anything of that sort coming in here.

On cash crops, Madam Speaker, again, seedlings were distributed to various farmers from NGOs, Government, the Ministry of Agriculture, but then the subsequent flooding situation that arose washed away a lot of those seedlings and rehabilitation crops in Nadi, Rakiraki and Tavua. Therefore, what we are asking is, we need to invigorate the Extension Services of the Ministry of Agriculture. I hope that all staff within the Ministry become as energetic as the Honourable Minister so that we can do our work, together with the stakeholders and the farmers out there because we can prepare any report, we can have everything on paper, theoretically we may sound very good, but unless we enter into partnership with the farmers, it will all be futile. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**BILLS – FIRST READING**

A Bill for an Act to amend the Public Order Act, Cap. 20 (Bill No. 23 of 2016).

A Bill for an Act to establish the Fiji Kava Council for the purpose of the regulation and the management of the Kava Industry, and for related matters (Bill No. 24 of 2016).

HON. SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 84(2), the Bills have now been read for the first time, and will now be listed on the Order Paper for second reading on a future sitting.

**HIGHER EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016**

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), I move:

That the Higher Education (Amendment) Bill 2016 (Bill No. 2/2016), be now read a second time.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call upon the mover of the motion, I remind Honourable Members that pursuant to the Standing Order 85(1), the debate is on the principles and merits of the Bill. Further, the only amendment permitted is an amendment moved pursuant to Standing Order 85(2). I trust this is clear.

I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to speak on his motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, this Bill was presented to this Honourable House on 9th February, 2016, for its first reading. This Bill seeks to consolidate into one piece of law a revision of the Higher Education Promulgation that was put in place in 2008, essentially to create the legal framework for the operation of the Fiji Higher Education Commission.

The Higher Education Commission, as has been talked about in the past couple of days, commenced its operation in 2010 and has been functional for six years. The Promulgation was created to monitor and regulate all higher education institutions in Fiji. The Promulgation has been enforced since 1st January, 2010, and after six years of its operation, the Commission has deemed it necessary to make certain amendments to bring the law up to-date with the current times, and to factor in any changes which have been made necessary by things such as globalisation, the movement of students, institutions and programmes across the borders, the phenomenal of different types of higher education providers in the last 10 years in particular in Fiji, including private online, cross border and business education, and the diversity in delivery modes resulting from the rapid pace of ICT development which are changing the paradigm of teaching and learning.

During the last 10 years, Madam Speaker, the number of higher education institutions have significantly increased in Fiji and these institutions provide a variety of programmes for studying. The number of tertiary students have also increased significantly due to the awareness and interest in tertiary education and, of course, because of the provision of Government initiatives such as TELS and the Toppers Scheme. The movement of students, Madam Speaker, also to and outside of Fiji has increased.

The Bill, Madam Speaker, essentially has a number of features in it and I do not labour the point going through all the particular clauses, but for example, it encompasses a new definition of operating, encompassing all higher education institutions conducting any activity in any medium,

whether they are based locally or are from overseas. This will bring all higher education institutions under the jurisdiction of the promulgation of the Commission, regardless of the address and the span of time in which they provide higher education.

This new definition will help reduce the number of higher education institutions which tend to operate only for a short period of time. For those that do not allow students to complete their programmes of study, such institutions may close down all of a sudden and leave students frustrated and cheated. Of course, their bank balance gets affected as well and families get distraught. The intention of this new provision is to reduce the number of higher education institutions which only tend to make money, and that is the purpose they are setup for.

The amendment to Section 13 has now made it mandatory for all types of higher education institutions to be established and registered under the provision of the Higher Education Commission which has been setup under the Promulgation.

The amendment to Section 17 authorises the Higher Education Commission to appoint an authority for the establishment of an institution which does not fall into the category of either university or a degree-awarding institute of technology.

Previously, a higher education institution could only be authorised by a legislation but now, the Commission has the powers to authorise a higher education institution. The terms “university and degree awarding-institute of technology” has been removed from the Promulgation and replaced with the term “higher education institutions” to bring it all into alignment.

With those brief introductory remarks, Madam Speaker, I recommend that this Bill now be read for the second time.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, this Bill is now open for debate.

Thank you. There being no input into the debate, the Honourable Attorney-General, would you like to add a bit more before we put this to the vote?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, thank you, Madam Speaker, just that it be read for the second time.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote, the question is that the Higher Education (Amendment) Bill 2016 be now read a second time. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No!

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to amend the Higher Education Promulgation 2008 (Bill No. 2 of 2016).

HON. SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 85(4), the Bill, has now been read for the second time. Pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a), the Bill will now be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

We will move on to the next Agenda item. I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications to have the floor.

### **METEOROLOGICAL AND HYDROLOGICAL SERVICES BILL 2016**

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), I move:

That the Meteorological and Hydrological Services Bill, 2016 (Bill No. 4/2016), be now read a second time.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call upon the mover of the motion, I remind Honourable Members that pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), the debate is on the principles and the merits of the Bill. Further, the only amendment permitted is an amendment moved pursuant to Standing Order 85(2). I trust this is clear, and I call on the Honourable Attorney-General to speak on his motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Meteorological and Hydrological Services Bill 2016 was tabled in Parliament on 9th February this year. The Bill basically seeks to establish, amongst other things, the Fiji Meteorological and Hydrological Services, and to provide for its functions and the efficient management, control, promotion and development meteorological and hydrological services for the protection of life, property and economic development for meteorological and hydrological disasters which we recently faced through *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, and of course, the other smaller cyclones that followed post that, including the flooding.

Madam Speaker, there is quite a bit of background to this in terms of the way it was first setup. As you know it was first setup in Suva, post-World War II when the weather forecast were broadcasted twice daily with special warnings, et cetera. The Nadi Weather Office was established and funded by the South Pacific Air Transport Control and operated as a branch of New Zealand Meteorological Services primarily to provide weather service and support civil aviation requirements. During this time, the Nadi Weather Office became responsible for weather forecast for international air services within Fiji's flight information regions, some of which we, of course, lost a few years ago. Forecasting operations from Laucala Bay stopped in 1947, and merged with the Nadi Weather Office, downscaling operations to collection, checking and archiving records for service observations.

In 1975, the Fiji Meteorological Services was established and inherited forecasting responsibilities with the expansion of services to marine and public sectors. The Climate and Special Services Division was also established, with data collection and archiving confined to Fijian operations.

Fiji became a member of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) in 1980 and in 1986, Nadi was designated as the regional Tropical Cyclone Warning Centre (TCWC) for the South Pacific Region. Following rapid development modernisation in meeting a required capability, Fiji was designated as one of the five Regional Specialised Meteorological Centres (RSMCs) to the responsibilities for tropical cyclones under the World Weather Watch Programme of the WMO. RSMC in Nadi was also given the responsibility to issue regular marine forecasts and warnings for

the high seas, and to provide essential tropical cyclone-related information and warnings to aviation which is very, very critical.

At present, Madam Speaker, there is no law in Fiji, regulating the provision of meteorological and hydrological services. As earlier mentioned, the purpose of the Bill is to establish by statute, the Fiji Meteorological and Hydrological Services, and to outline the specific functions and powers of the Service.

The functions and the service, Madam Speaker, will be as follows:

- 1) Observe and record hydrological meteorological data on a daily basis as required by the WMO.
- 2) Forecast weather in the state of the atmosphere;
- 3) Monitor and issue severe weather warnings of gale storms, tropical cyclones, hurricanes and other weather conditions that is likely to endanger lives, property or economic development, including weather conditions likely to give rise to floods or bushfires, which is very unlikely in Fiji's case but it does happen from time to time when we have bushfires.
- 4) Supply meteorological and hydrological information for the purpose of national development;
- 5) Publish meteorological and hydrological reports and bulletins;
- 6) Promote the advancement of meteorological and hydrological science, research, investigation or by any other means.
- 7) Maintain and develop meteorological and hydrological observation networks.
- 8) Provide meteorological and hydrological advisory services.
- 9) Cooperate with the authority administering the meteorological and hydrological service of any other country, and the list does go on.

Madam Speaker, some of the most important ones, of course, which we have recently seen is to monitor drought and appropriately advise the National Drought Steering Committee, is to work in conjunction and work with the practices of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and WMO, aid ships in navigation, support movements of civil aviation aircraft within their flight zones and regions.

The Service, Madam Speaker, as provided for under the Bill, will establish core divisions, including the National Weather Forecasting Centre, the Regional Meteorological Forecasting Centre, the Hydrological Services Division, the Climatological Services Division and the Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre in Nadi.

The Director Meteorology will be appointed by the relevant Permanent Secretary, in agreement with the Minister, and the Headquarters of the Service will be based in Nadi. Under the Bill, Madam Speaker, the Service is solely responsible for the promotion and development of the meteorological and hydrological services.

Madam Speaker, the gist of having this Bill also, it does put us on the international stage in terms of our ability to access funding. As you know that with climate finance now available, we have the opportunity by having a law in place, specifically to set up such a service with the ability to access grant through Climate Finance to be able to build the capacity. I am sure the Honourable Minister for Natural Disaster Management, including everyone else in this august House would agree that if we have a very good weather reporting mechanism, system service in Fiji, of course, it will also help us to prepare much better for the cyclones and the climatic events that various scientists are predicting.

Madam Speaker, with those few introductory remarks, I recommend that this Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The motion is now open for debate. I give the floor to the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, I rise to make a few comments on the Bill that is before us. In fact, the Honourable Attorney-General, has spoken on the merits and demerits of the Bill. I only want to make a few comments, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I believe it is the right time that Fiji has a law on the provision of meteorological and hydrological services. Considering that Fiji is prone to natural disasters like droughts, cyclones and floods, the Bill would greatly assist in ensuring the monitoring and issuing of weather warnings. Since Fijians rely on the weather updates and warnings from the Fiji Meteorological Services, I believe this Bill would greatly assist the department in carrying out its work.

Madam Speaker, it is not only us Fijians who rely on the service of this Fiji Meteorological Service but Nadi being designated a Divisional Tropical Cyclone Warning Centre for the Southwest Pacific Region, people living in the Region, our Pacific Island neighbours also rely on the service provided to them by the Fiji Meteorological Services by way of the provision of weather updates. As experienced recently, the Fiji Meteorological Services was also spot on in issuing timely alerts on approaching cyclones and flood warnings for specific areas in the country. Madam Speaker, these warnings and alerts no doubt, saved many lives.

Madam Speaker, I believe the Bill would ensure more provisions for the meteorological and hydrological services, not forgetting keeping a tab on Fiji's climate, considering that climate change is a major global issue now, especially for Pacific Island Countries. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I support the Meteorological and Hydrological Services Bill 2016.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you. Madam Speaker, the Meteorological and Hydrological Services Bill 2016 be now read a second time.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote. The question is that the Meteorological and Hydrological Services Bill 2016 be now read a second time. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

SECRETARY GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to provide for the establishment and functions of the Fiji Metrological and Hydrological Services and the efficient management, control, promotion and development of meteorological and hydrological services to contribute to the protection of lives, property and the economic development from meteorological and hydrological disasters (Bill No. 4 of 2016).

HON. SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 85(4), the Bill has now been read for the second time and pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a), the Bill will now be referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Just a clarification, Madam Speaker. The Bills are being referred to Standing Committees and the clarification I need is that, there are some vacancies in the Standing Committees which we had brought to your attention by letter and also at the Business Committee last week, and we were told that those vacancies would be addressed immediately. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- The vacancies are being addressed, therefore, the Committees should be sitting promptly.

