

**FRIDAY, 15<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2015**

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

MADAM SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer

**PRESENT**

All the honourable Members were present, except the honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management; the honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs; the honourable Assistant Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management; the honourable Minister for Fisheries & Forests; the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services; the honourable Niko Nawaikula; and the honourable Lt. Col. Netani Rika.

**MINUTES**

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2015 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

**COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

Acknowledgment of Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I welcome you all to this last day of sitting this week.

I warmly welcome another group of students undertaking studies in Politics from the University of the South Pacific, who are observing the Parliamentary sitting as part of their politics unit. We have welcomed groups of this same class for each of the sitting days this week, and we will have the rest of their class throughout next week as well.

Parliament is a fundamental institution and vital component of the democratic process, and I am encouraged by the visits as these by students to observe proceedings.

On that note, I wish you all the best in your studies.

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

### Membership of Select Committees

I wish to inform this august House that membership for two Select Committees have been finalised, namely the House Committee and the Privileges Committee.

The House Committee is comprised of myself as Chair and the other Members are the:

- (i) Deputy Speaker, the Hon. Ruveni Nadalo;
- (ii) Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration, the Hon. Timoci Natuva;
- (iii) Hon. Alvick Maharaj;
- (iv) Hon. Salote Radrodro; and
- (v) Hon. Prem Singh.

The Privileges Committee will be chaired by the Deputy Speaker, Hon. Ruveni Nadalo. The other Members are the:

- (i) Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications, the Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum;
- (ii) Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism, the Hon. Faiyaz Koya;
- (iii) Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management, the Hon. Inia Seruiratu;
- (iv) Hon. Semesa Karavaki; and
- (v) Hon. Salote Radrodro.

Also, for the general information of the Honourable Members, the Report submitted to me on the Biennial ACPAC Conference 2015, attended by a Parliamentary delegation to Adelaide, is now available on the website and will be shortly made available also in the Library.

### Population Message

As the world prepares for the affirmation and roll-out of the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs, the Pacific region but especially Fiji as a regional leader, must seriously consider development and population factors to ensure that we address related issues. The consequences of inaction will be the legacy we leave behind as today's legislators.

The Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, which Fiji was a signatory to, encourages governments to take an integral approach to sexual and reproductive health and rights, to the linkages between population and sustainable development and to social integration, in the context of demographic change.

Honourable Members, regardless of the subject of our deliberations, it cannot be without consideration of fundamental factors that impacts population and development issues.

## **QUESTIONS AND REPLIES**

### Oral Questions

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, I beg the indulgence of the House to grant me latitude, to give a brief summation and context to my question.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Your Question 97/2015.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Can I give a brief summation on that, on the context, to allow the honourable and learned Attorney-General ....

MADAM SPEAKER.- Question 97 is your question.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Can I be given to give a context on the question?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Just ask the question and we will give time after.

You will have supplementary questions later on, but ask the question right now.

Hon. M.D. Bulitavu asked the Government, upon notice;

Can the honourable and learned Attorney General inform the House as to what is the work done by the company, Pacific Technologies Limited based at the Government ITC, how much has been paid so far for the services rendered and when they are expected to complete their work.

Just to clarify on that, Pacific Technologies is the local partner for Yalamanchili International Pty Limited.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister of Finance, Public Enterprises, Public Service and Communications).- Thank you Madam Speaker, I see the honourable Member snuck in something towards the end.

I thank him for his question and I am glad he has got it right, it is Government ITC.

Madam Speaker, Pacific Technologies is not based at Government ITC. Pacific Technologies has not raised any invoices, nor has government paid any moneys to Pacific Technologies.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Supplementary question the honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, the presentation by a member of the Government ITC Steering Committee was made at the UN DESSA on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2004 in Seoul, Korea under Fiji Government E-Service Plan.

Also, there is a meeting with the Government ITC as reported in the Auditor-General's Report and is the same person in this Report, and also in an Investment Fiji press release of 2013. We have pictorial evidence showcasing the same person making a presentation, who is now the Managing Director of Pacific Technologies.

The question that I would like to pose to the honourable Minister is, can the honourable Minister inform the House in all these three scenarios the Managing Director of Pacific Technologies who is also a member of the Steering Committee, is also the Government ITC Manager. Is he the same person?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I would gladly answer the question, but obviously they are going off this and it is not a supplementary question to the main question.

Yes, of course you, must read the law. The law actually creates the Steering Committee and it does allow for people from ITC, who are managing it, to be part of the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee also includes people from outside government, it also includes people from within the ministry. So that is the answer, Madam Speaker.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- It contradicts.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I think conflict is something that they probably need to be given a lesson on also.

Government ITC Steering Committee....

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- There is a committee that decides.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- (Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ...where is the mischief, Madam Speaker.

The reality is that the same Committee is not made up of one person. It is made up of a number of people and, Madam Speaker, the point is this, the contract in fact was given to Yalamanchili through an open tender process. It was advertised on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2012. Madam Speaker, we had four companies that had put in expressions of interest and Yalamanchili has a local partner that does some of the work for them. The invoices are raised by Yalamanchili, the payment is made to Yalamanchili. They know about the payments, it is in the audited accounts.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. Can the honourable and learned Attorney-General advise the House, who the other members of the Steering Committee are?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the honourable and learned Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the other members of the Committee and I stand to be corrected, I can give them a list by way of a written question but from memory, I am sure, they do not remember all the Board members of all the organisations. It is Mr. Pradeep Patel, who is a certified accountant, we have a Mr. Sailesh Kumar and myself. I am on the Steering Committee as Minister responsible for Communications and we have someone else from the Ministry of Communications, I can table that name. They are the members of the Steering Committee of course we have from Yalamanchili Pacific Technologies representative on it.

Madam Speaker, the point is, and let me highlight that, since engagement and I will give them more information, the Fijian Government, previously was caught in the Stone Age, as far as technology was concerned. They were caught in the Stone Age, Madam Speaker. When other countries were getting online searches, online registration of companies, online search of title, Fiji had to take one year to register a company, it used to take ages. We still have archives full of titles, we have to physically forage through them. What this does is, by end of 2015, you will see online registration, online searches of titles, you will see online registration of companies, you will have online of births, deaths and marriages, the registration, the digitisation of all records. If tomorrow, we have a fire, if Suvavou had a fire, Madam Speaker, if it had a fire, all records, all titles would have been lost. No back-up system....

*(Chorus of interjections from Members of the Opposition)*

.....They opened the door and in answering the question.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable and learned Attorney-General, please continue, I am able to hear you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the honourable Radrodro referred to, in the next few weeks, we will have Investments Fiji, where foreign investors can have a one window application apply online sitting from the comforts of their homes in Sydney or business office in Sydney, Auckland, or wherever in the world, pay online, get their registrations done and have them processed by the five top tier agencies. It has never been done, Madam Speaker.

The iTLTB lease money distributions, all members of Land Owning Units (LOUs) will be within that, they will be digitised, so we have proper records and no one can siphon off funds. It creates transparency, Madam Speaker. This is what will happen by the end of this year, all of these will take place. That is very hard for them to digest.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- A supplementary question. Madam Speaker, did this company, Pacific Technologies Limited, also provided services to the Fiji Elections Office during the last General Elections? If yes, what services did they provide, and if any tender was carried out?

HON. A. SAYED –KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, it is not related to the main question at all. If they want to put a new question, I can do that, but I do not run the Elections Office. The Electoral Commission has carriage of the Elections Office. I can provide all information and I need to talk to the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections. I do not know who supplied whatever goods to them. They have their own tender process. They do not go through the Government tender process, they have their own tender committee, and I can very gladly provide to them all the people who supplied any information. But I can tell you one thing, Madam Speaker, as far as registration of voters and the software are concerned, it is provided by a Canadian company called “Code Ink”. That is what they are probably worried about. That is what they are trying to insinuate. It is provided by a Canadian company that did the online registration. As far as any other ancillary work that may have been carried out, I can provide that information to you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I thank you for this robust discussion and I will give the last supplementary question to the honourable Semesa Karavaki.

HON.S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, in the ITC in the past, there were very well qualified people over there, employed by ITC. If the honourable Minister can explain, in bringing this company to be responsible for the work at the ITC, what has happened to those capable staff that were there?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I do not know under whose assessment is the honourable Member referring to as the “capable staff”. But if there were capable staff, I can tell you numerous horror stories of what was taking place in ITC. There were products that were being purchased, for example, hardware that was being purchased that was end of life products.

What that basically means, Madam Speaker, if there is a particular brand of laptop, a particular model and it’s about to be replaced by another model next year, the Fijian Government, buying those models of laptops and computers that were end of life. In six months’ time, they become obsolete overseas and Fiji would be hanging on to these dinosaurs.

We had software that was being purchased off the shelf that then had to be tweaked to the Fijian system and again, there was a lot of money being accumulated before that.



We had software that had been purchased off the shelf where the Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) were enormously expensive. If we had capable people, all of these would have stopped.

Madam Speaker, what has happened, through the bringing in of this company, we have now expedited the digitisation process. There needs to be a software at least to be developed for it to be able to read it, for it to be able to register it.

They also have provided the input, so we are able to make more smarter procurements. We now have warranties been given to Government purchases, not for one year, but three years or even more.

We are getting newer models in, we are saving money, at the same time, as part of the contract, there is also a need to up-skill our own people. The idea is to develop a local cadre of people, who in time will be able to take over the management of ITC, Madam Speaker. That is where we are going from.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The question has been adequately answered. We will move on to the second oral question, and I give the floor to the honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki.

Log Proceeds from Fiji Mahogany Trust  
(Question No. 98/2015)

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

A key role for the Fiji Mahogany trust, administered by the Prime Minister as chair of the Mahogany Industry Council since 2010, is to distribute the proceeds from the sale of mahogany timber to the native landowners.

Would the honourable Prime Minister, Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs and Sugar Industry, confirm if landowners have been paid log proceeds and indicate the years and corresponding amounts paid?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA (Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs and Sugar Industry).- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable Member for the question. It is interesting to note, Madam Speaker, that the honourable Member has been a trustee of the Fiji Mahogany Trust, which of course he has not disclosed.

*(Laughter from Hon. Government Members)*

Madam Speaker, with regards to the question raised by the honourable Member, it must be noted that there is a Mahogany Industry Development Decree. That was implemented in 2010, and this was for the restructuring of the Fiji Mahogany Industry, in facilitating further developments in having regard to the interests of the *iTaukei* landowners, and of course all Fijians.

I am surprised to say, Madam Speaker, the statutory provision of the mahogany sale proceeds being paid to landowners now is an additional benefit that does not exist previously. Due to FHCL debt burden from the past, priorities have been placed on the repayments of debts that had been guaranteed by the State, and reforestation which will ensure sustainability of the Fijian Mahogany Industry.