We will now move on to the next Agenda item. I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to have the floor.

### **NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL BILL 2016**

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), I move:

That the National Research Council Bill 2016 (Bill No. 5/2016), be now read a second time.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call on the mover of the motion, I remind Honourable Members that pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), the debate is on the principles and the merits of the Bill. Further, the only amendment permitted is the amendment moved pursuant to Standing Order 85(2). I trust this is clear. I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General to speak on the motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, this Bill was in fact, presented to Parliament on 9th February, 2016 when it was read for the first time. The Bill, Madam Speaker, creates a National Research Council and essentially, to also regulate the operation of the National Research Fund.

Madam Speaker, research as we all know, is very critical for any country's development, whether we have research in agriculture and specific areas of agriculture, whether we need research in food technology, whether we need research in various other facets of our society, but it is very, very critical, not just in terms for the academic few but also in terms of everyday living. So, if we

are able to, for example, have research in the area of food technology, et cetera, we may be able to find new markets for our agricultural products.

We also need research, Madam Speaker, in terms of technological uptake and technological advancement, and Fiji, of course, in many respects, Madam Speaker, has lagged behind, in particular to mainstream research. Many countries, Madam Speaker, have also set up what they call 'incubators', where there is assistance given and the Bill also has the ability to fund these types of researches. This is the general idea, Madam Speaker.

So the Bill, Madam Speaker, in creating the Council, bulk of the Bill as you would see is very much about the Council itself, but the idea of the Council is to be able to create or engender that culture of research and be able to access funding. As we have said continuously, now Fiji is in a very good space internationally. We can access funds. We need to have the right legal framework for the various facets that we are trying to develop, and this gives confidence to our development partners to be able to contribute to these different facets of our society and our economy that we want to develop.

Madam Speaker, I do not want to labour the point, but there is about a few critical parts of the Bill itself. Part 2, of course, provides for the powers and functions of the Council.

Part 3 compels the disclosure of interests by members of the Council. It also provides protection to members of the Council.

Part 4 provides for the Fund which I have mentioned, and the Fund will be used for funding research and development proposals. This Part also enables a person to apply to the Council for funding of a research, the mechanisms through that.

Part 5 outlines the concept of misconduct or unethical behaviour.

Part 6 empowers the Minister to make regulations.

Madam Speaker, this is, of course, the first step in the area of addressing research. We have to take these first few steps to be able to develop that culture of research and attract that level of funding that is required.

So with those introductory remarks, Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be read for the second time.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The motion is now open for debate. Hon. Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I am going to be very brief. I think this is a very good idea. Some of us in the past talked about this idea of having a National Research Council and I agree with the Honourable Attorney-General that we need an institution like this which focuses on research at the national level which is more applied, which will result in a research that would inform policy.

On many occasions, Madam Speaker, we do not have that kind of interface between research and policy because what universities do sometimes is basic research, applied research, but removed from its application to policy, and I hope that an institution of this nature will have two very important things, and I would encourage all those stakeholders who would be contributing to this Bill to look at the two aspects of this. First, would obviously be the level of funding that will be provided and the second would be the kind of independence that the National Research Council would have, Madam

Speaker, to prioritize and to conduct research in an environment which is free from any kind of interference in the way that it will produce the outcome because research done independently with appropriate resources, with all the freedom, would create the kind of impact that the Research Council has as its objective. So, so I hope that there will be a lot of people contributing to this when the Bill actually goes to the Standing Committee. Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Hon. Minister for Education.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Bill. I just want to clarify a few issues raised by the Honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, it is an umbrella research organisation. It includes members from the research institutions like the University of the South Pacific, University of Fiji, Fiji National University, Koronivia Research Station and other research institutions. It is supposed to leverage funding from external research and international institutions, Madam Speaker, and that is why a National Research Council is established because it will have the national mandate to seek international funding.

Of course, if you look at or peruse through this year's Budget, Madam Speaker, which the other side voted against, it has already pegged in a small but significant amount of money for National Research Council. Unfortunately, they voted against that. The Council is an independent research body, Madam Speaker, and they should not pre-empt anything otherwise.

MADAM SPEAKER.- There being no other input, I now invite the Hon. Attorney-General to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I recommend that the Bill be now read for the second time and be referred to a Committee.

Question put.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote. The question is, that the National Research Council Bill 2016 be now read a second time. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, the motion is therefore agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to establish a National Research Council and to regulate the operations of the National Research Fund and related matters, Bill No. 5 of 2016.

MADAM SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 85(4), the Bill has now been read for the second time. Pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a), the Bill will now be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

**ENDANGERED AND PROTECTED SPECIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016**

MADAM SPEAKER.- Now I call upon the Hon. Attorney-General to have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), I move:

That the Endangered and Protected Species (Amendment) Bill 2016 (Bill No.6/2016), be now read a second time.

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

MADAM SPEAKER.- Before I call upon the mover of the motion, I remind Members that pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), the debate is on the principles and the merits of the Bill. Further, the only amendment permitted is an amendment moved pursuant to Standing Order 85(2). I trust this is clear. I now call on the Hon. Attorney-General to speak on the motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this Bill was tabled in this honourable House, in Parliament in the last sitting, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this Bill was tabled in Parliament on 9th February, 2016. It seeks to amend the Endangered and Protected Species Act 2002.

The Bill, Madam Speaker, provides for the setting up of guidelines by the Secretariat of the Fiji CITES Management Authority. CITES, Madam Speaker, as some Members would know is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, commonly known as CITES 1997.

Madam Speaker, CITES is an international agreement between Governments that aims to control the international movement of wild plants and animals, alive or dead, to ensure international trade of these listed species does not contribute to their endangerment or extinction. There are a number of such animals, flora and fauna in Fiji, some of it, Madam Speaker, are unique to Fiji, and indeed some of them have been captured on our currency that we currently have when we have the change in the currency.

Madam Speaker, right from Page 2 of the Bill, lists a vast list of indigenous plant and animal life with the indigenous names, with the common names and, of course, with technical names some of which many of us cannot pronounce, and it is vast list of those life that we want to protect, Madam Speaker.

The Bill, Madam Speaker, is primarily for the protection and regulation of trade or movement of endangered animal and plant species in and out of Fiji, as well as within the local market itself, for example, the protection of turtles and you will see that actually listed actually on Page 4 of the list, under Reptiles and Sea Turtles.

Madam Speaker, there is widespread public consultations. We, of course, need to be able to ensure that our laws are up to date. We are able to also then source, Madam Speaker, overseas funding from our donor agencies to be able to protect, and not just these animals per say but the environment in which they operate under, and as you would expect, this Bill will fall under the Minister responsible for Environment.

Madam Speaker, Schedule 1 of the Act lists the species, as I have said, endemic to Fiji, which are believed to be threatened with extinction.

Schedule 2 of the Act list all species endemic to Fiji by are not listed in CITES or Schedule 1 of the Act. Since 2002, the Department of Environment in collaboration with Fiji CITES Management Authority and the Fiji CITES Scientific Council have identified new species endangered in and endemic to Fiji, and which needs to be listed in the Act for the purpose of protection and regulation.

Madam Speaker, the Bill itself, as far as the main clauses are concerned, Clause 2 of the Bill amends Section 31 of the Act by including a new sub-section for the setting up of a guideline by the Secretariat of the Authority or the Council.

Clause 3 of the Bill amends the Act to give clarity to references made to Fiji throughout the Act.

Clause 4 of the Bill amends Schedule 1 of the Act by inserting the names of those species which are endemic to Fiji.

Clause 5 of the Bill amends Schedule 2, again which lists those various animals that we need to be on the lookout for that may face extinction, Madam Speaker.

The Bill itself, Madam Speaker, in fact consists of about three Clauses, so from Clause 4 onwards is basically the list of all the life that we want to protect and are special to Fiji.

Madam Speaker, with those few introductory remarks, I would like to recommend this Bill be read for the second time.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Bill is now open for debate. The Hon. Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I once again support this Bill for second reading. I only want to make a point, Madam Speaker, as the Honourable Attorney-General said the CITES is an important international agreement, and I hope that when this Bill goes to the Standing Committee, they will look at the Natural Resource Inventory which I was involved in compiling some time back because unless we have a very clear idea of the stock of these species, we will have great difficulty even with this legislation and with the international agreement on trade of endangered species, we will not be able to deal with this. So, I just want to make that contribution and suggest that a very clear and an ongoing inventory, not only of these endangered species but I think we need a Natural Resource Inventory for the whole country. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Lorna Eden.

HON. L. EDEN.- Madam Speaker, I also rise in support of the proposed amendments to the Endangered and Protected Species Act 2002.

Madam Speaker, I do not think that there will be vigorous and long debate over this because it is, in a nutshell, very important that we do go ahead with this. The Honourable Attorney-General has mentioned a lot of the points already but it is interesting to note, Madam Speaker, that according to INTERPOL, wild life trade in the world is the second largest criminal activity across the globe and second to narcotics. It is currently valued at USD10 billion a year.

Since the Act was formed back in 2002, 14 years ago, our numbers of critically endangered species and those that are not yet critically endangered but may become so soon unless strict trade regulations are compiled with, have sadly increased. In these amendments, Madam Speaker, six Parts have been added to the existing seven under Schedule 1 which is the critical list, and two Parts have been added to the existing eight under Schedule 2 which is the not yet critical list.

Madam Speaker, we have many, many species of wildlife very endemic to Fiji, like the crested iguana, the *Lawedua*, the Fiji Petrel, the Fiji Sago Palm, Green and Leatherback Turtles and many, many more that need protection for their survival. Whether flora or fauna, Madam Speaker, every species on our earth plays a particular role in our ecosystem. So, it is all in our interest to ensure that we do all possible to maintain sustainability and balance in this area.

It is also important to note, Madam Speaker, that as a member of CITES since 1997, it is our obligation to regularly update our Schedules to remain compliant.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I think we would all agree in this House that this is a very important Bill in terms of preservation of our life in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, this Bill and its laws have been brought to also attract funding for these types of projects that we do have precisely for the reason of what Honourable Dr. Prasad was talking about, making sure that we have proper stock-take, and also to be able to preserve the environment in which these extinct or near-extinct life are currently existing in.

With those few words, I would like to recommend that we proceed to the second reading. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote. The question is that the Endangered and Protected Species (Amendment) Bill 2016, be now read a second time. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to amend the Endangered and Protected Species Act 2002 (Bill No. 6 of 2016).

HON. SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 85(4), the Bill has now been read for the second time. In pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a), the Bill will now be referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

We will move on to the next Agenda item. I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to have the floor.

### **LAND AND WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT BILL 2016**

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), I move:

That the Land and Water Resources Management Bill 2016 (Bill No. 7/2016), be now read a second time.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call on the mover of the motion, I remind Honourable Members that pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), the debate is on the principles and the merits of the Bill. Further, the only amendment permitted is an amendment moved pursuant to Standing Order 85(2), and I trust this is clear. I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General to speak on his motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, this Bill was tabled in Parliament on 9th February, 2016 for the first reading and really, Madam Speaker, this Bill is an outcome of the review of the Land Conservation and Improvement Act (Cap. 141).

There was a consultant that was engaged under the technical assistance provided by the Pacific Community and the German Bilateral Development Agency called GIZ, as we talked about earlier on, the Consultant Dr. Julian Prior is an Academic and has vast experience in this area. Madam Speaker, there was widespread consultations with various stakeholders and thus, this Bill came about.

Madam Speaker, Fiji's land and water resources are limited, as Honourable Members have highlighted earlier on. The Honourable Leawere had talked about the REDD Programme and indeed, if we do not address the land and water degradation issues, Madam Speaker, we will notice that most of our agricultural land, pastoral land and indeed, fertile land will actually no longer be fertile as we have seen vast areas of what we called *talasiga* land are dry stretches of land in areas that used to be fertile land.

Madam Speaker, this is a sign of land and water degradation and this, of course, is part of this review of the existing laws but a lot of it has to do with practices that we have engaged in and perhaps, overlooked in terms of curtailing and prohibiting. Therefore, Madam Speaker, the main objective of the Bill is to make provisions for the management, conservation and improvement of the land and water resources in Fiji. The Bill addresses current land and water resources management concerns, and promotes the implementation of sustainable land and water resources management practices.

The Bill is necessary, given that the Land Conservation and Improvement Act has become almost irrelevant and outdated in terms of today's living, and requires more stringent needs for environmental protection and the need to set out more clear enforceable environmentally friendly laws. Enforcement, of course, Madam Speaker, as you know in many of these areas has been very very underdeveloped.

Madam Speaker, just very briefly on the clauses of the Bill, the Bill seeks to empower the Land and Water Resources Management Board with the flexibility to identify and recommend areas in Fiji to be designated as land and water conservation areas, in order to restore and conserve degraded land and water resources. These land and water conservation areas may be issued with conservation orders to restrict the use of the land and water resources, and restore its quality.

In the same way, as for example, as you see some of the areas are declared to be “*tabu*” for fishing, the same way we need to be able to ring fence certain areas of land for it to get back its fertility and the various nutrients that are essential for it to have that level of fertility essential for cultivation.

Madam Speaker, it allows for wider representation from Government agencies, Non-Government Agencies and various stakeholders (the Bill envisages that) in the Board for membership to allow for greater consultation and co-operation on land and water resources management issues.

It also sets up the provisions for the appointment of land and water use, planning sub-committees to create the necessary land and water use plans suitable and necessary for the rehabilitation of conservation areas identified by the Board, or indeed that may be subject to the risk of degradation.

It allows for the appointing of specific land and water conservation officers, who will work on the ground to monitor and report on the degradation and status of land and water resources in danger of further degradation.

It increases the penalties, Madam Speaker, for offenders who breach conservation orders and practice unsafe land-use practices.

It allows the Director for Land and Resource Planning Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, who will also act as the Secretariat of the Board, to oversee and co-ordinate the effective enforcement of the Bill, including the co-ordination of land and water conservation officers in the day to day administration of land and water rehabilitation effort.

Madam Speaker, it is also very critical to know that the Minister for Agriculture is also the Minister for Natural Disaster Management and as he has highlighted previously, the climatic events obviously do not necessarily always have to be a cyclone or have to be a hurricane or a *tsunami*, it can also be a drought. These sorts of climatic events do have great impact on the Ministry of Agriculture to be able to deliver and to be able to also, at the same time, provide direct assistance to farmers who are cultivating these lands.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, it empowers the Board with the approval of the Minister to make conservation orders, to ensure the restoration and sustainable use of conservation areas.

With those few introductory remarks, Madam Speaker, I recommend that the Bill be read for a second time.

HON.SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament is now open for debate on this Bill.

HON. ROKO T.T.S DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, it sounds rather innocuous when put like that, Honourable Attorney-General, but the body that is being given all these powers under this Bill, and I mentioned it during the Bills Workshop, it appears to be like the Politburo, Madam Speaker. They decide what is to be planted, where, I mean, that is how wide their powers are.

So I would urge everyone in the agricultural sector, who has a large interest in what they farm and the income that they derive from it, to please take a great interest in this Bill and make your submissions to the Committee.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Hon. Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki.

HON. RATU. K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, my comment is in regards to the regulator being the Ministry of Agriculture, and I see a conflict of programmes or policies. As we know the Ministry of Agriculture in using machines in the degradation of forests to promote the agriculture sector, especially in the Naitasiri area. You can see that as you go down Sawani right opposite the river, on top of the hill, the use of mechanization.

As we have heard from the presentation at the workshop by the Ministry of Agriculture, there are millions of tonnes of silt going into the rivers which have implications on the country as a whole; impacting on the social economic livelihoods of those who live on the deltas and on fisheries. So, I see a conflict of interest or priorities in having this portfolio under the Ministry of Agriculture. I would suggest another authority or ministry, probably Ministry of Forests because degradation of land is in regards to the maintenance of the vegetation and the forests. It would have also encompassed the aggressive harvesting of the indigenous forests. That basically is a mitigating factor as we talk about climate change, as I had mentioned yesterday.

I would like to comment also on the remarks given by the Honourable Attorney-General yesterday in regards to mahogany in Ecuador as being preserved, not only because of the preservation of indigenous species but also for the absorption of carbon dioxide. The trees absorb carbon and as the trees grow bigger, it is evidenced by the amount of carbon it stores, not only from photosynthesis that we benefit from the exchange of oxygen but also a tree sponsors two or three people's lives by giving oxygen and that is the essence of my contribution. As we go into the interior of Cakaudrove, we see the exploitation and aggressive harvesting of indigenous forest, especially *dakua*. For a *dakua* that ages hundreds or even thousands of years, six or ten people joining hands around it is the amount of carbon dioxide it absorbs.

How much economic gain can a country get from a single tree? You see the harvesting of these in Valebasoga and Malau. These are ages and years of conservation and yet, we allow degradation where millions of tonnes go into the rivers, siltation, and as I have said already silt is deposited in our rivers every year. That is what I would like to highlight. So, I would suggest that probably the Ministry of Forests should have a separate regulatory body to see that there is no conflict of policies or programmes with the Ministry of Agriculture.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Hon. Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- At this stage, we are talking about the merits and the principles of this Bill. I commend the Government for that, moreso for bringing it under Standing Order 50 and that will allow the public to put their views into this.

The Land Conservation Act has been there for a long time and the point I wish to raise is that, one of the problems that has been there incessantly was enforcement, the incessant burning of canes, practice of bad husbandry or impossible, for all these years to enforce and we are probably too late now because of those bad husbandry practices. So I am happy that we are now at this stage to look into this Act, and I hope that when this Bill goes to the Committee stage, the stakeholders will come in and will give their input, especially on how to enforce the Act.

That is my brief contribution.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister for Agriculture.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I would like to contribute and again, show my support for the Bill before the House because this is very important for us.

From sustainable development perspective, Madam Speaker, the three major issues that we are all trying to address are water resources, food security and, of course, energy. This Bill very much plays a significant role within our pursuit for sustainable development because land is very important and as far as food security is concerned, that also translates into the environmental issues, and likewise water resources. We need to have these regulations in place so that we can look at these resources, probably in a different perspective, and of course, we value rather than take for granted that we have an abundance of such resources in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, again from the Ministry of Agriculture, we have been waiting eagerly for this Bill, so that we can also address some of the issues that we have.

On the other hand, Madam Speaker, I can also say in this august House, let us not only blame the Bills or the regulations in most instances because in Fiji, we have regulations in existence already. The Honourable Kiliraki did mention about logging practices in Fiji but we have a Code of Logging Practice. Likewise, in the sustainable use of land and land conservation issues, that is already covered as well, particularly with the Land and Water Resource Management Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture and, of course, they look at what we call the sustainable land management practices as well.

Development like any other activity, Madam Speaker, comes with risks. Of course, there will be risks in agriculture and forest development but again, those risks can be reduced, transferred, mitigated or managed, and of course, whether the regulatory body be with the Ministry of Agriculture or be with the Ministry of Forestry. I see that they both have interest, particularly on land and may be, that is something for the Committee to deliberate further on and come up with very good recommendations.

In Fiji particularly, we have to clear forest before we bring in agriculture, whether it be livestock or crop, but it is sustainable land management practices that we need to enforce in order to minimise the level of risks. I agree with the Honourable Nawaikula, the amount of soil erosion and if go to the mouth of Rewa River today, you will see the amount of silt that has formed up again, which demonstrates the lack of conservation and unsafe land practices that need to be addressed.

So, I strongly support the Bill and I only hope that those responsible will be enforcing the Bill and, of course, the co-operation from all key stakeholders as well, particularly in the perspective of sustainable development. If we need sustainable development, we need to look after our land resources, water resources and most importantly, Madam Speaker, this is probably in our INDCs which we have submitted as commitment in the *Cop 21, Paris Agreement*. These water resources management, of course, is a good source for our renewable energy as well. So, the Bill is timely and I again, echo my strong support for the Bill, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I think, we are all in agreement that we do need to address land degradation. To clarify some points, I mean to say that, we should be taken away from agriculture and given to forestry because agriculture farm lands, the forestry department is also responsible for cutting down trees. They actually give saw milling licences, so there could also be a conflict there as well.

The reality, Madam Speaker, is that, the Ministry of Agriculture, of course, like we have said, has a much greater relationship with the Ministry of Natural Disaster Management, so that is the kind of symbiosis that we want.

Just a clarification, what we are talking about is that, we should not mix timber or mahogany in this case coming from planted forest and timber that comes from virgin forest because that is not a good thing because many of these virgin forests are actually cut down illegally. We do not want our trees that are cut legally to be mixed up with timber that is cut down illegally.

Madam Speaker, I think the point of course, is that, the Bill will go to the Committee and we will be able to look at the many features of this and in fact, to setup the Council. It is not a Politburo, the Bill does not setup some kind of Politburo, Honourable Draunidalo. The Council is there essentially to look at the land management resources and to be able to address it. Of course, we do have the presence of our Permanent Secretaries in some of these Boards and Councils because they are the ones who are going to implement it. However, the Bill also shows, Madam Speaker, that outside stakeholders, including NGOs will be appointed by the relevant Minister to be put on the Board to get a wider cross-section community of views.

So, with those few remarks, Madam Speaker, we recommend that the Bill now be read for the second time.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote. The question is that the Land and Water Resources Management Bill 2016 be now read a second time. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to make provisions for the management, conservation and improvement of land and water resources and for other related matters (Bill No. 7 of 2016).

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, in accordance with Standing Order 85(4), the Bill has now been read for the second time. Pursuant to Standing Order 85(4)(a), the Bill will now be referred to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Pursuant to the resolution of Parliament on Monday, 25th April, 2016, the Financial Amendment Bill 2016 and the Fair Reporting Credit Bill 2016, will both be debated and voted upon today. The debate will be limited to one hour for each Bill.

Honourable Members, I also note the time, so before I call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to move his motion, I will allow the Honourable Leader of Government in Parliament to move the suspension motion.

#### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

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

That under Standing Order 6 so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended, so as to allow the House to complete the items of business in today's Order Paper.

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

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote. The question is that so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to complete the items of business in today's Order Paper.

Does any Honourable Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

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

Motion agreed to.

I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General.

#### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016**

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to the resolution of Parliament on 25th April, 2016, I move:

That the Financial Management (Amendment) Bill 2016 (Bill No. 25/2016), be debated, voted upon and be passed.

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

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, when we introduced this Bill on 25th April, we did highlight the three key reasons, being highlighted for the changing of our fiscal year.

Madam Speaker, when we do make changes, all those people who actually may oppose it should not be beholden to something for the sake of being beholden to it. The choices that we make in life are reflections of our history, some reflections of the changing of times.