Madam Speaker, let me give out my figures, despite the financial strain. To answer the honourable Member's question, from 2000 to 2014, FHCL has paid a total payment of \$13.12 million

to landowners. From the \$13.12 million that has been paid to landowners, \$3.4 million was paid as payment of land leases, which was paid directly to iTLTB for the landowners; \$4.5 million was for the payment of stumpage, which was paid directly to iTLTB for the landowners; \$665,799 was for the payment of land management fees, which was paid directly to landowners; \$870,000 was for re-forestation and plantation maintenance payments to landowners who are contracted to FHCL; and \$3.65 million was for the payment of contractor payments, which included harvesting extraction, scaling, and of course cartage, and which was paid directly to landowners who were engaged by FHCL.

In the case of Fiji Mahogany Trust, Madam Speaker, the Fiji Mahogany Trust needs to have in place the accountability and Government procedures and that will make things happen for our mahogany industry.

MADAM SPEAKER – Supplementary question - the honourable Maharaj.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ. – Madam, I would like to thank the honourable Prime Minister for his answer and also thank him for taking the governance of FHCL into his hands, because we definitely know anything that goes under his governance is always done in a proper and best way.

(Applause)

Sir, while you were actually telling the amount that is paid to landowners, I would like to ask my supplementary question; why there have been so much debt with FHCL and now that bulk of money that was supposed to go rightfully to the landowners is being used to do repayments for those debts?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI – Point of Order, Madam Speaker. The question raised is not relevant to the original question.

Laughter from Hon, Government Members

It is about log proceeds, Madam Speaker and not about FHCL.

MADAM SPEAKER – The onus will be on the honourable Prime Minister to answer or not to answer the question.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA (Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs and Sugar Industry).- Madam Speaker, FHCL has been making losses since incorporation in 1998, and accumulated a total debt of \$21.4 million by the end of 2010. It was not even in a position to service these loans, and majority of the accumulated loans were the result of the 2004 purchase. If you remember, Madam Speaker, someone from across the room was talking about the Waivunu Sawmill, the majority of the accumulated losses were the result of the 2004 purchase of the Waivunu Saw mill \$2.6 million and the Navutu Timber Yard of \$3.5 million.

We found out that the Waivunu Sawmill, in particular had been bought at an inflated price, with equipment and machinery that were obsolete. Also FHCL, Madam Speaker, does not have the capacity and the technical know-how to take on the value adding side of operation for Waivunu and Navutu, which lead to both operations consistently making losses until its closure in 2010.

Madam Speaker, FHCL had also had fraud inventory and accounting procedures and controls which allowed for the abuse of the system. Additionally, the focus of the company was wrong, as it did not concentrate on making profit, but generating revenue only. In the forest, there was no proper planning and stock surplus logs and management was only relying on good weather.

It is also important to note, Madam Speaker, that from 1998 to 2003, Government had invested \$15.9 million of operating grant into FHCL, without proper controls on the utilisation of the funds. This resulted in such investments by the then government being wasted.

The issues mentioned above that I have just mentioned, Madam Speaker, had triggered the need for the Fijian Government to take measures and necessary action to reform this important industry for the landowners and the people of Fiji.

(Applause)

MADAM SPEAKER – Supplementary question, I will give the floor to the Opposition and then to the Government.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA – I thank the honourable Prime Minister for his explanation on the issue. My question is: the Mahogany Industry Development Decree guarantees landowners participation in the industry. Can the honourable Prime Minister inform this august House, what area of the industry they participated in, and what is the monetary value?

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, if the honourable Member had been listening to what I have been saying for the last five minutes, he would have heard the distribution of funds that I have mentioned.

MADAM SPEAKER – Thank you and for the last supplementary question, I will give the floor to the honourable Semi Koroilavesau.

HON. CDR S.T. KOROILAVESAU – Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is, what is now the role of FHCL, after the introduction of the Decree?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- A point of order, Madam Speaker.

The supplementary question has gone out of the original question, which was on the log proceeds. That is a new question altogether, Madam Speaker.

HON. REAR ADMIRAL (RET'D) J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker we are talking about log proceeds and payments to landowners - which is very important, and I think the question by the honourable Member is very relevant to what we are talking about.

I want to answer the honourable Member's question in saying that FHCL had been making losses since its operation in 1998, but now things have changed and we have come up with a better figure for that. But before, FHCL used to do both, but now we have moved FHCL and it is now just looking after the landowners. Thank you.

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

Could the honourable Minister for Local Government, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport explain why the Fiji Electricity Authority did not call for tenders or invite expressions of interest from local companies for the purchase of at least 35 diesel generators as part of its \$35 million contingency plan last year?

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Madam Speaker, due to the prolonged spell of dry weather in 2014, which the honourable Member has mentioned, FEA implemented a contingency plan and had to purchase, install and commission 40 megawatts generators in order to supplement the low power generation output from the Monasavu and Nadarivatu Hydro schemes. Madam Speaker, hiring option was also discussed but the charges were very high. Therefore, the FEA Board decided to go for an outright purchase, as these sets could be used in future to meet the increasing power demand.

Madam Speaker, since there was an urgency to this situation and due to the time limitation, known suppliers were approached to submit their quotes for the supply of the diesel generators. The prices were received from the five companies and recommendation was submitted to the FEA Board for their deliberations. The Board within its powers approved the purchase of the 35 diesel generators. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

Were the 15 generators purchased through a local company named Filter Suppliers, which does not have generators as its core business but instead deals in supply of filters?

HON. P. B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker. This is just like there are few hardware companies, biggest name in hardware, trusted name in hardware, their core business is timber, steel and cement but they also sell glassware, tea sets...

(Laughter)

... so really, I really do not know where he is coming from. But let me say this, Madam Speaker, yes, 15 generators were purchased from local companies after all due process was followed by the management of FEA Board. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, I give the floor to the honourable Sanjit Patel.

HON. S. PATEL.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just an observation from the previous two questions. It can be seen that the Opposition loves to be living in the stone-age rather than new technology and the other thing is, when the Government is doing so well for the landowners, they still complain about it. The question is, is Filters a local company?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Yes, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. The honourable Jiosefa Dulakiverata, for your last supplementary question.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is, why is the FEA keeps investing in diesel generators and not investing on renewable energy?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, can the honourable member repeat his question, please?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Why is the Fiji Electricity Authority keep on investing in diesel generators instead of investing in renewable energy?

HON. P. B. KUMAR.- Thank you. I can now listen properly to the honourable Member. Yes, Madam, there are plans and there are few Korean companies that have just visited our country and FEA is going to go into that direction. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, we will move on to the next question and I will give the floor to the honourable Balmindar Singh.

Strengthening of Fiji's position as  
the Trading Hub of the Pacific  
(Question No. 100/2015)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism inform the House – Fiji is generally regarded as the trading hub of the Pacific – how can Fiji strengthen its position as the regional trading hub?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the honourable Faiyaz Siddiq Koya.

HON. F.S. KOYA (Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to question number 100 of 2015 and I thank the honourable Balmindar Singh for the question. It is a pity that the other side does not see Fiji as the trading hub. It is quite a shame actually, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, as the honourable Member has rightly stated, Fiji has a very important position and role in regional trade, I think they all know that and I must add that this position is getting stronger each year in terms of trade, investment, transportation and logistics. Fiji, obviously has an advantage in terms of having a strong manufacturing base, an ideal location, transport links and communications.

Madam Speaker, the Fijian Government has worked tirelessly to upgrade Fiji's international port infrastructure, which is the key to boosting Fiji's international competitiveness and is vital for Fiji's position as the hub of the Pacific.

The Bainimarama-led Government, Madam Speaker, inherited major problems when it came to port operations and these included congestion, outdated machinery and lack of work ethics. The Government, Madam Speaker, through reforms by the Ministry of Public Enterprises, responded to the crisis by having Fiji's Ports Corporation Limited enter into a successful public private partnership with a Sri Lankan company namely Aitken Spence. This company, Madam Speaker, is listed as one of the 200 most successful companies by Forbes and this was to manage the port facilities with a view to enhancing productivity and efficiency and reducing congestion problems. Today, Madam Speaker, we are proud to say that the productivity has increased by 30 per cent and marked improvement in turnaround time has effectively reduce the cost of doing business.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the current reform and modernization of the aviation industry will further consolidate our status as the aviation hub of the Pacific. Airports Fiji Limited, Madam Speaker, will be spending \$250 million in the next five years to upgrade our airports, raising the standards of our facilities and the quality of our services to world class.

Madam Speaker, connectivity is vital in enhancing the trade and Fiji Airways has actively contributed towards improving our connectivity. There are approximately 390 flights a month between

Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, USA, Korea, Hong Kong and the Pacific Islands. I do not see where they get this non-hub thing from the other side. Recently, new routes have been added onto Australia and furthermore, Fiji Airways using Fiji as a hub connects the US and Hong Kong to the Pacific, Madam Speaker, and US to Australia and New Zealand. Hence, we are harnessing, Madam Speaker, our opportunity which will lead to a further increase in demand for Fijian Made goods and services and this will lead to increase investment, obviously from the private sector, and creation of jobs and wealth, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, in terms of our export, the Pacific region has emerged as the top export destination for Fiji over the past three years. In 2012, Madam Speaker, the Pacific was ranked as the fourth largest export destination by regions, behind Australasia, North America and Europe. However, in 2014, the Pacific became the number one destination for Fijian Made products recording an all-time high of exports receipts of \$710.6 million, surpassing the Australasian region with a total export value of 423.9 million.

In essence, Madam Speaker, the Pacific market accounts for approximately 32 per cent of our total exports. It is also important to note, Madam Speaker, that our exports to the Pacific include a wide range of commodities ranging from food items, construction materials, textiles, and actually non-food items.

The trend is quite different when compared against other traditional export partners whether single or limited number of products dominate the exports, Madam Speaker.

Our trade with the Pacific has and will continue to grow in the future. Madam Speaker, to enhance Fiji's position in regional, international and global trade, our Ministry is now in the final stages of launching the Fijian Trade Policy Framework, which determines how we will connect all the dots in addressing the production capacity in the supply-side constraints, with the ultimate objective of enhancing Fiji's position in the global trade.

Madam Speaker, the framework would work towards contributing to the fulfilment of government's vision for a better Fiji for all and through this framework, we will consolidate efforts to involve all the stakeholders to work towards a single objective of achieving a competitive economy that serves as the hub in the Pacific. Madam Speaker, further my Ministry would also through key regional trade arrangements such as the Melanesian Spearhead Group, the MSG Trade Agreement and the Pacer-Plus Agreement, which is currently under negotiations, consolidate efforts to further strengthen our market access into the Pacific.