As we highlighted also on the other day, there are many countries in the world, in recent times, for example, even a country like New Zealand that has changed its financial year from 1st April to 1st July. It is not something that is uncommon, nor are financial years set in stone. In Fiji's case, Madam Speaker, of course, it is very, very critical for us to be able to take stock of where we are, how the financial system is working, how we can best be able to gain access to revenue that should be used in that particular year itself.

Madam Speaker, just to show you the trend of the revenue that is collected in the month of December, and indeed most of it, as we highlighted the other day, is collected in the last few days or even in the last day of last year, we had something like about \$68 million or \$69 million.

Madam Speaker, in 2011, in the month of December, \$179.2 million was collected. In 2012, \$210.5 million; in 2013 - \$221.2 million; in 2014 - \$218.4 million; and in 2015 - \$274 million, a huge jump of about \$60 million.

Now, Madam Speaker, these monies that FRCA collects is very critical for us to be able to use in that financial year, because if you are able to access that revenue that is generated in that year, you are able to then use it so you have to borrow less. That is the whole idea of cash flow management. There is no point, being able to project and say, "we will be collecting x amount of dollars in the year", when you do not actually get to use it because when you will get that money, it is too late to use it in that particular year. That is one of the key reasons, Madam Speaker.

The other issue, of course, Madam Speaker, is that, we talked about Climate Change. In fact, when we attended the V20 (Vulnerable 20) Meeting, Fiji has now being made part of the V20, the chairmanship is held by Philippines and it is very interesting that the two issues that they had highlighted and we actually told them that we have already done it and they thought that it was quite good. One of them, of course, was that, we have said that we have moved Climate Change and mainstreamed it by bringing it into national planning in the Finance Division, because Madam Speaker, it is very critical to ensure that climate change gets mainstreamed. So, through national planning we are able to ensure that it taps into all the respective Ministries and we have a national approach to Climate Change. Climate Change is not only about, Madam Speaker, highlighting the detrimental effects of climate change, but to be able to ensure that we are able not to just mitigate, but to be able to adapt to the changing environment brought upon us by Climate Change itself. By doing so, Madam Speaker, you have lot more synergy and you are able to attract also funding. So, that was the first point that they raised and we said that we have already done it.

The other thing that they also talked about was, how we need to be able to adapt policies. Simple things we have highlighted in Fiji, generally for example, we are dependent on various seed varieties being brought in from countries that climatic conditions are not suitable for us. Many seeds of strands of tomatoes that we grow for example, Madam Speaker, in Fiji is brought from New Zealand, but in fact, countries like India are most suitable for us because the climatic conditions are suitable or may be other South American countries. Now, we need to be able to adapt to that, to be able to, for example, grow these fruits and vegetables practically almost all year around. The same thing with mangoes, so we can increase, for example, our exports to those countries. You go to countries like Australia and New Zealand, you will find that mangoes have come from Ecuador or other South American countries, when Fiji is a producer of mango, yet we are not able to export raw mangoes to those countries.

(Inaudible Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED- KHAIYUM- So, these are the kind of things, Madam Speaker, it is adaptation, it is a national policy approach. I know some of the Members or the back three are unnecessarily attuned to this kind of ideas.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- But the point is, Madam Speaker, that in the same way, this is an adaptation measure that we need to take.

We talked about how we were thinking about changing our financial year. Madam Speaker, by making policy statements that may require legal changes subsequently, it is not usurping the role of Parliament, Madam Speaker. Many countries do that, you need to go to Australia and New Zealand, you will have Ministers standing up and saying, "This is our policy we want to do that."

So, that is a policy initiative that they are taking, if there needs to be any subsequent legal amendments, that is brought to Parliament, it is not usurping the role of Parliament, Madam Speaker.

Again, Madam Speaker, the point that we want to make, that has also been raised in the discussions that we had earlier on, is that this has nothing to do with *Tropical Cyclone Winston*. This change in the fiscal year is completely different to the *Tropical Cyclone Winston* event that has taken place. As we had highlighted and publically said, Madam Speaker, that we started discussing this idea of changing our financial year, Madam Speaker, even before *Tropical Cyclone Winston* came. In fact, we started talking about it in December.

(Hon. Member interjected)

Madam Speaker, one of the reasons why we had referred to the IMF and the World Bank, we are not depending on them telling us what to do, we actually went to them and said, "These are some of the ideas, let us check the technical aspects of it." Of course, as has been acknowledged, they have also advised by other countries. Then we talked about, for example, if your financial year has changed, do you, for example, have a protracted financial year? Do you, for example, take this to go all the way to July or do you shorten this year and start from 1<sup>st</sup> August? These are the kind of discussions we had.

We also looked at other countries, and there is a list of countries, there are a number of countries, of course, that have their financial year in the calendar year, but equally, Madam Speaker, there a huge percentage, I think about 35 or 40 percent of the countries (I do not have the exact figures here in front of me) that actually have their financial year, for example, from April to March. I mean these include, as we have said, many of the former British Colonies, including the larger economies like, India, you had New Zealand previously, and of course, you had countries like Singapore and South Africa. Now, New Zealand has moved across now to the 1st of July. You have then countries like some of our major trading partners, like the United States America, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of Interjections)

Madam Speaker, I am being disrupted, can I be allowed to speak, please?

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Can you listen, you might learn something?

HON. SPEAKER.- Please constant frivolous interjections are really not in order in Parliament. So, please, be respectful. We want to hear the Honourable Minister out and the nation wants to hear the Honourable Minister. Honourable Members, I beg your indulgence.

Honourable Minister, you may continue.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, just to highlight some of the countries that have different financial years, just more closer to home, for example, Nauru, Norfolk Islands and Tonga have their financial year from July to June. American Samoa, Marshall Islands, Micronesia and, of course, as expected USA have their financial year from October to September. Then, of course, Samoa has an unusual financial year which is from 1st June to 31st May. United Kingdom has their financial year from 6th April to 5th April, and of course there are various other countries that have different dates.

The other countries in the Pacific, for example, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu has a calendar year, so does Solomon Islands but Tokelau has March to April, Cook Islands has April to March, Niue has April to March, Japan has April to March, Australia, one of major trading partners has July to June, Madam Speaker. So, these are some of the key countries that we do love to trade with, they have different financial years, and of course, it does not mean that they have not been able to

experiment or relook at different calendar years or fiscal years for themselves to be able to ensure that their practices are actually the same, and actually gives a lot of efficiency to the economy.

Madam Speaker, I am also happy to announce that Standard & Poor has just released our new rating. Our new rating has gone from B to B+, Madam Speaker, which is a wonderful achievement for Fiji to go from a rating of B to B+ by Standard and Poor, this has just been released. I mean, he is shaking his head, please can you tell me when was the last time? It is a big deal.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- It is not a big deal.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is a big deal. May be, you do not get your bonds right, how can you say it is not a big deal?

Madam Speaker, the point is this, the change to a non- calendar year must always be motivated by economic reasons in improving the overall productivity and implementation of policies and initiatives. Madam Speaker, the reality is this, this is what Government has assessed, these are the new dates that we are bringing about and, we urge everyone to support it. If the Opposition is concerned about finances, it does not make a difference to them if they are worried, as the Hon. Salote Radrodro talks about “give us this plan”, “we want to know much money was spent”, we can still do all of that. It does not mean you cannot do that. I hope they understand that.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- He does not understand.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We are changing the financial year of ours from January to December, from now it will be from 1st of August to the 31st<sup>t</sup> of July. It is still one year, we still go through the budget process, we are still able to scrutinise, we still have the Heads, we still have the subcommittee, and all of those things are in place, Madam Speaker.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Why change?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM- They are asking, why change? Again, obviously, it seems like they do not comprehend but, Madam Speaker, the reality is...

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON.SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, you will have a chance to also add to debate after this.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So, Madam Speaker, I think with those remarks, I will close off, I am sure many other Members want to speak on the Bill as well. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON.SPEAKER.- Thank you, so the motion is now open for debate, Hon. Prof. Biman Prasad.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B. C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, Governments everywhere change policies, they change the way they do things and there are different motivations for them to do so. This change, Madam Speaker, as I have said on Monday is unacceptable for two good reasons. One, I think, is the way in which this change is being introduced. I mean, we all agree that change is inevitable, change must happen, but change must happen in an appropriate manner. Change must be done, at least, in a democratic process, in a way that a large number of people have input. What we were

saying is that, if the Government wants to change this, let us not change this through Standing Order 51. This should have been referred to a Standing Committee where that Committee would have had the opportunity, Madam Speaker, to hear not only from the public at large but also from the civil servants.

I noticed that the Honourable Attorney-General did not talk about the reason that he gave on the first day on how civil servants would be on leave around December and would not be ready to implement the Budget the following year. I have not heard one convincing reason as to why this has to be changed. The only reason and the only motivation, I think there is a political motivation here, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Let me say this, Madam Speaker, before I come back to the logic of what the Honourable Minister of Finance was saying in terms of the number of reasons he gave. I think there is a political motivation because when you change the financial year from 1st January to 31st December to 1st August to 31st July, and the next general election is in 2018, Madam Speaker, and it will probably be held after the Budget under the new calendar in June. So, Government will have an opportunity to put out a budget and ...

(Chorus of Interjections)

... say; "This is the Budget for the next person." That could be one political motivation.

Let me come back to the reasons that the Honourable Minister of Finance was saying. The first one is dealing with climate change adaptation measures and dealing with natural disasters.

In fact, the financial year that we have now is actually more suitable for Fiji because natural disaster - tropical cyclones, floods, the rainy season is usually from October or more intensely from November right up to April.

Let us say, Madam Speaker, that we have a budget that is passed in November, starts from 1st January, and if we had natural disasters within that period, it would be better for the Government because you can adjust the budget in January, February or March. You would have the same thing. Madam Speaker, let us say that we had a cyclone in April and you are heading towards the end of the financial year in July. So, I really do not see the logic behind the idea that changing the financial year will address some of the adaptation measures.

The other logic that I do not understand, and may be the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Finance can explain that in his response, if we change the financial year from 1st January to 31st December, or from 1st August to 31st July, and the end of the financial year is 31st July, the companies (I am sure many of them would change their financial year as well) would make their tax returns. In any case, the bulk of the tax revenue that the Honourable Minister was pointing out that we received now on 31st December, we could be receiving on 31st July. So, we would have the same problem.

Madam Speaker, when Government change policies, they always have to be mindful that it is not in their hands to determine the incentives that, that change is going to create for the public and for those economic entities because the incentive could be very, very different. People and businesses behave very differently to any kind of Government policy whether it is a tax policy or whether it is a change in the financial year, the final impact could be very, very different. I do not understand that we are going to solve any problem with changing the financial year.

The final point that I want to make, Madam Speaker, and as I have said before, this is not a new idea. I was talking to a senior civil servant on the day this Bill was presented to Parliament and this idea has been considered in the past. It was considered to be a futile exercise because it was not going to make any impact on the material issues of economic growth, managing finances, managing revenue, implementing tax policies, neither did it have any logic to suggest that it might help some kind of a climate change adaptation. I do not see any logic in that.

Madam Speaker, two reasons in summary why we cannot support this Bill. First, as I have said earlier, we should have taken this to a Standing Committee and we should not have rushed this through Standing Order 51. That would have given time, not only to the Civil Servants but also the broader community to actually digest, think and understand the reasons and the plans behind this change. It would also allow them to think through this change in a reasonable period of time.