Madam Speaker, as you know a strong national economy and a healthy export trade will raise the standard of living for all Fijians and this essentially means reducing poverty and giving every Fijian child a better and sustainable future. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. B. SINGH. - Madam Speaker, you might have heard why Fiji has been classified as the hub of the Pacific region. My question is, what has been the export trend in the region over the years?

HON. F.S.KOYA. - Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for the supplementary question.

When comparing our exports to the Pacific from 2012 and onwards, Madam Speaker, a significant increase of 150% was recorded from \$155 million to \$387.3 million in 2013. Our export to the region continues to perform above all expectations and increasing to \$710.6 million in 2014, a further increase of 84%, Madam Speaker. On average, our exports in the Pacific region from 2012 to 2014 was about \$417.6 million and, this signifies the importance of the Pacific as an emerging export market destination for Fijian made products and at the same time, reinforces our position as the hub of the region.

HON.V.R. GAVOKA. - A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Just an observation, these impressive investments in Ports Authority and Airport Fiji Limited costing hundreds of millions of dollars, why are we then selling them to foreign interest? My question is, to be a hub, you need to build relationships and I do not think FijiFirst is building the relationship that we need, to be the hub of the Pacific.

*(Chorus of interjections from Government Members)*

We played hard ball with the Solomon Airlines, a very tiny airline, we played hard ball with them. We kept the tourism operators out of our straight zone and we are having spats with Samoa, New Zealand and Australia. How can we become a hub when we are not building relationships, Madam Speaker?

MADAM SPEAKER. - Thank you. Point of Order!

HON. M. VUNIWAQA. - It seems that these supplementary questions are taking on a whole different dimension all together. They really should ask the questions that they want to ask and they should stop from adding any extras to such questions.

MADAM SPEAKER: I ask honourable Members when asking questions, please be succinct with your questions, however, additional information is always required to put focus on the question.

The Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I think the Members on the other side, do not actually realize the divisions in the Ministry with respect to who is responsible.(Laughter)

The question should be directed to the Ministry of Public Enterprises since it concerns the Ports Authority, which is under his authority, Madam Speaker. So, if it can be raised at a later day, I am sure the honourable Minister will answer.

MADAM SPEAKER. - Thank you, I will give the last supplementary question to the honourable Member who stood up first and that is the honourable Alvick Maharaj.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ. - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Minister for the answer and how he has actually enlightened the honourable Members on my right-hand side that Fiji is a trading hub of the Pacific. Now that they are aware that Fiji is the trading hub of the Pacific and might be interested in exporting some of the key products that are exported from Fiji. Can the honourable Minister let the honourable Members know what are some of the key exports to the Pacific region?

HON. F.S. KOYA. – I would like to thank the honourable Member for the question. Madam Speaker, there is a whole long list of exports that goes out to the Pacific. Obviously, yes; Fiji is truly a manufacturing hub of the Pacific. As I have mentioned earlier, they range from food preparation, construction materials and textiles as such. I will break it down for the benefit of the other side of the House. It is flour, noodles, cracker biscuits, sweet biscuits, non-alcoholic beverages, sauces, frozen chickens, sausages, canned fish, kava, cocoa powder, cement, roofing irons, tubes, pipes, paint, gravel mix, cartons and boxes, kitchen cutleries, furniture, clothing, footwear, car batteries, electric accumulators amongst other things.

MADAM SPEAKER. – Thank you. We will move on to the next oral question and I give the floor to the honourable Jilila Kumar.

Assistance provided to Sports Federation in Fiji  
(Question No: 101/2015)

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

Can the Minister inform the House what assistance does the Ministry provide to sports federation in Fiji and in particular, what support is being provided to the Fijian 7's team in its bid for gold in the Rio Olympics?

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU (Minister for Youth and Sports). - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the honourable Kumar for the question. To inform this august House, yes our Government supports sports development in Fiji and it has allocated \$4.7 million to this year's budget, especially for the sporting federations. These total allocations support these sporting federation in three ways:

- 1) It provides to the federation in terms of applying for grants when hosting international tournaments or on an overseas tour. The federation will benefits or are in the process of benefiting from the \$964,000 that the Government has allocated as grant.



- 2) The second part is also to meet one of the grants to the federation; participating in games like the South Pacific Games, the Rugby World Cup, the Netball Championship, the FIFA under 20 World Cup, the Government through the Ministry has allocated \$1.8 million to provide for federations participating in such tournaments.
- 3) Madam Speaker, as per the assistance provided, the third component of the assistance to the federations is the \$2 million provided to assist international coaches and federations are in the process of benefitting from this support. As per the assistance provided for the Fiji 7's Team, first of all, I must congratulate Ben Ryan and his Team for their achievement in Glasgow, in winning the Glasgow 7's. The Vodafone Fiji 7's has created history in qualifying for the Rio Olympics. Government is glad to have contributed and will continue to support its effort for the 7's in Rio.

As we have heard, to prepare a 7's Team in Rio, it will cost about \$3 million in its bid to get gold for the Rio Olympics. Government will also provide assistance for the Rio Olympics. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU. – Supplementary question, Madam Speaker. As a former Fiji Rugby Rep, I am interested in this topic, in regards to the money, in which we would like to know what the Ministry is allocating to the Fiji Pearls and the Fiji Rugby 15's. I still can recall some of the weakness by some former workers of the Fiji Rugby Union that organised the lottery and we did not know whether the money has been banked, because I bought \$500 worth of tickets. I do not know who the Chief Executive Officer was at that time and now, we want transparency.

My supplementary question is, how much is being provided to the Fiji Netball and Fiji Rugby Union for the last three years and what achievements the Fiji Pearls and the Fiji Rugby 15's Team have accomplished? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Madam Speaker, I must thank the honourable Vunivalu for that question. Yes, the money was provided for the Rugby and Netball, that includes the allocation of the coaching contracts for Netball and Rugby, including Rugby 7's and Rugby 15's.

The breakdowns are as follows: for Netball in 2013 - \$27,000 approximately was given; in 2014 - \$273,000 and in 2015 - \$421,000.

For Rugby in 2013 - \$490,000, in 2014 - \$1.2 million and \$1.4 million in 2015. So the achievements that we got for the last three years is that the Netball in 2011, the ranking of the World International Arena was 10<sup>th</sup> but now it has come up to 7<sup>th</sup>, which should be applauded. Rugby from the ranking of 16<sup>th</sup> in 2011 to 12<sup>th</sup> in 2013. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. RATU N. T. LALABALAVU. – I thank the honourable Minister for Sports for his reply to the question raised and my only concern is on the Sevens. Given the fact that I happened to watch the World Sevens in Dubai way back in the last tournament that was held there, it was sad to see the way the Fiji Sevens Team were equipped.

The question that I would like to raise to the honourable Minister, can he explain as to what sort of measures does he have in place, to ensure that whatever funds we are going to allocate to the Sevens Team will certainly reach them? You highlighted that there is the 15's Team and the Fiji Netball Team that have been identified to share whatever proceeds that you have identified. But the question is, if I repeat, what sort of measures you have in place, to ensure that the money that is going to be allocated reaches the Sevens Team; because we all understand what the Fiji Rugby Union is going through over this past few years. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU. – Madam Speaker, I must thank the honourable Lalabalavu for the question. Yes, we have a Development Plan in place and we must thank a company in America that consists of our locals, who have been leaving in America that assisted in providing the machine that recovers the team very well. Also we have the Fiji Sports Commission that looks after the good governance, administration of sports and all the funds that is allocated to the Sporting Organisations are accounted for and the reports received by the Fiji Sports Commission, that all funds are properly utilised. Yes, that is why all the reports are available with the Fiji Sports Commission. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Our last supplementary question is to the honourable Semesa Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you Madam Speaker. It is indeed comforting to hear the honourable Minister assuring us in this House how ready and willing the Government is to support the Fiji Sevens Team, especially in its preparation towards Rio.

My question, Madam Speaker is that, because he has also assured the Chamber, the team needs \$3 million for its budget to prepare itself and also the willingness of the Government to assist. Whether the Minister can confirm in this House with that extent of willingness and readiness to assist, whether it is going to go all through to give that \$3 million to the Fiji Rugby Union, to assist the Sevens Team for its preparation towards Rio. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER. – Thank you, I do not think the honourable Minister is in a position to make a definite amount to be allocated at this point in time and therefore, I will not give him the floor to answer that question, but will give the last supplementary question to the honourable Jiosefa Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA. – Thank you, Madam Speaker. It was very enlightening to hear the commentator at the Scotland Sevens Tournament that the game had been telecast to more than 139 countries and to millions of people. That shows the publicity the Fiji Sevens Team had done for Fiji and considering the amount of money that the Government is giving to the sports team, it is nothing compared to what the Government had budgeted for the Natadola Golf Tournament.

(Laughter)

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- \$12 million!

MADAM SPEAKER.- Could we have your supplementary question!



HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- The question I would like to ask is, whether Government is going to consider this publicity and give appropriate funding to the Fiji Sevens Team? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. TUITUBOU. – Madam Speaker, I must thank the honourable Member for the question. Yes, \$3 million is being planned by the current coach that we will have to prepare. So Government with other sponsors and is appealing because it is a people's team and the coach himself is appealing to the people, and the Government will surely assist with that \$3 million plan that it has. Thank you,, Madam Speaker.

Current Status of the Micro and Small Business Grant.  
(Question 102/2015)

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

Can the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism enlighten the House on what is the current status of the Micro and Small Business Grants?

HON. F.S. KOYA (Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism).- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for the question. Once again, I wish to update the House on the Micro and Small Business Grant, which is the newest initiative of the FijiFirst Government. Madam Speaker, by way of background, the grant facility is targeted at the grassroots community again and individuals with special skills such as handicrafts, carpentry, farming, beekeeping and fishing amongst others.

Madam Speaker, upon closure of the expressions of interest, the Ministry had received a total of 25,789 applications from all over the country and we have now completed the screening process. It is encouraging to note that so many Fijians are serious about earning a better livelihood and not being left out in the economic equation.

Madam Speaker, the Fijian Government has allocated \$1 million for the facility of up to \$1000 per applicant. This will only cater for approximately 1,000 successful applicants. However, 25,789 applications were received; 7,744 applications met the pre-qualifications grant criteria, and have qualified to be funded. The Ministry, in conjunction with the Fiji Development Bank, is currently undertaking site visits and verifying the applicants. Madam Speaker this is a laborious process.

Madam Speaker, the Bainimarama-led Government is determined to assist all the successful applicants. With this in mind, the Ministry is aggressively pursuing possible avenues for further budgetary support and we are looking for a favour from the Ministry of Finance and support from our international development partners.

Madam Speaker, it is only fair that all the applicants that have qualified for funding are assisted under the facility.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, to the honourable Member's question, I reiterate that my Ministry's commitment to meet the needs of our micro and small business, Fijians to sustain and grow their business to another level and make the micro and small and medium enterprises the backbone of the Fijian economy. We are doing this very seriously, it is taking a bit of time but it will get done.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Supplementary Question and I give the floor to the honourable Mosese Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I thank the honourable Minister for the initiatives that his Ministry is currently doing to elevate the economic status of our people at the grassroots level. That is very encouraging.

Madam Speaker, a similar initiative was done by a Micro-Finance initiative of the Reserve Bank two to three years ago, and this is a real story, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, could we have the question?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I will come to that so that you can understand what happens to this kind of initiative.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Can you ask the question please?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- What measures are in place that will ensure when one access those applications or proposals by people that the business will be viable, the markets will be readily available and whatever they propose to sell they make a profit. For example ....

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, I think the question is clear, and I give the floor to the Honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, first of all, I did explain that the FDB is currently engaged in this particular thing, its offices go around assessing all the applicants so that everything is assessed properly.

Most of the applicants are already existing businesses, so you can understand, it is not like they are unsuccessful, they are successful. We are trying to make them more successful and that is the aim of the Government.

HON. B. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his answer to the last question. My question to the honourable Minister is; is this the way to give back to the FijiFirst supporters?

HON. F.S KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for the question, and I would like to categorically state in this House that this grant facility is made available to all Fijians ...

(Applause)

... and when we say “all Fijians”, we mean all Fijians.

Madam Speaker, the policy guidelines with respect to this and processes that are put in place to operationalise this grant facility are to ensure the grant is channelled to people in genuine need of assistance, and that is why we say “all Fijians.” Madam Speaker, once applicants qualify for the funding, there will be validation site visits conducted by the Ministry and the FDB officials before the grant is dispersed.

There is something else. What must be remembered is, we are not just giving the money for them to disperse and do whatever it is that they want. There will be further checks afterwards once the money is dispersed to find out whether they have been successful or not. I thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. RATU. S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Speaker, another supplementary question. I do thank the honourable Minister for all the explanations been given relating to this grant.

What we are worried about Madam Speaker, is whether the Department has put in place monitoring mechanisms, to ensure that this grant does not become another scam?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, the scam may belong to the other side of the House.

(Laughter)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, as I have pointed out quite clearly, there is a review process that FDB will undertake, even after the grant is given. So the selection criteria takes care of a whole lot of stuff, before and an ongoing process afterwards, to see whether it is \$1000 or \$500. We still care about all Fijians, to ensure that it is all done, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I do thank you all for your contributions and discussions and question time is now over. We will now go on to the next item on the *Order Paper*.

## **BILLS – FIRST READING**

### Motion to Repeal the Regulation Surfing Areas Decree, 2010

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

That A Bill for an Act to repeal the Regulation of Surfing Areas Decree, 2010 (Bill No 8 of 2015), be now read for the first time.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, this Bill is about the Surfing Decree that took away the proceeds that used to be earned by owners of *qoliqoli*, who is of interest to the tourism community.

They used to earn a comfortable amount from these royalties as fees. It was removed in 2010 by a Decree, and we would like to repeal that Decree because we believe they rightfully deserve the use of their resources that are enjoyed by a vast number of tourists in the country.

We have a tourism industry that is now to the tune of \$1.4 billion. We always ask the question; “A billion dollar for whom?” We believe an equitable distribution of proceeds from tourism would benefit the industry and strengthen it, going forward.

MADAM SPEAKER.- In accordance with Standing Order 84 (2), the Bill has been read the first time.

SECRETARY GENERAL.-A Bill for an Act to repeal the Regulation of surfing Areas Decree 2010 (8/2015)

MADAM SPEAKER.- The Bill will now be listed on the *Order Paper* for second reading on a future sitting date.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I will now invite the honourable Ratu Kiliraki to have the floor.

Motion to Repeal the Mahogany Industry Development Decree, 2010

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, I move:

That a Bill for an Act to repeal the Mahogany Industry Development Decree, 2010 (Bill No. 9/2015) be now read the first time.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, I back to second the motion.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, as rightly mentioned by the honourable Prime Minister, I am a member of the Fiji Mahogany Trust, as well as a landowner for the Colo-i-Suva Forestry Station.

As I bring this motion for the interest of the 14 stations throughout Fiji. In Vanua Levu, there are 6 stations and the rest are in Viti Levu. This in regards to the Mahogany Decree that since 2010 until now has a very regressive impact on the landowners, especially in their stations as described in the Decree full participation

Also in regards to the roles of the Mahogany Industry Council, especially in the allocation of Log Mahogany Licences, as well as the Code of Practice that is being endorsed by this Decree, whereas at the same time, we have a Forestry Decree that also is empowered for the Code of Practices in harvesting.

That is the basis of this motion Madam Speaker that needs to be taken into account that this Mahogany Industry Development Decree must be repealed for the betterment of the landowners and for the nation. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA. – Madam Speaker I back to second the motion.

MADAM SPEAKER. – In accordance with Standing Order 84 Clause 2, the Bill has been read the first time.

SECRETARY-GENERAL. – A Bill for an Act to repeal the Mahogany Industry Development Decree 2010, (Bill No. 9 of 2015).

MADAM SPEAKER. – The Bill will now be listed on the *Order Paper* for a second reading on a future sitting day. We will now move to the next item on the *Order Paper*.

**MOTIONS FOR DEBATE**

Motion to Repeal the Media Industry Development Decree, 2010

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD. – Madam Speaker, I rise to move:

That this Parliament supports a review or a repeal of the Media Industry Development Decree, 2010, to ensure Fiji has a free, fair and unfettered media industry, in conformity to a modern democratic nation

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA. – I rise to second the motion, Madam Speaker.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD. – Madam Speaker, at the outset, let me say that this motion is not about politics, it is not a political motion, but simply a necessity in a true and modern democracy.

Madam Speaker, if this House agrees or passes this motion I think it will be a big win for all Members of Parliament. It will be a big win too for the media industry; the journalists; the economy and for Fiji, Madam Speaker. I brought this motion with that in mind.

Fiji's future as a social, economic, and politically stable nation cannot be guaranteed unless freedom of expression is enshrined to a free, fair and credible media.

We firmly believe Madam Speaker that this is not pessimism, it is a reality.

The media industry in this country has been under siege since December 2006. For more than five years, especially after the abrogation of the 1997 Constitution, Madam Speaker, on 10th April 2009 have been turbulent and devastating for the media industry and media organisations.

The work of the media industry, especially after the start of the *coup* culture in 1987, has been remarkable in some ways balanced, informative and on many occasions impartial, except for a brief period after the 1987 *coups*. However, Madam Speaker, the enforcement of the media censorship under the Public Emergency Regulations after April 2009 until January 2012, and the promulgation of the Media Industry Development Decree, 2010 has seriously undermined media freedom in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, media throughout the world as we all know, is generally regarded as the fourth state. It is the last line of defenders of democracy, human rights, dignity and justice.

Article 19, Madam Speaker, of Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, and I quote:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek to receive and impart information and ideas through the media regardless of frontiers.”

Madam Speaker, this freedom and right is reposed in the people which the state and politicians, and governments and parliaments like ours must respect at all times.

The Media Industry Development Decree, Madam Speaker, without doubt is regressive and suppresses media freedom because it imposes restrictions and prescribes heavy penalties.

This Decree must be either repealed or amended substantially because we believe that the media should not be regulated by the State or any government.

Madam Speaker, the restoration of parliamentary democracy has, in my view, and views of a lot of people has seen little change in the behaviour of large sections of our media and individual journalist, and there is a reason for this Madam Speaker, it is not the choice of the media industry and ournalists, but a result of severe penalties in the Decree that I wish to outline.

The Media Industry Development Authority is essentially an enforcer of Government's agenda on many occasions as far as the media is concerned.

In January, this year, Madam Speaker, the MIDA Chairman, Mr Ashwin Raj, who is present here, spoke about the need for the focus to shift on freedom of expression and ethics. Words are mere rhetoric, Madam Speaker, the Decree renders freedom and ethics meaningless.

Madam Speaker, Part 2 of the Decree outlines the structure and functions of the Media Industry Development Authority. The honourable Minister appoints the Chairperson, and five other members and can also remove them. This is obvious and it could be a major conflict of interest.

Section 17, Madam Speaker, provides the Authority, immunity from legal proceedings, civil or criminal. While the media is bound by restrictive rules and regulations, the Media Authority can act with virtual impunity. Where is the balance and fairness, Madam Speaker? Where is the accountability?

Section 22 states:

“content of any media service must not include material which:

- a) is against the public interest or order;
- b) is against national interest; or
- c) creates communal discord.”

This is a very broad provision, open to interpretation by the Government or anyone else. It is, Madam Speaker, like a noose around the neck of the media.

Madam Speaker this provision is unnecessary because offences such as those are already adequately covered under Crimes Decree, the Public Order Act, on racial and religious vilification, hate speech and economic sabotage.

Part 5, Madam Speaker, covering Enforcement of Media Standards, allows the Authority to enforce the disclosure of specified documents or information, as well as the right to enter, search and confiscate documents when it comes to breach of confidentiality. The standard practice in democracies is that it is referred to the courts, which rely on precedents and can be expected, Madam Speaker, to come up with fair, impartial judgements.

But in Fiji, Madam Speaker, this function has been somewhat usurped by MIDA, which is in my view controlled by Government, through appointments made by the Minister and this is yet another noose around the media's neck.

Part 8, Madam Speaker, deals with the Media Tribunal which consists of a chairperson, a qualified judge, appointed by the President on the advice of the Attorney General. The Tribunal adjudicates complaints received from MIDA. It has to comply with the directions of the responsible Minister pertaining to policy. The Tribunal also has to consider the Attorney-General's submission during certain proceedings. It makes hearings vulnerable to political interference.

Madam Speaker, it also increases the level of Government control and pressure on the tribunal. This is by no means an independent tribunal. It is tied to Government in too many ways. It may not be happening, Madam Speaker, but this provision is unethical and not transparent.

Part 10 deals with the powers of the tribunal, Madam Speaker, and this includes ordering fines up to \$100,000 against media companies; \$25,000 against publishers, editors and \$1,000 against other media employees, as monetary compensation to complainants. Upon conviction for any breaches of the Media Code, a media organisation, Madam Speaker, could be fined \$100,000. The publisher, the editor, \$25,000, and or two years imprisonment, and a journalist, Madam Speaker, or media \$1,000 and or two years imprisonment.