The second reason and as I have said, it does not make any sense in terms of the reasons that have been provided, and I do not think it is going to make any material difference to the overall issues of managing Government finances, managing the economy and putting out the right policies for economic growth and development.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I rise to give my short contribution on the Bill before the House. My contribution will somewhat relate to a lot of questions. The first question that I would like to ask is; are these changes really necessary?

I have been going through the Financial Management Bill, there are not many changes in there. I was hoping to see that there will be some changes in the accounting system, but it is not. We know that the Government continues to use the IPSAS accounting system which is the International Public Sector Accounting System. We also note that the explanations that were given by Government, firstly says that the changes is needed to assist in the devastation of *TC Winston*. Now, we just recently heard from the Honourable Minister who said that these changes are not related to the *TC Winston*. So, what is this changes about?

If there are not many changes, why can you not facilitate with a mini budget on the use of the funding for *TC Winston*? The bottom line Madam Speaker, it is the same pocket of taxpayers that have been financing the Government and will continue to do so even with these changes, whether it is from business taxes, people in employment taxes or whether it is from everyday citizens in the form of VAT. These are the same people who will continue to fund the Budget Estimates of Government. I do not know the explanation that has been given by the Government but it is not convincing enough. If this is the change to reflect the guidance of institutions like IMF and World Bank, I would be very concerned because the policies have not always been successful.

We have countries like Bolivia, and even recently Greece have denounced any further involvements with these institutions. Why? Because of the unfavourable policies they have, recurring debts, Madam Speaker, restructuring of Government departments and Government entities are some of the drawbacks of these institutions. So what is coming next? Reduction of budgets. We are already carrying forward budget to the following year for implementation, so budgets are no longer real. Is debt repayment to these institutions now our priority? What does these changes lead to – devaluation of the dollar or further lower the standard of living of our people?

These are issues we are now asking. Our involvement with IMF and the recent borrowings from the World Bank, I assume, is USD\$100 million dollars or FJD\$100 million. Is that the real reason for these changes? The changes in our financial year need to be able to restructure debts, are

we still an independent state? Is our sovereignty becoming questionable or have we become puppets of foreign institutions and policies?

Let me bring it home, Madam Speaker, behind all the promises of a more transparent efficient Government, we have the astounding high levels of recurring debts that are just never ending, and worse some of our baby policies of restructuring of public enterprises which include the civil servants, the Government corporate entities like Fiji Electricity Authority, Water Authority of Fiji, Ports Authority and the Airports Fiji Limited. Out of these restructures, let us take for example, FRA. Previously PWD had a budget of around \$100 million a year. Now, it has bloated up to \$600 million. Last year and the year before, has FRA made much difference to our roads?

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO. - There has been some developments and improvements but not enough when compared to the exorbitant inflated budget FRA enjoys annually.

I was in Tailevu last week in Deep Water, recently following the cyclone, and was told they missed Public Works Department because they could call them, and they would come to gravel their roads whenever it badly needed it. Now, no more. We can hardly see Fulton Hogan, for example, they only come when they have the money, is exactly what this layman from Tailevu told me. So where does the FRA use its money? I will tell you where. Most of it, the chunk is swallowed up by the consultancy fees, the executives that never make it into our actual roads, as there is a seat in our offshore offices overseas and sign out reports that they get paid top dollars for. We have in the meantime lost all our engineers and experts to other fortunate countries in the region and abroad with a minimal number of professionals setting up their own.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- I am coming there.

What a waste of human resources and Government's investment in training! Our solution lies not in adhering to these structural adjustments, but finding real solutions domestically, otherwise we can have another RAMSI situation here on our hands. The so-called experts can be here guarding us when we slowly disintegrate from within. We have our own similar concerns that are equally real test here at home, and the threads that hold our system together are very flimsy.

My strong recommendation is that, we find real solutions to our home-brewed problems, and tackle them without hesitation or self-interests. Let us not build a house as based on just the whims of a few individuals who, should they be gone one day, Fiji would erupt into lawlessness and further distrust like we have never known before. The question, Madam Speaker, are these changes really necessary or are they simply going about in the wrong way and not answering our real problems? What are our real problems?

Let me spell it out. Security for both our races, real solutions to the expired leases, address the high squatter problems, re-look at the take home pays of our Civil Servants, et cetera. Madam Speaker, I say it again, that the devil is in the detail and time will only tell, time will only bear the true testimony.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.— Madam Speaker, two comments were made earlier, one was, do we need change? Yes, definitely we need change, that is why we are bringing in these changes. The second one was, in order to understand business, Madam Speaker, we need to be a business man, we cannot be an economist to understand business. We need to be practical about that. I personally believe, Madam Speaker, that this is a very important Bill, especially for the business community.

Madam Speaker, as we know the economy revolves around the national budget. Business plans are made depending on what is presented in our national budget. Majority of businesses in Fiji have their financial year starting on 1st July and ending on 30th June. What has been happening, Madam Speaker, in the past, once a business plan is made and placed in July and August, everything changes once the budget is announced in the month of November or December.

Madam Speaker, we all know that FRCA is now focusing a lot on compliance and self-assessment, and business communities through incentives placed by Government such as decrease in corporate tax. In previous years, we were aware that for a business, the most busiest time of the year is from November to January. This is the time of the year, Madam Speaker, that businesses should be given the freedom to trade and not dealing with taxation issues and its accuracy. We should not put the burden on businesses to be dealing with the effect of the budget. For example, Madam Speaker, if there is a decrease in tariff, it comes into effect at 12.00 a.m. on the day the budget is announced. The VAT reduction comes into effect on 1st January.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Who wrote that for you?

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Speaker, during this busy month, businesses should be allowed to trade freely and not be busy implementing the effect of the budget. A business owner would not want their staff to be busy changing their prices and implementing policies during the month of December and January. They would like them to be busy with selling their products.

The amendments, Madam Speaker, will allow businesses to adhere to the changes from August to September which is not a busy month as compared to December and January. If the budget is announced in the month of June, Madam Speaker, it will allow everyone to plan for a year and not just for six months. As stated earlier, Madam Speaker, how timely can it be for a business in Fiji, if the budget is announced in June, financial year ends in June, business plans are made in line with the National Budget in July and implemented in August and September?

For those reasons, Madam Speaker, I fully support the Bill.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Dr. Mahendra Reddy.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, while listening to Honourable Radrodro, I was thinking whether we are talking about this Bill or about RAMSI, Fiji Roads Authority, et cetera. However, let me get to the fundamentals of this Bill.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Bill and the arguments presented by the Honourable Minister of Finance. This Bill is about aligning to international best practices. Madam Speaker, this Bill will allow the Government to mitigate its financial risks well. On this the Honourable Minister of Finance explained pretty well about ensuring that given that we have got a cash based accounting system which Honourable Radrodro understands very well, that whatever money that hit our book, only will be captured in that year and when we draw up a budget based on a projected revenue base, that revenue does not hit our book, then the forecasted deficit will be out of line because we have a cash based system.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, making this change will also enhance comparability and benchmarking against all major trading partners, Madam Speaker, as alluded to by the Minister of Finance. Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Finance like New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, we buy all our petroleum products from Singapore. So, these countries are our major trading partners and this will allow our financial year with them and therefore, enhance the relevance of comparisons and benchmarking.

Thirdly, this change in financial year would also further complement the Civil Service Reform that we are undertaking as in the past, our civil servants have to forego the festivities and precious time with their family during Christmas time, Boxing Day, New Year, et cetera, to concentrate on closing of accounts, Madam Speaker. Generally, productivity of workers during this time is not that high and they could compromise on the quality of output in terms of closing the accounts, Madam Speaker. So, a change in financial year will complement efficiency that we are wanting to achieve with our Civil Service Reform Programme and minimise the probability of errors. This can further offer rewards such as more attention, consistent results, quicker turn around on the staff work, et cetera, and after all, no urgency as neither unlimited capacity, note the ability to rampart down quickly, especially when we are able to provide quality work in view of the timeframe, Madam Speaker.

Fourthly, it also allows us to better access to business and trading partners. We believe in more freedom, access and opportunity given to business and consumers during peak business periods from November to January. Madam Speaker, this is the peak business period. The Government stance to change the financial year is a statement that we wish to strengthen our ties rather than burden our business partners. We want to acknowledge, appreciate and understand their business model. That is noted that if the financial year of the government and major business partners all use the same fiscal year, approximately scrutinise, some June, July, et cetera, all parties are busy preparing budgets, year-end reports and tax document at the same time, Madam Speaker. So, the time when you might be swamped and the need to access financial data for planning purposes, the private sector might be busy with accounting responsibilities. It may result in delays in getting back to us, so operating on a fiscal year other than December year can help avoid working with partners who are very busy at the same time.

Fifthly, it also allow us to improve relevance and reliability of financing accounting information for budgeting and forecasting purposes, Madam Speaker. Relevance and reliability are two of the four qualitative characteristics of financial accounting information. I am sure, Honourable Radrodro understands what variability means because he comes from an accounting background, which he wants to totally acknowledge.

The other thing is understandability and comparability. Our geographical varies and accessibility in remote and maritime zones limits financial decision makers to get timely and relevant data. So, the change will ensure that more relevant information is used to budgeting and other financial reporting purposes. For instance, new enrolments in our universities and schools will provide us a better measure for decision making and planning while preparing the budget and this data is not available if you are preparing the budget for January because we do not know the full complete data. If you ask in November when we are preparing the budget for universities to give us a normal data, we will be using previous year's data, Madam Speaker. It does not paint a good picture in terms of providing them with the right grant based on per capita student enrolment - correct grant based on per capita student enrolment because we do not have students' enrolment, as we will be using last year's student enrolment.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- They do not understand.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, they do not understand and they do not want to understand anything good from us, Madam Speaker, that is the problem with them.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- When you had your time, you were talking about FRA, RAMSI, let me talk about this Bill.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, this change will allow increase compliance amongst businesses to allow budgetary changes in off peak period, Madam Speaker, they do not understand that.

Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I give the floor to the Honourable Salote Radrodro and you only have four minutes left.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Four minutes, Madam Speaker, we are all asking and I am sure all those watching television are also asking, why the change?

(Chorus of Interjections)

May I read the reasons alluded to by the Honourable Minister for Finance when he gave his interview. The holiday mode, unplanned spending on natural disasters and late taxes affecting Governments bottom line have been pinned as reasons for change in Government's financial year. That does not carry any weight. That is very shallow reasoning given, and as we have heard from the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, there may be other reasons that is politically motivated, but what we must remember, Madam Speaker, these are the people's money. These are our taxpayers' money and it must be taken to the Committee, so that the people are brought in, they can give their views on how their money is going to be used. Bringing it under Standing Order 51 suggests that there are other reasons or motives that is not coming clear now until the time comes and he will tell us.

Also the Honourable Minister for Finance said in that interview, that consultations had been done with the World Bank, but why the World Bank? With these kind of change coming in, Madam Speaker, we are asking, is the Government in some kind of financial problem, financial obligation that they are not in a position to fulfil it? That is why the calendar year is being moved forward, so that they lock themselves there and find the money to free them from the financial problem that they are facing? These are the kind of questions we are asking and these are the kind of things that the Minister for Finance is not telling us. You are telling us something else which does not carry weight, the reasoning are so shallow. This is from your interview, and World Bank, why World Bank? World Financial Institutions like World Bank have very heavy conditions when it comes to loans.

From 2015, we have been hearing that the Civil Service Reform will be funded by the World Bank and again in 2016, we hear the Civil Service Reform will be funded by World Bank. So, no Civil Service Reform has started which means World Bank has not agreed to what you have come and announced in the budget and now you are going back to World Bank, what for?