Madam Speaker, this is unnecessary, especially when we have defamation laws in place. It is an example of duplicities and tricky legislation. A waste of time and resources. Such pay outs can ruin media companies and journalists, and to protect themselves, journalists and media companies have resort to self-censorship. This is a fact.

Madam Speaker, media organisation can challenge decisions in a Court of Appeal, but only for awards in excess of \$50,000. Media workers, Madam Speaker, have no such options, even though the awards can lead to financial ruin in a sector, where salaries are low compared to other professions. While the defendants have little recourse, complainants or the authority can challenge Tribunal decisions in the Court of Appeal. This is yet another example of the lopsided and one sided legislation.

Madam Speaker, we have heard in the past the Government justifying the Media Decree on Social, Economic and Political stability. However, all these restrictive provisions, basically what they have done is to push opposition views into anonymous online media platforms, where they have re-emerged, Madam Speaker, in more extreme forms. People have lost faith in the main stream news media, instead they are relying on blogs where people are posting comments, some of which are full of rumours, misinformation, incitement to racial violence and so on. It is happening because people do not believe the mainstream media in many ways. And we believe that this misguided media policy espoused through the Decrees, to be partly blamed for this state of affairs.

On balance, Madam Speaker, there is a requirement in the Decree that all news stories have to be balanced otherwise they cannot be published. This is a further sign of a legislation simply gone wrong. This provision simply becomes a loophole to evade media and scrutiny by not responding to media questions. So, if there is a statement from the opposition and the media goes to a Government Minister and the Minister chooses not to respond, then the media may not be able to run that particular story, Madam Speaker, and this has happened. They are worried about the implications that if they do, then they will be slapped with this severe penalties.

Madam Speaker, also if the stories are sometimes positive, and I have experienced this, towards the Government, this requirement is ignored. I give an example, we issued a press statement, and the next day the media organisation produced a Government response without actually referring to anything that the press release which allowed the Government to respond to it, was reported in the media.

Madam Speaker, every international organisation of repute that I have known since this Decree came into being has expressed concern about the regressive and draconian provisions of this Decree, and allow me to just give you a few examples.

The Human Rights Watch, a Non-Government Human Rights Organisation says that the Decree should be removed. Reporters Without Borders, a France-based non-profit organisation, Madam Speaker, which has consulted the United Nations and UNESCO says, and I quote;

“Revoke the Media Industrial Development Decree and its draconian punitive measures against journalists, editors and media organisations and adopt self-regulatory media framework encouraging a free press”.

Madam Speaker, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the world’s largest organisation of journalists, first published in 1926, currently represents about 600,000 members in more than 100 countries, says the following:

“The IFJ is extremely worried that the Decree allows the authority and tribunal that it would set up to have the power to call for any documentation, to enter media offices, to seize materials and equipment. It is extremely worrying that the Decree allows for fines of up to A\$300,000 and, or prison of up to five years for a range of offences”.

Freedom House, Madam Speaker, an independent watch dog organisation dedicated to the expansion of freedom around the world, and I quote:

“Violations of the vaguely worded public interest or public order provisions of the Decree are punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment of up to two years for journalist. The penalty for any media company that breaches the Decree maybe as high as F\$100,000. In addition, it overrides traditional checks and balances by forbidding the judiciary to challenge the Decree or the institutions by it”.

Madam Speaker, genuine democracy, equal citizenry, freedom of expression, accountability, transparency, which are ethics that every government, parliament, every country would want to promote, can only be achieved through free, fair, credible and non-regulated media.

Let me conclude, Madam Speaker, by saying once again, this is not a political motion. This is not a motion to gain political mileage. This is a motion that will put this Parliament that will allow Members of Parliament, journalists, media organisations, and indeed Fiji as a country to tell the world that we have changed this Decree, or we have repealed this Decree to allow for the freedom that we espouse as part of our parliamentary democracy in this country.

Thank you Madam Speaker, and I commend the motion to the House.

MADAM SPEAKER.- The motion is now open for debate.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I am quite shocked to hear the honourable Member Dr. Biman Prasad saying that we should repeal the Media Industry Development Decree. Coming from a former academic colleague, I am totally taken aback.

Madam Speaker, I note he alluded to saying that it will not be a loss to the people, economy and the country. Unfortunately, that is not true and I will demonstrate that, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, media whether it is online, print or voice on air, play a very important role in shaping the kind of nature of society that the one who have a vision for, a very important a very critical role. Media access a critical conscience of the society, they are our eyes and ears on the ground. It helps at times to reach the people, it is faster than what we are able to do. It raises issue which needs to be pursued by researches or by policy-makers through in-depth research to raise issues. Given that immense responsibility of the Media and the profound impact it could have on the society and the people, we need to have a framework.

What the Media Industry Development Decree does is to provide a framework within which the Media Industry should operate. The framework ensures that they are responsible, the ethical, they contribute to the development of the wisdom that we want to have in the society that will help us develop the vision of the government. Madam Speaker, if there is any grievance, people can take it to the Media Tribunal.

Now, there is a number of assertions and allegations that the honourable Member has made about the Media Tribunal but no single evidence has been given to us by the honourable Member providing that the Media Tribunal is biased or could be biased. Not a single evidence has been given by the honourable Member to show us that the ruling of the Media Tribunal has been biased. Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the honourable Member has not been able to make any proper or solid

justification for renewable of the framework that provides Media functions in the country. What the honourable Member failed to realise is that, it is not about self-regulation.

Madam Speaker, the honourable Member is saying that we should allow the Media Industry to self-regulate. Self-regulation does not mean that you do not provide a framework for the function. What the Media Industry Development is to provide a framework within which the Media Industry can function. It is a framework. So, the question is, I am shocked why the honourable Member is saying that we should not provide a framework for the Media Industry to operate and therefore, give the unfettered access to have any kind of behaviour conduct in a small developing society where we are trying to build.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, we do not support this particular motion.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to contribute to the dialogue today on this very important motion to bring life back into this country.

We started off the week, Madam Speaker, with the motion by the honourable Prime Minister for Fiji to re-join the International Parliamentary Union, which was greatly applauded by everyone. We salute the honourable Prime Minister for taking Fiji back to the IPU, where we would observe democracy to its fullest being part of a community that believes in the rights of mankind which is unlimited.

What we have been accustomed to, Madam Speaker, the reality in Fiji today is that, we are not truly enjoying our democracy because of the Media Decree that holds everything back. The reality is that, Madam Speaker, just recently, we paid two Media organisations to run ads, fully paid. They did not run it. They were afraid. That is last week, Madam Speaker. In this modern day Fiji, we have with us today students from the University, I would like to ask them; do they really have freedom of expression to its fullest in this country?

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, please do not include the guests in the gallery.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- My apology, Madam Speaker.

The youths of today, Madam Speaker, we spoke to a number of groups and there is still this fear that is in them. We need to remove that. We owe it to our youths to enjoy freedom to its fullest. I normally say to them, I want you to taste freedom that I tasted. I was 20 years, 21 years once when Fiji became independent, we enjoy freedom that was unfettered is what I want to pass on to our youths of today. Today, we are not doing that. The work is in progress, I agree, it is a long march back to freedom but we need to start unshackling what is holding us back to become a truly free people.

Again, we applaud the IPU today, Madam Speaker, we should all vote and re-look at our Media Decree and make Fiji truly free. I was just sharing with the youths about an incident in 2011. I left Nadi and went to Sydney and as soon as I arrived, you know how you stop at the airport, walk through the tunnel into thoroughfare, duty free, immigration, pick your bags. Immediately, I got into my car, there was something in the air that told me, I used to live in a country like this. I do not know what it was, I still do not know today, what it was. Was it the radio, someone on the radio or was it the billboard, or whatever? I said I used to live in a country like this. That was Sydney in 2011 and that was when I used to live in Nadi which was very sullen. I just do not know what it was. We need to bring that back. There is something about freedom that is in the air, it live at its purest and make us all citizens that we all deserve to be.

Madam Speaker, let us repeal the Media Decree and put Fiji back on the right pedestal.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I give the floor to the honourable Ashneel Sudhakar.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand here today, Madam, to add to my honourable esteem colleague, Dr. Mahendra Reddy for what he has said. We have heard the motion that has been moved and we have heard the views in support of the motion. The purpose of the Media Industry Development Decree 2010, Madam Speaker, is to make media more responsible and that is the bottom line. Now, there have been suggestions, there is a motion before this august House to remove this essential Decree. Imagine what will happen if this Decree is removed. The mainstream Media, as mentioned by the honourable leader of the National Federation Party, is an essential arm of government, the fourth arm of government, if it removes the cover, removes the protection that the public enjoys, the Media Decree is to make the Media more responsible. Remove that cover, what we will see is all that Hollywood story that is written on blog sites will be brought in and published in the main stream media.

I am a legal practitioner, Madam Speaker, I am a lawyer with 11 years standing and I have done numerous defamation cases. I have handled defamation cases.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- More jobs for you!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Yes.

(Laughter)

And that is probably what they enjoy. They think about money, they think about jobs for lawyers, I think about integrity. I think about principles and what I am saying today is that, there are cases, instances where Media will write as an article, pick something from the Wikipedia, pick something from the blog sites and publish in the mainstream Media. An innocent litigant will have to spend thousands of dollars to go to court and prove that he is right. I have not done it, he has to go to high court, he has to go through the whole process of high court procedure, eight years, nine years of cases and what he gets, \$5,000 to \$6,000 in compensation.

This Media Industry Development Decree 2010 is not helping, it is not curtailing the Media. It is helping the citizens of Fiji, it is helping the people of this country from attacks of this kind that you have seen and it is not only happening now, it has been happening. Media and democracy do not mean that you will take a scattergun and start firing at everyone. I think the Opposition likes that approach, just to take a scattergun and shoot at everyone. But there must be some integrity, there must be some responsibility. Now, if you allow, the Media as an essential part of democracy, but if you allow them to be irresponsible then there is no end to where these things will end. There will be comics, there will be cartoons about all of us in the Media. What will happen; we will be asked to go to court, we will be asked to go to lawyers, file a writ and it will come to me and I will fight for you too, of course, at a charge.

Madam Speaker, to add to what the honourable Dr. Reddy has said, this Decree is making the Media more responsible and Mr. Ashwin Raj sitting here is also a victim of one of those articles and if this protection is removed, then the Media will not be responsible and we will all be dragged down on the streets and made a mockery of. Therefore, with these words, Madam Speaker, I cannot and I will not support this motion to revoke the Media Industry Development Decree, 2010. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER – Thank you. I give the floor to the honourable Roko Tupou Draunidalo

HON. ROKO T.T.S .DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I made a few notes that I am going to refer to it through this contribution. Free speech, Madam Speaker,

which includes free media is a key stone of any democracy and why do we say that. Obviously, democracy is about representation of people and like this Parliament and people get to choose their representatives. How are they to choose if information that helps them to choose - make the choice is not freely available to them? If I were cheeky, I would say they choose what we have, Madam Speaker. But this Decree is very restrictive, as we heard from the mover, the honourable Dr. Biman Prasad. I would refer to the various sections of the Decree and read them out for our benefit but before I go there, the question has been asked by another honourable Member, what would happen if this Decree were to be taken away? What would happen is that, the democracy that we have had are up to when this Decree came in.

Madam Speaker, in big democracies like the United States of America, where they have a lot of secrets that they want to keep. They are not so insecure as to have decrees or laws like this. In fact, they take the mickey out of it. The President of the United States, Madam Speaker, not so long ago, went along to the White House correspondence dinner and took along his anger translator, to talk about what he really felt about the media. So while he was talking nicely on the surface, his anger translator was saying things completely different, making faces, getting angry, cursing the White House correspondence and that was I thought of a very good show of what Media Freedom is all about. Because in every democracy, politicians will always have raddles with the media and even the President of the United States, the most powerful man on this planet would not dream of a law or a structure to restrict speech.

He instead takes along this comedian to take the mickey out of journalists that he cannot stand and whatever they have been running, as his anger translator. There have been a lot of talking in my party having my own anger translator, to communicate certain things. But this is not a new thing, Madam Speaker, politicians having run in through the media and there is a runner, a lonely runner for the leader of the Fijian Association Party back in the late 1990s -1999. I had real issues with some journalists in this country. I used to think "oh, what can we do with these journalists?" They just do not print the truth, they do not do this, but never, ever, Madam Speaker, would I have condoned a law, a draconian one to limit free speech. Because that just stifles the information that goes to the people. We have already heard from the other speakers, Madam Speaker, how that is injurious to the State as a whole.

Madam Speaker, perhaps the Government ought to think more about having a sense of humour with the Media, so that it would help them. I have also heard from other speakers about there being no evidence for this limitation of speech. I can confidently say that the various publishers and journalists have to run their stories by their lawyers. Their lawyers have to approve stories before they print because they are scared of this Decree. It is true, Madam Speaker. During the campaign, I had to defend former colleagues at the Bar and say, "if I were their lawyer, I would also tell them do not run that story, because you will run the risk of this Decree". Do not run it because the client's interest is the priority above sensationalizing or whatever other accusation that might come that journalists wish to indulge in. So, Madam Speaker, that is the evidence of lawyers rightly restricting the free speech of media, their clients, for their own protection.

Madam Speaker, if I can refer to sections of the Decree which is the establishment of MIDA. The Minister of Communications is also the Attorney-General appoints the five people that are there and so this idea of the honourable Minister for Education almost it sounded like social engineering what is appropriate and what is not appropriate to be let out to the community is in the power of a politically partisan office and this is not just FijiFirst. We do not want any other Minister for Communications in the future to have this power; whether it be Fiji First or if one day this side of the

House gets the Minister for Communications, Madam Speaker, that Minister should not have this power.

If I can refer, Madam Speaker, to the powers of MIDA, that is in Section 9 of this Decree. The authority or power to do anything for the purpose of discharging its functions and duties under the Decree or any other written law or which is incidental or conducive to the discharge of those functions and duties, in particular may, so it is not restrictive. That definition is very large. All the things that are listed there, includes monitoring compliance with ethical standards of print and broadcast media, in accordance with the Media Code of Ethics and Practice, monitor advertising practices of the print and broadcast media, monitor compliance by television broadcast with the television programme classifications code, it goes on. And then, if it is not sufficient that the Minister for Communications and again, let us not just think of this Minister, any other future Minister for Communications. Not enough that he or she would appoint of this MIDA, they have Section 10 - Directions by Minister. The Minister may give such directions not in consistent with the provisions of this Decree as to the performance of the functions and duties and exercise of powers of MIDA. Just to make it absolutely clear, apart from me appointing you, I will also direct you as to how you exercise your powers.

Now, Madam Speaker, the other section that I wish to refer to was Section 17 of the Decree - Protection from Liability. No proceedings civil or criminal shall lie against the authority or anything it may do or fail to do in the course of the exercise or intended exercise of its functions, unless it is shown that it did not act in good faith or without reasonable care. No proceedings, civil or criminal shall lie personally against any member, officer or employee of MIDA.

Madam Speaker, this is interesting, we have always heard from the other side of the House, they profess to have absolute confidence in our judiciary and yet, these provisions take judicial functions away from the Judiciary as though we do not have confidence that they can interpret what is if of national security and speech that should be allowed into the community. Through these restrictive and other clauses, we are taking away judicial functions and giving them to the executive arm. Again, Madam Speaker, it is not just this Minister, we do not want any other Minister in the future to have this power and that is why we say that this Decree should be taken away.

There is a Section 20 on political advertising, white powers in Section 22, so political advertising, Madam Speaker which will include not only the incumbent Minister's party but other parties competing with the incumbent Minister, not just this minister, any minister of it, why should that minister have power over what his or her rivals get to put out as political advertisements?

Section 22, Madam Speaker, Contents Regulation. The content of any media service must not include material which is against public interest or order, is again national interest or creates communal discord.

Madam Speaker, before this Decree came into force, speech was regulated by the Courts, what speech, that is, not loud in our discourse and they would take all these into consideration and all of these things including the laws of defamation were things that were developed over many decades and over a century or more by the Common Law. So, the Courts are properly equipped to deal with this as the honourable Dr. Biman Prasad has already set out. Why should a body that is appointed by a political party and minister, this one or into the future? Why should any minister, in the future, have this power over his content that would touch on his political opposition? It is draconian, it is just totally out of sync with what a modern democracy should be like and I note that the honourable Minister for Education could barely raise his voice in defense of this Decree. and I know it is because all of his wisdom and education would tell him not to.

(Laughter)

MADAM SPEAKER.- Order, order, please do not address a Member directly.

HON. ROKO. T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, the last...

MADAM SPEAKER.- I have not finished please; order. Just address the Speaker, thank you.

HON. ROKO. T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Yes, Madam Speaker, and on the last issue, there was a comment made by a learned colleague that defamation laws were not sufficient because people could not take or it was expensive to take people to court. What I would say to that is, at least defendants were known because they were put into the mainstream media, you could say X and Y said so about me and I am going to take X and Y to court. Now, that freedom has been taken away by this Decree, people are unknown, as the honourable Dr. Biman Prasad has said and they go into these blog sites and then we are looking around. I want to sue a few people on those blog sites but I cannot find their identity and that is the result of this sort of Decree. Now, we cannot take people for defamation, we do not know who the defendants are.

Madam Speaker, this is just part of an environment which we have spoken of many times. This restrictive environment is not conducive to people having confidence in this economy. There could be much more investment, if serious investors overseas saw, only if I took \$20 million, \$100 million to Fiji and if I had problems there with certain personnel, can I freely air my story in the media about what has happened in this conduct or the next. Lawyers will say, “do not bother”, there is a Media Decree there, you can only say what, so you make sure your investment is this way, you make sure that, you just forget about it. That is one of the consequences apart from not knowing defendants and restricting our democracy and that is my contribution this morning.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the honourable and learned Attorney-General.

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

Madam Speaker, in the interest of honourable Bulitavu signaling to me that he wants to eat, so I will be very, very quick.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, there are numerous fundamental flaws in the arguments that have been put by the other side. But just to be very succinct, I would like to refer all the Members of this House to the Constitution. The Constitution, Madam Speaker, is the supreme law of the land.

Section 7 of the Constitution states that all laws need to be consistent with the Constitution and if any Member has an grievances, they want to air some issues that they believe is unconstitutional, they can do it to the courts. Honourable Prasad has been speaking a lot about this, why does he not, armed with his lawyers, take the matter to the courts?

Section 7 says, Madam Speaker, it says and I quote:

“In addition to complying with section 3 with interpreting and applying this Chapter, a court, tribunal or other authority –

- (a) must promote the values that underlie a democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom; and
- (b) may, if relevant, consider international law, applicable to the protection of the rights and freedoms in this Chapter.

So, Madam Speaker, that avenue is there, for them to challenge that law.

Now, let me also tell you about freedoms, Madam Speaker. We have freedoms, no freedom has no limitation placed on it, except probably the freedom not to be tortured, as is set out in the Constitution. The Constitution has no limitations on being tortured. So, of course, there are some countries that have allowed torture, as a means of getting information. You talk about USA, Guantanamo Bay, they allow water bodying. The Israeli Supreme Court has allowed a form of what we would call torture, for the protection of the sovereign State. All freedoms have some limitation placed to it, all other freedoms. In the same way, freedom of speech, freedom of publication does not give the media to write any story about any individual. It does not give the media the right, to say for example, well we know Mr. XYZ was standing outside Pender Street, therefore, he was seeing prostitutes, they cannot make those statements. The media also cannot go and say, well we believe because there are too many Chinese coming to Fiji, let us kill all the Chinese. There are certain laws, the restrictions on hate speech. So there are limitations to these freedoms, Madam Speaker.

Now, the debate in this House so far, in particular from the other side, seems to be focused on politicians, seems to be focused on people in this House. The Media Development Authority Decree is not about that. It is about the standards to be set. It is about the rights of the individuals. What the honourable Prasad twisted around when he talked about the appeal to the Court of Appeal, he said “oh why should the companies only appeal if it is more than \$50, 000 but individuals can go”. Because the individual person needs protection. If an individual citizen of Fiji, who does not have the means to go to the Court of Appeal, he or she should have the right to do that, whereas the *Fiji Times*, *Fiji Sun* or *Fiji TV*, FBC they are media organizations, they are limited liabilities. They need to have a particular threshold before they meet. So it is a protection of the individual themselves. So, Madam Speaker, you see this has been all put out of context. We, of course, had our advertisements knocked back by *Fiji Times* during the campaign time. There were advertisements that were run by SODELPA that we thought were factually and legally incorrect but they printed it. When we wanted to do a response, their lawyers came back and said “no, you cannot do this response, this is how you amend it, we decided not to print it”. That is how it functioned. We do not go running off and saying that there is no freedom et cetera.