Also, Madam Speaker, the reason that is stated there is because of the taxes and why FRCA cannot change its taxing payment mode? Why do we have to get the Government to change because you will have to change all the financial management information system that it is in Government to be able to key in to this new Act that you are bringing along?

Madam Speaker, on that note, I do not support the passage of this Bill. It must go to the Standing Committee, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, towards the end, it became a real entertainment by the comments from the other side. Madam Speaker, I think we have elucidated enough about the merits of why we need to change and let me clear some of the misunderstandings and apprehensions that the other side has.

The World Bank and the IMF do not just simply lend money, they also provide a lot of technical assistance. They have a lot of indepth knowledge about other economies approach, it is not just simply for money. So, they need to get that right, we do not go to them for money to change the financial year, it has nothing to do with that.

Secondly, I am glad the Honourable Member is aware of television, people behind the television watching her. We are not here to entertain people at home, we are here to discuss fundamental issues, that is what we are here to do, not about how we dress up or how we perform over here.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, who I understand was also a member of the FRCA Board at one stage, will also quite clearly tell you, what is being proposed here. We are not changing the tax calendar year for FRCA. It is a vast world of difference between the tax calendar year for FRCA and the fiscal year for Government. They are two separate things.

Again, I think there is a lot of confusion not necessarily by him but others sitting behind him or on his side. The fact is, Madam Speaker, he needs to tell them that and Honourable Radrodro is making these comments about how FRCA needs to change modality, et cetera, of payments. Itt is ludicrous to say that! It is quite superfluous!

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Radrodro, who we know has acted as a Financial Controller in some organisations where he is very clearly aware of accountability and transparency, went on asking all these questions. All of the statements that they have made, apart from Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, who has probably made some substantive remarks, are simply conjectures. They are pulling stuff out of the air. There is no proper intellectual input into it.

Hon. Aseri Radrodro talked about RAMSI, we do not have Multinational Force. He has talked about the country going to collapse, about the different racial growth being in harmony, we have got nothing to do with that. It is to do with the fact that we are changing the fiscal year for the Fijian Government finances, a lot more suitable for our intents and purposes as a country.

Madam Speaker, there is absolutely nothing to hide about the finances. They will get the Fiscal Year 2016 figures at the end of 31stJuly. They will get the new Fiscal Year, one year Budget Appropriation on 22nd June as we have proposed, it will be tabled in Parliament. They will get to similarly scrutinise all the figures, all the proposals as they have done previously, that does not change. It is not hiding public money, it is about actually making it more accountable, so in fact, we do not have to go out and borrow more money. That is what it is about.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is about ensuring that we do not....

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- See, they do not understand! They do not understand, they are simply just saying that! They do not simply understand that if I give you \$1,000 and say to you, 'here is \$1,000, I want you to spend it by midnight tonight, but none of the shops are opened', what good is that \$1,000 to you? That is simply the point we are making. Such a basic common sense approach is required for this, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I agree with the Honourable Radrodro about the Financial Management Act. We are currently reviewing the Financial Management Act, he is absolutely right. It needs to be reviewed. Of course, we need to amend it to suit the Financial Link and Interchange. That is why it is simply being amended now, to suit the financial year, but you are absolutely right. We need to review the entire Financial Management Act which we are doing, and we will present it as a Bill to this House, and it will go to the Committee. You can be rest-assured of that, but we need to change this to suit our financial year.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is very, very simple.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We will not even do it under Standing Order 51!

Madam Speaker, the other thing is that, I understand as the Honourable Prime Minister told me, Honourable Professor Prasad, said that we are only doing this because of political gain. What political gain? The Elections, Madam Speaker, as provided for under the Constitution must be held no earlier than three and a half years, and no later than four years. So, essentially, let me give you the exact date, the Writ can be issued from 6th April, 2018 to 13th October, 2018. The last date for the Elections can be 27th of November.

Madam Speaker, the point is, invariably Elections are never held in the cyclone season, so it will not be held in November, that is the cyclone season. Invariably, Elections are held during school holidays. That is a huge leap for you. So, if the school holidays are in May and June, when do you think the Budget will be issued? The Budget will be issued in the preceding year.

(Chorus of Interjections)

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Oh my God! Oh my God! The light has shone, let it shine on that side, it is already shown on this side!

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, this is how ridiculous the debate has escalated to, in spite of the 'hum' words.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, as I keep on saying to the Honourable Prime Minister, 'thank God, this side of the House is on this side'. Thank God, this side of the House is on this side, and those people are there.

(Laughter)

Last, but not least, Madam Speaker, I think the Honourable Radrodro said that the standard of living of our people has decreased. I will make a revealing statement to you tomorrow, Honourable Radrodro, in my Ministerial Statement about the gap between the rich and the poor in Fiji, and how it has substantially decreased to what it used to be.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, that is a real test for Government, and we will show that to you.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We will show that to you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, with those remarks, I would like to recommend that Parliament unanimously support the amendment to this Bill, and that the Financial Management (Amendment) Bill be passed by Parliament.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote. The question is, pursuant to the resolution of Parliament on 25th April, 2016, that the Financial Management (Amendment) Bill, 2016 be debated, voted upon and passed.

Does any Honourable Member oppose the Motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- Chorus of "Yes" and "Noes".

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

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	30
Noes	:	13
Not Voted	:	7

The motion is therefore agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Bill reported without amendments, read a third time and passed. (Act No. ....of 2016)

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to amend the Financial Management (Amendment) Act 2004, Bill No. 25 of 2016, enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will move on to the next Agenda item. I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to move his motion.

### **FAIR REPORTING OF CREDIT BILL 2016**

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, as highlighted in pursuant to Standing Order 51 on Monday, I move:

That the Bill, namely the Fair Reporting of Credit 2016 (Bill No. 27/2016), be now debated and voted upon by Parliament, and with the one hour debate, and the right of reply being given to me as a Member moving this motion.

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

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, as highlighted in the introduction of this Bill on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> April, Madam Speaker, this Bill is critically important to ensure that ordinary Fijians are given a chance to have access to credit, which they do require and many of them, for very critical utilities and critical needs and wants that they have on a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, just to reiterate the rationale behind the Fair Reporting of Credit Bill. At the moment, we have one company to our knowledge that is called, 'Data Bureau' that is owned by seven shareholders, different companies that actually took up the business of collating individual people's credit information. That business not only involves the collation of VAT information on individuals, it also disseminates those information to anyone else who would want to pay for that service, and get that credit information. That is the first reason, Madam Speaker.

Now, Madam Speaker, in many countries in the world, such an intrusive type of business would be regulated in the same way that banks in Fiji are regulated. For example, in the bank, I simply cannot turn up and get Honourable Professor Prasad's bank details, I cannot. The Banking Act specifically prohibits a bank from giving his personal information to me. If I want to get his information, I need to get a Court Order or if there is any other enforcement of the law that forces the bank to do that, they will give that information. However, in this instance, Madam Speaker, you have a private company that holds the information of individual citizens of this country and they can give that information to anyone who pays a fee, without any reason.

The second reason, Madam Speaker, which is quite offensive of this entity is that, this Company, when it collects the information, at the same time it also collects information from people who may belong to what they call 'members'. You pay a monthly fee and you can say; "I will provide you with information". As I have highlighted on Monday, we have many instances of ordinary citizens who may, for example, have taken out a loan, even if it is a \$1,000 loan. Assuming that they have paid \$900 of it or \$990 of that \$1,000, if they owe a \$10 amount and there may be a dispute about that, the creditor (in other words the person who you owe the money to), even though you may have a dispute with, without actually even telling you, can go and report your name to the Data Bureau and say; "Mr. X owes me \$10." So, the next time when Mr. X goes to Courts to do a lay-by, for example, Courts will say; "We have checked with Data Bureau, and you are not a person who always pays your debt. I am afraid we cannot give you the lay-by, we cannot give you this item on

credit”, and you will be actually flabbergasted. We have heard so many people saying; “I did not know this, I thought this \$10 was in dispute”.

Madam Speaker, what this tells us is that, there is absolutely no regulation regarding what amount of money that you should owe to a company before it can be put in what they call a Credit Reporting Agency in this Bill or what we call at the moment, Data Bureau. There is absolutely no regulation. We have had instances, for example, people who have disputes with utility companies, whether it is FEA, Water Authority of Fiji, about leakages, where there is a dispute of \$500. Someone may raise the bill, if you dispute it, you do not pay, they simply just go and report you. So, we have instances where people who may be wanting to go and do a lay-by with Courts and because some other debtor has reported them for the amount of \$10, \$20, they are forced to go and pay that money unwillingly because they want this credit. It is very unfair to the individual citizen of this country. Every Fijian, Madam Speaker, has a right to get credit if they are able to pay their debt, and should be assessed but that information against him or her should not be held in such a manner without regulation.

It is a very simple principle, Madam Speaker. Our Constitution also guarantees the right to privacy. How do we know that this Company is not giving out your information to third parties for a fee? Where is your right to privacy?

The other issue, Madam Speaker, as I have highlighted, if the credit reporting agency makes a mistake and puts someone’s name down as a person owing that debt when it is owed by someone else, what is your right of recourse? Can you go up to them and say; “Look I am not Ram Prasad, take it off, that is the other guy”. What mechanisms are there? What redress do you have? There is none. There is no regulation, absolutely none! Mistaken identity, identity theft, and what if someone takes your card, goes and borrows something and does not pay, then I come along wanting to borrow, they will say; “Hey, you owe this money” and you say; “I did not do it. Someone may have stolen my licence, my driving licence or whatever the case may be.”

These are the things, Madam Speaker, we are saying that need to be regulated. There must be a licensing regime as the Reserve Bank of Fiji licenses banks. It must licence a credit reporting agency, that is what we are saying. This Company that exists at the moment, Data Bureau Limited, has to do two things; it can continue but all the data it has must be given to the Reserve Bank of Fiji. It must be quarantined. We must start off on a clean slate. We need to have a new beginning for this Credit Reporting Regime. Start off on a clean slate, we need to rebuild that data that they are going to have of defaulting debtors, but it must be built upon using the new rules and regulations. Everyone must be given a break. There are so many people who have been very unfairly treated, not through their own fault but because of the unregulated industry in this respect. That is the first thing they need to do.

The second thing is, they can immediately start their business, they simply apply for a licence from the RBF. Based on the regulation and on the principle of this law, they get a licence and can be off and running with their business. Madam Speaker, this is doing the restart button as far as credit reporting agencies are concerned. If someone new wants to come in, there is absolutely no restrictions. We can have many credit reporting agencies coming to Fiji, but please comply with the standards that will be set by the Reserve Bank of Fiji and they are set under this Bill and set under the regulations.

Those are some of the introductory remarks I would like to make, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Bill is now open for debate. The Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, this Bill has come to this House under Standing Order 51, and for all the reasons that the Honourable Minister has said, justifies the need for public consultations, the need for a very wide discussion, and especially so, because it seems that the Bill is attacking a single company – Data Bureau.

They have not been consulted, the public has not been consulted. There is a need for this to happen and I hold here a letter from one of the Directors of this Company, Mr. Garry K, raising exactly that. He said; “On the lack of consultation, we refer to the above Bill which our company has become aware of only today.” They never knew this was coming today. “We noted on our announcement last year, true, but since then, there has not been any consultations at all either with our company or Fiji’s Finance Industry on this matter”, nothing! Then he goes on to say, and this letter was written to the Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- When?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You should know.