The other point that the honourable Prasad, the mover of the motion forgot to mention is that, if you look at the Decree, Schedule 1 - Media Code of Ethics and Practice, guess where it is from? That is verbatim, borrowed from the Media Council that existed before this, the self-regulating council, borrowed verbatim from that and they do not talk about unfettered access they talk about accuracy, balance and fairness. These are the standards that they talk about. So, Madam Speaker, the reality is this, you have many other countries in the world, I mean they do not talk about Samoa but I got the Samoan Broadcasting Act, I got their Tribunals,  
(Hon. A. Sayed-Khaiyum holds up a copy of the Act)

they are, I tell you, draconian. I have also got here with me the Singaporean Act Development Authority, they need to read that. Now, Madam Speaker, the point is, this year when the World Press Freedom Index 2015, Fiji has jumped in these rankings from 107 to 93<sup>rd</sup>, So, we are improving and we will continue to improve. No doubt about that. It is not going to be done simply by sweep of some law therefore, it will all be hunky dory, no, they need to look at the essence of what this Decree is about. All the Members of Parliament who walk out of this door every day, the media, Madam Speaker  
...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Don't point.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.-... I am not pointing at you, I am pointing at the door.

... is there anyone restricting them from their voices being heard? Is anyone telling them “no, you can only speak to that person or that person? It is up to the media organisations what story they are on; who they want to run it; and what is the editorial spin on it. That is up to the media organisation.

Let me also remind you, Madam Speaker, no journalist; no media organisation; no editor; and no publisher has been charged under this Decree since its inception - no one. There was one, Madam Speaker, in respect of the ownership issues, but nothing to do with any publication of any story. So this, Madam Speaker, is the reality.

Madam Speaker, the other point that I wanted to point out and very simply that ...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- That what?

You scared! Why, you alone?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the kind or sort of noise in the background, I was sort of a bit distracted by that.

Madam Speaker, the point is, there is no restriction in terms of what gets printed. There are normal laws to be followed. There are media standards that need to be adhered to and if anyone has any disagreement, they can take it to the Tribunal, or some other. There is a right of appeal to that. Simply, and if they feel as the Opposition so aggrieved by it, please take it to the court system and let it be tested. Please do that, rather than bringing silly motions to this House. Madam Speaker, we should reject this motion.

HON, F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I will be very short today, but I am going to bring up a story from 45 years ago, that was told in this very House, and I think the statement actually reflects exactly what this side of the House is talking about, including them (*Hon. F.S.Koya points to Hon. Government Members sitting on the other side of the House.*).

Madam Speaker, I read from the *Hansard copy of the Daily Hansard of 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1970*, this was part of the Appropriation Bill. There were some discussions going on then, regarding media, et cetera and the responsibilities and irresponsibilities. This statement was made by the then honourable Leader of the Opposition, the late S.M. Koya.

(Applause)

Madam Speaker, I hope that the three Members of the National Federation Party, sitting on the other side, would listen very carefully.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Blame it on you.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Shame on you, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM: Absolutely

HON. F.S.KOYA -Madam Speaker, shame on you for being disrespectful.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I would like to warn Members, please be respectful and uphold the decorum in the House.

HON. A.SAYED-KHAIYUM: *(to the Opposition)* – How dare you speak for him!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- You are not my father.

Madam Speaker, I quote:

“It will not be a big joke when the country goes mad. The country goes berserk because the newspapers of the day in the critical hour have indulged in sensationalism. I know, Sir, our limitations and I am well aware of what is happening. Whilst we cannot abrogate the abrogation of freedom of speech, we can nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, pass sufficient laws to see that they are within the disciplined society. “Disciplined society” my friends, I have said before and I will say it again, Sir, freedom and democracy without discipline are meaningless, they mean nothing. They are only free in a well ordered society.”

I only wish, Madam Speaker, that they had read this, or taken the time to read it.

HON. GOVT MEMBER.- They don’t understand. Give them a copy.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I will make a copy available to you.

Madam Speaker, what it really means is, and I want to correct some wrongs too about what has been said economically, we are doing quite well, Madam Speaker, as a nation. We are doing well economically. There is no block to investment, just because of the Media Industry Decree. There is not – absolutely not. I have in this House made available figures that show everyone, all and sundry, and the entire population as to how well we are doing. There is no obstacle, Madam Speaker, so it would be wrong to say that this particular Decree is a block to any investment in this country. In fact, we have created such an environment that we are getting inundated with investment applications at Investments Fiji. But in any event, Madam Speaker, a fine balance must be held, and I was hoping that the three honourable Members on the other side of the House who belong to the National Federation Party could have read this, and not brought this motion because that is where it was born.

(Applause)

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I thank all the honourable Members for their contributions on this motion.

First of all, Madam Speaker, some of the contributions and references to the motion was actually incorrect. If they read the motion carefully, it says “that this Parliament supports a review or a repeal...” So reference to just a repeal by some of the honourable Members on the other side was not correct.

The other point, Madam Speaker, is the contribution of some of the Members from the other side was a bit confusing. I think they were confused about a responsible media with the regulations and how draconian they are. None of them, Madam Speaker, talked about the draconian penalties: the flyers, the jail term and the reason for self-censorship in the media. You talk to any journalist in this country today, Madam Speaker, and they will tell you how they are restricted by the Media Decree and the draconian fines.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about repealing or reviewing this Decree, we are not talking about irresponsible media; we are not saying that. We want a responsible media; we want sufficient laws to ensure that there is a responsible media; and I must say that on the quote by the honourable Member from the other side, the National Federation Party has the greatest respect of its former Leader of the Opposition, the late honourable Siddiq Koya, and what he said, Madam Speaker, was coming from a man with wisdom. He would have never supported, Madam Speaker, this draconian decree. Never, Madam Speaker ...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Never, never!

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- ... and would have said that we want freedom of speech in this country.

The other point I want to make, Madam Speaker, and let me say this. The honourable and learned Attorney-General always tells me that I am not a lawyer, but I can tell him that I am a father of a bright young lawyer.

Section 173 of the Constitution and I have said this before, Madam Speaker, when I was making my contribution to the motion by the honourable Prime Minister on the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), that all the Decrees from December 2006 until the first sitting of Parliament last year, Madam Speaker, according to this Constitution is intact and at (4) (c) of the provision says

“any Promulgation, Decree or Declaration, or any subordinate laws made under any such Promulgation, Decree or Declaration (including any provision of any such laws) made or as may be made between 5 December, 2006 until the first sitting of the first Parliament under this Constitution, for being inconsistent with any provision of this Constitution, including any provision of Chapter 2 of this Constitution.”

Chapter 2 of the Constitution is the Bill of Rights.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Until the first sitting, Biman!

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- This is what we saying, Madam Speaker, that the only hope for this Constitution is that we need to review or repeal some of the Decrees that are included in this, and I agree with the Attorney-General, that we need to challenge some of this in the Court.

Madam Speaker, let me just conclude, I am actually surprised, the confusion you always sought ...

(Laughter)

...by what I say.

Let me, Madam Speaker, just before I make the final point, I wanted to show the honourable Member, a copy of the page of the title of one of the books that I had written, with one of my colleagues which says, “Media and Development in the Pacific”. I would suggest that some of the Members on the other side who contributed on the motion actually read that.

One final point, Madam Speaker, responsibility and freedom of speech are interlinked, but you do not need to suppress freedom to have responsibility. That is the point of this motion, Madam Speaker, that there are provisions in the Decree and this is why I have worded the motion Madam Speaker to say that the House support the review or a repeal. If we cannot repeal the whole Decree and there are elements in the Decree, Madam Speaker, this is why we have carefully worded this motion, that there are provisions in the Decree that maybe needed.

It is not amending the motion, read the motion, honourable Member, read the motion carefully. It says, review or a repeal. So Madam Speaker, we are saying that there is a need to look at this Decree, remove the draconian provisions so that people in this country, the Media Organisations in this Country, the journalists in this Country can feel that they have their space, and without being responsible, without fear cover the issues that they want to do so.

Madam Speaker I hope that the honourable Members on the other side, as I said I want to reiterate what I said at the beginning, this is not about politics, this is not about tier tricks, this is not about any kind of drama, this is really an appeal, appeal to you and appeal to the Prime Minister. He should tell his Attorney-General that there are provisions in this Decree that should go because the Prime Minister, Madam Speaker, quite vitally talks about genuine democracy and I support him, but he should know that this Decree will embarrass him ...

*(Chorus of Interjections)*

... somewhere. So again Madam Speaker, I appeal to the Prime Minister and to the Government side...

MADAM SPEAKER. –Order! Order! Please refrain from speaking directly to a person or a Member. You can speak to me.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD. – Thank you Madam Speaker. I appeal to the Prime Minister to think about this carefully. Thank you Madam Speaker and I wish to end my contribution on the motion. .

MADAM SPEAKER. – I thank the honourable Dr. Biman Prasad for his reply.

The Parliament will now vote, does any Member oppose honourable Dr. Biman Prasad's motion?

*(Chorus of interjections)*

Some does oppose, so we will go into electronic voting on this particular motion. We now put the motion to the vote.

Question put.

Ayes:	17
Noes:	24
Not Voted:	9

Motion lost.

We will now move on to the next motion. You will note that we are not breaking for tea because this sitting will end at 12:30 p.m.

Review of current 55 year Retirement Policy

HON. RO. T.V. KEPA. – Madam Speaker. I beg to move the motion:

That in view of the long-term negative impacts of the mandatory 55 year Retirement Policy on future debt levels, labour force participation, social security and valuable skills, that this House directs the relevant Standing Committee to review the current 55 year Retirement Policy with a view to amending the policy to:

- (i) Move the compulsory retirement age back to the original default age of 60 years; and
- (ii) Insert a provision for retirement to be optional to employees.

HON. RATU S. NANOVO. – I beg to second the motion.

HON. ROKO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, maintaining human dignity and social justice is a basic human right, particularly for those that have spent all their productive life in nation building. Policies and programmes, Madam Speaker, of Government, especially must ensure we maximise on their potential. Policy makers usually consider the demography, physical, a cost of agent, health, life expectancy, nature of the profession, supply of labour force, et cetera while deciding the retirement age. However Madam Speaker, in 2009 after the *coup* of December 5<sup>th</sup> 2006, there was a Decree that was named the “States Service Decree of 2009, and for clause 15, the heading for that Madam Speaker was “Retirement Age in the Public Service.”

Clause 15 states:

“15- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in any written law, the retirement age in the Public Service shall be 55 years;

- (2) The retirement age of 55 years in sub- section (1) above shall extend to the civil service, Fiji Police Force and the Fiji Prisons Service
- (3) Any person employed in the civil service, Fiji Police Force and the Fiji Prisons Service, who is already over the age of 55 years, shall retire on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2009.
- (4) Nothing in this section prevents, upon retirement, the continued employment of a person on a fixed term contractual employment, if his or her services are required in the Government.”

So you can imagine, Madam Speaker, those who had spent a beautiful Christmas and New Year in 2008, and to be told in this, by way of this Decree, that they had to retire on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 2009. Some of them, Madam Speaker, who are at 54 almost 55. You can imagine how these people, these civil Servants people who are employed in the Fiji Police Force and the Fiji Prisons Service.