(Laughter)

He goes on to say; “We do not object to it being regulated, but we do take strong objection to the manner in which this regulation is occurring without any consultation. Also, some provisions of the proposed Act which we believe will make it impossible for us or anyone else to operate a credit bureau in Fiji in the future. There is a need for consultation.” So, why did you not refer this to a Standing Committee for deliberate discussion with the public?

Then, he goes on to say that most of the things that we have heard yesterday were misinformation and misrepresentation by the Honourable Minister. He said, “Before commenting on the proposed Act itself, we would like to provide a brief background to the establishment of the Fiji Credit Bureau and also refer to the background section of the Bill, and also the *Fiji Sun* article today quoting your statement in Parliament. I can only assume that you have been completely misinformed by someone, and those misinformation have found their way here to this House.”

He goes on; “The Bureau was established some 15 years ago, using the expertise and software system of Baycorp Advantage now known as Dealer.” They spent more than a year establishing rules of conduct, proof of compliance and in doing this, they worked closely with the Reserve Bank of Fiji. So, what was the worry there? They also sought funds from local investors, who all knew that it would be many years before a company would be profitable here in Fiji. So, these were pure investors, who invest money in Fiji and they have been disadvantaged, they have been attacked by this Bill.

He goes on to say; “All the Bureau’s documentation consent procedures were signed off by legal advisors of the Reserve Bank”, so the RBF was involved with this Company from the very first place. This was a requirement for all banks before they joined as members, and one such bank was the Colonial Fiji Life Limited and there was quite a bit of discussions regarding membership rules with none other than yourself, acting as Legal Counsel. So, the Honourable Minister was there, and had given advice to this Company, but now he is here attacking it.

There were changes made to the membership agreement arising from them and indeed, became a foundation member. We have to assume that you were satisfied then that the Bureau was acting in legal and transparent manner, so why the change now? Why the change now? Why did you deny them that primary right of being heard? You should have consulted them.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- You do not read someone else's letter.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Therefore, the periodic but regular criticism of the Consumer Council because all that they have done is that go to the Consumer Council and heard only one side of the story, and that side of the story has found its way here where they are charging that there is malpractice, violation of consumer rights and all those which are totally wrong. Here he goes on to say; "There are examples of many wrong and malpractices. The Bureau has always had a compliance procedure over the last 15 years."

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Members of the Bureau in relation to those allegations of malpractices that we heard here and yesterday, this is what he said, "They are examples of many wrongdoings and malpractices." How can that be? The Bureau has always had a complaints procedure and over the last 15 years, the number raised by the Council has been 14 only. All complaints have been resolved, a little as one complaint a year. So where is the problem?

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Where is that letter addressed to?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Where is the problem?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I have it here. It is addressed to the Honourable Minister.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We need to have it authenticated. Honourable Minister, are you aware of this letter?

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- I have not received it.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I got them this morning. When did you get it?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I do not know. I am not obliged to anyone.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You listen to it and you can answer it. You will have your time.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- I will not allow further discussions on the letter because it is not authenticated.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The point is this, the Honourable Minister has come to this House using the privilege of this House to make accusations against this poor company. One accusation is malpractice, totally wrong! Another....

HON. SPEAKER.- Please do not read anymore from the letter.

HON. N. NAWAILUKA.- Well it is here.

HON. SPEAKER.- I am not allowing you to read anymore from the letter.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Could I ask why, Madam Speaker? Could I have the reason why is that?

HON. SPEAKER.- The letter has to be authenticated. You are saying that the letter is addressed to the Honourable Minister and the Honourable Minister is not aware of that letter.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. ROKO T.T.S DRAUNIDALO.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is copied to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I am entitled to read this.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. ROKO T.T.S DRAUNIDALO.- I would like to raise a Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 18, your powers are to protect the privileges of the Honourable Members not to obstruct it.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No obstruction.

HON. SPEAKER.- I am not obstructing.

HON. ROKO T.T.S DRAUNIDALO.- You are obstructing his...

HON. SPEAKER.- Under my powers I need to ensure that what is presented in Parliament is a fact and is authenticated.

HON. ROKO T.T.S DRAUNIDALO.- I request, Madam Speaker, that ....

HON. SPEAKER.- At the moment that letter ....

HON. ROKO T.T.S DRAUNIDALO.- I ask for suspension so that you can have a copy of the letter before we continue, can time be stopped, Madam Speaker?

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- No, we cannot stop. I am giving the right to the Honourable Nawaikula to speak on that motion but not to quote from the letter.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, I can tell you this. All of the allegations that the Honourable Minister made here were totally wrong. They amounted to misrepresentation. First allegation is that ....

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- He said it here and I quoted him yesterday. The Honourable Minister said; "Anyone can go up to the Data Bureau and get information from someone else about anyone, even the third-parties"; that is wrong.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That does not apply, they will not do that unless they have a consent of the other side, but the point of all these, Madam Speaker, is that if this law had followed the right process where it was referred to a Standing Committee, it will allow the public to give their input; that is the whole point here. That was never done, we came here, we willingly went into Election knowing that there will be a democracy, it will guarantee us accountability, transparency and inclusiveness. Where is that inclusiveness when you are putting it in Bills like this under Standing Order 50 or Standing Order 51 or like we did yesterday, even worse Standing Order 6? It makes a monkey business of what we do here.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Exactly, because you do not do that willy-nilly. . Standing Order 6 is only used when necessary, not as a matter of course.

For those reasons, I oppose this Bill.

Madam Speaker, may I seek your leave to table this?

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Faiyaz Koya.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I rise in support of the Bill before the House. Madam Speaker, we heard this afternoon about one side of the story being told. Let me tell you the consumers' side of the story.

Madam Speaker, this Bill has been crafted to protect the interests of consumers and a large number of whom have faced difficulties in accessing loans from financial institutions because of unjust credit reporting practices.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Tell them, tell them!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, the current credit reporting agency in place has been created by a group of credit providers as mentioned by the Honourable Attorney-General.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Please listen, please do not interrupt. We heard you, now you hear me.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- You are not entitled to interject aimlessly.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is my right.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- The current credit reporting agency in place has been created by a group of credit providers, Madam Speaker. There are no guiding principles and there is lack of accountability. Most importantly, there is a lack of privacy for the individuals.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, it has been noted that many a times, the information is incorrect which has led too many Fijians not being able to access finances from lending institutions.

Madam Speaker, there is an urgent need to ensure that all the credit reporting is done accurately and the credit reporting agency is held liable for any incorrect information. Major

financial institutions, Madam Speaker, and credit providers rely on the information provided by the credit reporting agencies to determine the credit worthiness of their potential clients. This business of credit reporting, first and foremost, has been conducted without any legal standing and there is currently no regulatory framework in place to govern the operations of credit reporting agencies.

(Inaudible Interjection)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, the Bill will allow for the necessary provision for the regulation, administration and licensing of credit reporting agencies. Please hear this carefully.

Madam Speaker, there have been a number of complaints registered with the Consumer Council of Fiji regarding the conduct of certain credit reporting agencies and those concerns vary. They include the listing of names without the consumers' knowledge, the listing despite clearance of debts, unfairly penalising customers. The listing without consent, the listing despite non-payments for damage goods and wrongful listing.

Madam Speaker, allow me to highlight the number of real cases which necessitates the enactment of this Bill before us. The most common cases involve consumers who have defaulted on payments for items taken on hire purchase, a common practice amongst a lot of Fijians. They find their names placed on a list which is assessed and accessed by other financial and credit institutions.

A consumer's name, Madam Speaker, remains on the list for a period of seven years irrespective of whether the consumer has cleared the debt or not. Now, you tell me, is that fair? This creates a lot of unnecessary difficulties and hardships for our consumers who have cleared their debts, particularly for those who had genuine reasons or changing circumstances which led to the default in their payments.

Madam Speaker, you must also bear in mind there are lot of people in Fiji who rely on this. There are also instances where the amount reported has been exaggerated, whereby the amount outstanding is not placed on the report, but the total credit amount. Madam Speaker, there is yet another common malpractice that has been carried out. There is also no minimum amount so regardless of how much was owed, consumers may find their names registered with the credit reporting agencies as in when one particular case, as low as \$67, Madam Speaker.

HON. MEMBER.- *Sa dina.*

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, an example of the flaws of the current credit reporting agencies is one involving a transaction of a property whereby the buyer unknowingly inherited the debts accumulated by the seller and found his name placed on the list, and his name also revealed through a public notice. He should buy a financial institution.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Who?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, another case involved a consumer's name being listed by an internet service provider, despite the fact that the internet service was not being provided for three months.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- A complaint was lodged with the provider but the consumer was continuously billed, Madam Speaker. The consumer found his name on the list and had to clear his account, even though he was not provided with any internet service for the period he was being billed.

Madam Speaker, the cases that I have highlighted, and as I have stated earlier, necessitates the urgency.

(Inaudible Interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Listen to this, these are the particular cases that necessitate the urgency of this Bill to be enacted.

This system, Madam Speaker, which credit providers in Fiji are subscribing to is clearly unfair to Fijians and denies and victimises consumers in Fiji, access to credible goods and services, particularly during difficult economic times. I think you know that very well, my friend.

Consumers also need to have a level playing field, Madam Speaker, when it comes to privacy regarding information on their credit status. Businesses, likewise, should welcome this Bill, as it will now provide a just and fair system of credit reporting that should be beneficial to all Fijians. Madam Speaker, this is being done because it is urgently required by our Fijian people.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak, and I reiterate my support for the Bill on fair reporting on credit.

HON. SPEAKER.- I give the floor to the Honourable Tupou Draunidalo.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, I think every Honourable Member of this House would be concerned about the kinds of cases that the Honourable Ministers have cited, those who would want that credit but for some reason they cannot because of some unfair practice.

What we are saying on this side of the House is that, the least that the Government can do, Madam Speaker, is to just go and consult with the stakeholders, please, because I am advised that this business collects information, not by force but through consent given by customers of the financial lending institutions. So it is not forced out of them, they have consented to give it.

Now, the regulation of how it is used and all of those mechanics is something the Government can go and consult the stakeholders about. Madam Speaker, I am told that this business that is being affected, Data Bureau Limited, has invested and has been here for about 20 years. They have invested a lot of money here and that includes employment and this Bill, when it becomes an Act, the transitional provision, I believe says that when the President assent becomes law, that business has to stop right away.

Madam Speaker, those who are employed by that company, the families, they have children, Madam Speaker, is this the way we will just deal willy-nilly with investors, Madam Speaker? If we want investors to invest in this country and this is something I have alluded to quite a few times, Madam Speaker, we should be encouraging investment for jobs, young people, especially the graduate market. We cannot do that when we are passing these sorts of laws without consultations.

Therefore, we are asking the Government, please go and consult the stakeholders. I am sure they will have something meaningful to say to you about the mechanics of how their business is run and you can work out the mechanics and we will support the Bill. However, Madam Speaker, the way it is being brought and roughshod over them, and not having the other side being heard, Madam Speaker, they are not being heard because this was just announced on Monday. It is going to go through an hour debate and that is the end. All those years, all that investment, jobs, families and children, does not matter, Madam Speaker, we are just going to throw them out. They can apply but the business will end right away under the transitional provision; that is my contribution, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Veena Bhatnagar.

HON. V.R. BHATNAGAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Fair Reporting of Credit Bill, Bill No. 27 of 2016.

First of all, Madam Speaker, this Bill is introduced in the best interest of all Fijians. Any business of such nature as credit reporting must have proper legal framework and guidelines or else people are put through unnecessary troubles. Collating and availing data which is confidential and personal, what are the selling consumers private information without any accountability to the consumers must be regulated.

Madam Speaker, there are many Fijians victimised by false information provided by such organisations who do not upgrade their data regularly. There have been concerns raised that quite often, the hire purchase companies, financial institutions or any other businesses that give loans or services on credit, forget to upgrade the status of their customers, and those who have cleared their debts, their names must be removed from the records but due to delays in data updating and negligence by the credit reporting agencies and credit information providers, wrong information is released, putting the customers in a very uncomfortable position to obtain further loans or make further purchases. These ordeals lead to a lot of frustration, Madam Speaker, and a lot of running around, wastage of time and money before the person's name is cleared off the records.

Madam Speaker, we also have to take into consideration the respect and dignity of an individual. We cannot have them in bad books, simply because some agency have not cared to update their data system. Many have been taken to tribunals, even whilst customers' arrears are paid in full, his or her name should be removed from the records of the Data Bureau but sadly, this does not usually happen because the Data Bureau's records are not promptly updated or the financier has not updated the credit reporting agencies. At the end of the day, who suffers? Obviously, the consumer.

This Bill, Madam Speaker, will definitely seek efficiency and accountability of credit reporting agencies, credit information providers and credit report recipients. This Bill will protect our Fijians from unnecessary difficulties and stop the wrongdoings.

So, Madam Speaker, I fully support this Bill.

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

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, my small contribution to the Bill which is before House, in principle, we agree that people are really concerned about when one's name is being reported to an agency without their knowledge, and I will concur with my friends, Honourable Niko Nawaikula and Honourable Tupou Draunidalo as to the need for a proper consultation in regards to the issues that are rightly being mentioned by the Honourable Minister for Trade and the Assistant Minister for Health. These are real issues that are suffered by our people but only from a consumer's perspective.

We should also be considering the views of these agencies. One of the instance of this, Madam Speaker, is the accuracy to give information, whether you are going to give the right information or the wrong information about these agencies. How will they prove that the provider of those information is correct or not correct? If I was in the position of the Honourable Attorney-General, given the letter that was read to us this afternoon, your good self, Madam Speaker, has withheld because it has been tabled, proves that the interest of those who will be involved will be governed by this particular Act. When it is enforced, it should be taken into account and if you had

the chance to read the whole letter, Madam Speaker, you will come to a conclusion. Perhaps, the Honourable Attorney-General must withdraw the Bill, and bring it back in another sitting day and follow the procedure that will have to go through the Committee.

The idea, Madam Speaker, is quite correct because there is a great interest within our people who really suffer when they go to financial institutions, when they go to places that they would like to obtain financial assistance but they do not know that someone else has done something, using their name or similar names. However, that should not be an excuse, Madam Speaker, for us to push with urgency these kinds of Bills, it has to be properly vetted, Madam Speaker, ventilated, people give their ideas, if need be. Once we have a Committee that will look into it, has proper report on it and recommendations, bring it back to the House. That will be a better time for us to report and I ask my fellow colleague, the Honourable Attorney-General to reconsider his position in regards to this, for the best interest of Parliament as well, given the two divided opinions we have. We cannot be debating and winning the passing of this Bill by our support and the composition of this House.

We are legislature and to see the needs of the people fairly, those who support and those who do not support and bring it back in a later date, Madam Speaker, but to go through the Parliamentary Procedures that will be very beneficial once this Bill is passed by Parliament. It has fully been dealt by our society, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I need to balance the opportunities for both sides to speak. I, therefore, give the floor to the Honourable Mataiasi Niumataiwalu.

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU.- Madam Speaker, for me, I will speak as a consumer and I was so glad that I heard the Bill come up. The Data Bureau did not consult people like us. When you go to a hire purchase company, they will tell you that if you do not pay, your name will appear in the Data Bureau. When you go to the airports, there is a feeling that, "Oh, have I paid all my bills?" If not, I would not be able to go, and that is the sort of thinking that has been with me for the last 20 years.

For this Bill to come up, I am one of the consumers who really support this Bill because every now and then, when the hire purchase companies text you; "If you do not pay, we will add x amount of percentage to the cost", to me this is something that needs the urgency.

The Bill needs to be passed now because there are so many people out there, like me, who feel that every now and then when you go to the airports, because I work for the Olympic Committee, every now and then when I go, I am thinking at the back of my mind, 'did I pay my bills' because of the Data Bureau. I am saying that the Data Bureau did not consult people like us, and that is why I fully support and endorse this Bill for it to be passed today.

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

HON. RO T.V. KEP.A.- Madam Speaker, that is why we are asking for consultations from the various presentation that have been given from the Government side where we need consultations, so that the shortcomings can be brought forward to the Data Bureau, especially to improving their customer service.

My brief here, Madam Speaker, is on Part 6 – Transitional. Clause 19 says and has been quoted by the Honourable Draunidalo, that with the date of the commencement of the Act, the agencies must discontinue such operations immediately after this Bill comes into force.

Madam Speaker, they have Bureaus in Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu, who have workers, and they have been employees who have also invested, I am sure, into the business. Imagine all these

people losing their livelihood, their investment, Madam Speaker! I think it is very cruel not to have this consultation with these people. This is worse than other Decrees, Madam Speaker, because they are now looking for Parliament to support, legislate, legalise and endorse, what we thought.

We are living now in a democracy but that just seems like a dictatorship, Madam Speaker, where they are bringing this in with right sweeping powers. These people will lose their livelihood. That is why we are asking the Honourable Attorney-General, consultation, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- There have been no other input, I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General to give his right of reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I rise to give my right of reply. Madam Speaker, it is quite apparent now that the Opposition wants to fly the flag, not for the ordinary Fijians in Fiji but just for one company.

(Chorus of Interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- When they are saying, let us consult, they are basically meaning Data Bureau. As I have said on the other day, if you go out, if we ask the people sitting in this room or every Fijian outside this Parliament Complex if they do agree will this Bill, they will tell you, 'yes'. No one will object to it because what we are saying, Madam Speaker, if you have a Credit Reporting Agency, that Agency must operate within the rules. The Honourable Nawaikula who is not here said they had consulted RBF but they are still not regulated.

The Honourable Koya has highlighted how people have even paid off their debts, their names are still there. As I had highlighted again on Monday, on Sunday evening I received a call from a person who wants to borrow money from ANZ for \$5,000, but he did not get it because his name was in the Data Bureau. He had a loan with FDB which he has already cleared, but his name is still there and they say; "Sorry, we cannot lend you the money." He said; "I want to borrow the money because I want to rebuild my house after *Cyclone Winston*."

Madam Speaker, the matter is a critical issue. The Honourable Leader of Opposition and the Opposition Members want everything to go to our Standing Committee. Let us go to Standing Committee for everything, consultation.

(Inaudible interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- When you have 890,000 Fijians on one side and you have this company that probably employs a few people on the other side, that is what they are saying, Madam Speaker. I have here a list of the shareholding structure which I really do not want to get into, and it will show you the network of how some of the companies that own shares in this company are offshore.

The Honourable Leader of Opposition is wrong when she says that this law will apply to their business in Tonga and Samoa. The jurisdiction of this law only applies to Fiji. We cannot pass the law for Tonga and Samoa in this honourable House. They probably get benefits from the laws that we have made, but the point is this, we have said it again and I cannot believe that we are standing here and talking about one company based on one letter, when he talks about my personal employment in another company, another time as a lawyer where I have a fiduciary duty in that company when I worked there as a lawyer, and they are still bringing that up. That shows the calibre of the person who is writing the letter. He does not even understand the relationship between the

lawyer and the client, and he is using the Act and Honourable Nawaikula being a lawyer should understand that.

Madam Speaker, the point is this, we are simply saying that the provisions simply say this, any company that is a credit reporting agency performs a like function, which at the moment, is Fiji's Data Bureau, they simply cease operations. They can commence operations once they get the licence, and the data that they have collected because it is adulterated. It is not pure data in that sense because the data they have been collected has been tainted. We want to give every single Fijian in this country a clean slate to start off. Why can we not start off with a clean slate as a nation? Give every ordinary Pauliasi, Ram Prasad, Shirley or whoever it is, a clean start. Let us give them a clean start as a nation. We are responsible to the ordinary members of our country as opposed to one company.

We will do the right thing. They can still operate their business, they simply need to get a licence.

(Chorus of interjections)

They can still use the same interest structure, they simply need to use the data from a clean slate perspective. Unbelievable! Unbelievable! These people talk about being the representatives of the people, they should be called the representatives of Data Bureau. You are representatives of Data Bureau and not the representatives of the ordinary Fijians.

Madam Speaker, I have been told that Data Bureau has three employees. This is the website what it says. They are talking about passive losses. What I am saying, Madam Speaker, the way the law has been drafted, they can simply get a licence almost immediately, once the law comes into effect and the Regulation is put in place.

(Hon. Member interjected)

HON. S.A. KHAIYUM.- You were not here, so you do not understand what I am saying!

(Laughter)

HON. S.A. KHAIYUM.- The point is, Madam Speaker, we need people to start off on a clean slate. Let us give the ordinary Fijians a break. If you are watching on television, Honourable Radrodro, let us tell the ordinary Fijians, let us give them a break. Give them a break! We want them access credit. Let us get them to access credit, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the point is this, we have a constitutional provision also regarding right to privacy. There are no rules there. The Honourable Draunidalo, in a very flippant manner, said; "Well, these people actually signed to give the information", but what choice do they have? You go to Courts, how many other hire purchase companies are there? Whatever paper they stick in front of you, you want the bed so you signed it, fine print. Madam Speaker, that is what they do, we do not have a choice, it is so flippant to say that. Talk to the ordinary person who wants to buy that new bed that is being advertised on television. Let us think about them, they have the right to those basic amenities as well.

Madam Speaker, the point is this, even if they do sign and they do not have a choice, let us give them a right of recourse. Let us have a dispute mechanism. That is all we are saying Madam Speaker, and here they are flying the flag for one company which we are saying can still operate, simply under the rules.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.A. KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I think enough has been said, I really do not want to go on. Honourable Nawaikula, I am very gladly would love to give you the shares structure of this company, one of them goes....

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I do not want that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You brought the letter in. You are flying the flag for them, Gary Callaghan you mentioned. See what he owns? What company is here, what is in Vanuatu? Go and have a look, then you will understand. It is completely relevant because you are giving some form of credibility to a situation that does not have any credibility. We are here for the ordinary Fijians, there is a reason to have this law expedited, Madam Speaker, and we recommend that we vote for this Bill. We vote for the ordinary Fijians of Fiji.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members, we have ended this debate on a very high note, so we are now ready to vote. Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

The question is, pursuant to the resolution of Parliament on 25th April, 2016 that the Fair Reporting of Credit Bill 2016 be debated, voted upon and passed. Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- Chorus of “Yes” and “Noes”.

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

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	30
Noes	:	13
Not Voted	:	7

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Bill reported without amendment, read a third time and passed. (Act. No. .... of 2016)

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A Bill for an Act to make provisions for the regulation, administration and licensing of credit reporting agencies and for related matters (Bill No. 27 of 2016) enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji.

HON. SPEAKER.- That brings to the end our business for today.

The Parliament is now adjourned until 9.30 tomorrow morning. Thank you, Honourable Members.

The Parliament adjourned at 6.05 p.m.