Madams Speaker, we note here that the Fiji Military Forces was not part of this retirement Decree. So Madam Speaker you can imagine the families of these workers to be told that they were not retiring at 60 years, which they had been planning for, but at 55. Children's education, mortgages to be paid, housing, probably, vehicle loan, relatives children to be educated. It was not so bad, Madam Speaker, for these people who worked outside of Suva, because the cost of leaving is generally cheaper in other areas of the country, apart from Suva. So you can imagine the shock and the trauma that must have gone through these thousands of people, the sleeplessness, the heart break that they would have been going through in terms of being told that they were retiring at this time.

We put this into perspective, Madam Speaker that the normal retirement age in other countries, I will just name a few, Madam Speaker. It is 65 years for countries like Austria, Belgium and Denmark. In Germany it is 67 years, also in Greece and Italy, and in the United Kingdom it is 68 years. If they opted for early retirement, in Austria and Belgium, it will be 60 years; in Germany, 65 years; Greece, 58yrs; Italy 57yrs; and in the UK, where they have just had elections, if they opted to take early retirement, it would be 65yrs. Madam Speaker, it is noted here that in the Roman Catholic Church, the priests retire at 70yrs, for Archbishops and Bishops, 75 years and I note here also that Archbishop Peter Loy Chung would be retiring at 75 years as that his predecessor, the late Archbishop Petero Mataca.

Madam Speaker, for those mandated by this Decree that they were to retire at 55 years, many of them did not own their own homes, but were renting so they would had to move out, possibly into squatter settlements as we heard many of them had to move out into. The lucky ones, Madam Speaker, were thrown a life line in that other Pacific countries have employed the highly skilled labour that were on the market now in Fiji; highly skilled with their expertise, experience and qualifications.

Madam Speaker, we know that almost in every Pacific island country, they have Fijians who are working there and providing very well for the civil service and for the private and public sector.

I note that in Nauru alone, the Chief Justice, the Chief Registrar, the DPP and the top lawyers in that country, the posts are held by Fijians. Those women who were here from the Pacific Island Parliamentarian Forum last week, they also commended very highly the people who are working in their countries who have come from Fiji. So these are the people who have been out of service to Fiji because they did not want them any longer and grabbed by these countries, especially in the Pacific Islands, but also in Australia and New Zealand.

Madam Speaker, we also have to note that in terms of life expectancy, there are very high stress levels that are now in various areas in the work place, in the Civil Service. We find that the younger people or the young professionals, and I do not have to name them, Madam Speaker, they are dying because of the high stress levels that they have to work under. The older ones who have retired are now living longer. So that is something for us to think about and to remember.

Madam Speaker, I found that in trying to get some information for this particular motion, it was very difficult from the Government Ministries and also through you, Madam Speaker, to the honourable Prime Minister and the honourable and learned Attorney-General. We had written a letter requesting, if our side of the House could visit some of the Government Ministries, we were told in order to visit them we had to go through the line Minister. So I do not know why we are victimised

in this particular regard, and I am bringing this to the attention of the honourable Prime Minister and the honourable and learned Attorney-General that only two days ago, we wanted to meet with some civil servants and they told us “you have to go through the line Minister.”

Madam Speaker, if that is for us, who are ordinary members of the public, desiring service from the Civil Service I do not know how we can operate productively with that type of restriction.

In terms of this particular motion, as I said the lucky ones are the ones who have been able to find employment overseas, especially the teachers, nurses, who are spoken very highly of in overseas countries.

Madam Speaker, these people who have retired, with the rise in cost of living in Fiji those who have not been able to get postings or employment overseas, life is very difficult for them because of the rise in cost of living. We hear that from our constituency visits and also from people who come to the office.

There was a shocking revelation, Madam Speaker, in 2013, during the Members’ Forum which was held by Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) in terms of their reforms that there were some members there who were receiving a mere \$5 monthly pension annuity payout from FNPF. This is just one example, and some of these people who were on pensions that they thought were able to support them for the rest of their lives, but some of them they found it just too expensive and difficult to live in Suva because of the great reduction in their pensions, especially from FNPF. They have had to relocate to other parts of the country, especially to the Western Division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this is one area that is of great concern for those who have retired and those who are almost on the point of retiring.

With those words I commend this motion to the House, and wish to have a debate on it.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, on a point of order that Standing Order 23(1) be suspended to allow debate and vote on all motions that are in today’s Order Paper.

HON. RATU I.D.TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the motion is agreed to, we will continue with our debates on the motion and the last one before we adjourn for today. Sorry, I did not hear that someone did oppose the motion which means that we will have to put the motion to the vote. And the question is to suspend the sitting to enable the House to complete the motions before we adjourn at 12.30pm. The motion is now put to the vote.

HON. P. SINGH.- A point of order, Madam Speaker. It should be put to a vote - any Member can move, it is just to complete the business in the Order Paper for today, and I believe that only one more motion is left on the agenda.

MADAM SPEAKER. – The Standing Order says that we adjourn the sitting at 12.30 p.m. and you have put forward a motion to suspend the Standing Order but a Member has opposed that motion and therefore, we will have to put it to the vote. Open the vote

HON. P. SINGH.- Just a clarification, is there any Member who oppose the vote?

MADAM SPEAKER. – Close the vote. Open again the vote. This is on the motion to suspend or not to suspend the Standing Orders. Are we ready to close the vote? Close the vote, Secretary-General.

Votes Cast:

16	-	Ayes
24	-	Noes
10	-	have not voted

MADAM SPEAKER. – There being 16 Ayes and 24 Noes, the motion is defeated and therefore, we will continue with the sitting until 12.30 p.m.

The floor is now open for debate and I now call on the Minister for Education to have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY. – Madam Speaker, I rise to oppose the motion. Madam Speaker, to those whom this retirement age is applied to, they are working in the formal sector. The formal sector are the ones who are members of the superannuation fund. The post 55 years they will get a stream of super, they will get a stream of income as pension. Now beyond 55, they choose to work, then they will be doubled dipping. They also access their superannuation fund, as well as they will be part of the Public Service. That is number one.

Also, the Members on the other side have argued - that they are not arguing that we should raise this superannuation eligibility age from 55 to 60. Very conveniently, they are saying “will keep the age at 55 but we want to raise the retirement age to 60”. They have forgotten the main argument about what do the members want? Do they want to lose the superannuation from 55 and choose 60 and continue to work till 60. They have not addressed that particular issue, they should go back to the members.

The second point that I want to argue is that, we are talking about retirement from the public sector, not from the private sector. You can establish your own business, you can go and work in the private sector, you can market your skills that you have, if the skills are that good to the private sector. Madam Speaker, the private sector does not have a retirement age because it belongs to individual but the public sector belongs to everyone and everyone must have the opportunity to get the employment there. Public sector belongs to everyone. Madam Speaker, there are people in the market who want to enter the public sector unless and until people do not move on and move out of the public sector, we will not be able to give opportunity for new young minds to come and join the public sector.

Madam Speaker, I want to address a few other issues raised by the mover of the motion the honourable Leader of the Opposition, talked about the children’s education, who will look after the children’s education after retirement. Madam Speaker, the Government will look after the children’s education, the Bainimarama Government will look after them through the Free Education Policy. Any child with education is free now, primary education is free now, secondary education is free now, university education is free now, Government will look after them.

Madam Speaker the honourable Member also said about mortgages to be paid. I am wondering if someone at the age of 55 and beyond is still paying mortgage, it is not about the retirement age but it is about poor financial planning. The honourable Member also selectively picked up the retirement age in other countries. Turkey has 45 years of retirement age, Greece - 57 it was 55 before, Bolivia - 58, Italy - 59, 55 it was in 1990. As the country grows, as the country develops, as the country resolves its social and economic problems, the country tend to look at some of these variables. So, it is important that when we drop numbers, we are not selective.

Madam Speaker, the third issue I want to talk about is in the motion. The honourable Member talked about retirement age verses future debt level. I cannot see any link between that. What is the link between getting someone off to retire at 55 and building future debt level. I want to see what is the link between the retirement age and the future debt level, debt levels of what; debt levels of individuals. I want to see what is the labour participation rate, we are talking about. In fact, we are talking about better distribution of labour force participation in public sector and moving these people to market their skills in the private sector, establish their own business, doing their own market. We are talking about better utilization of social security, we are talking about getting new right mind in the public sector and giving opportunity to everyone to have a fair share of the public sector. That is the logic behind the establishment of the retirement age of 55. Madam Speaker, I join our Members here in opposing this motion. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER. - Thank you. I call on the honourable Dr. Biman Prasad.

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to contribute very briefly on the motion. I think that is absolute confusion in what we have just heard from the honourable Minister from the other side. The honourable Leader of the Opposition is talking about retirement age in the Public Service, which was reduced from 60 to 55 and the honourable Minister forgot to say that. That the retirement age was 60 and it was reduced to 55, so the logic behind this motion is to raise it back to 60 and there are several reasons given as to why the retirement age to be reduced from 60 to 55. Some of them were related to employment that because you reduce the retirement age in the Public Service, you will give more employment to young people. The logic, Madam Speaker, is actually quite wrong because if you take that logic towards his logical conclusion then tomorrow you might say "okay, we have more people coming out of the university, more people coming out of technical colleges, they need civil service job". Are you going to suggest that you are going to reduce the retirement age from 55 to 50, so that the idea of logic that we heard about in creating jobs and we heard it from the honourable Minister for Education when he was employing teachers at \$12,000.

Madam Speaker, throughout the world, the trend is that you look at the labour market. Civil Service in most countries should be a sector where people, where young bright people want to go and work and they want to see a long term future. Now, you tell me a young bright graduate from a University wants to look at a job in the Civil Service, knows that he or she has to retire at 55. Why would that bright person in his or her right mind want to join the Civil Service?

So the logic of improving the Public Service with good people, efficient Public Service will not come simply because you are going to reduce the age from 60 to 55. In fact at 55, Madam Speaker, the wisdom, the experience, the knowledge that is needed in the Civil Service and there is a contradiction to what the Government is doing. If you look at the appointments under the Administration of Justice Decree, 2009, some of the important constitutional appointments, the retirement age is 65. And it proves the point, Madam Speaker, that you need wisdom, you need experience of those kind of people in the Public Service.

I mean, I was taught by teachers, Madam Speaker, in primary and secondary schools with an average experience of 10 to 15 years. Today, we have teachers in primary schools and secondary schools with an average experience of four to five years. Now at 55, Madam Speaker, a teacher would be at her best, I would like my kids to be taught by a very experienced teacher. So this logic of reducing retirement age from 60 to 55 was wrong and government should look at this seriously. This is a very sensible motion, Madam Speaker, thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the honourable and learned Attorney General. I have to give it to the most senior Member.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I feel somewhat compelled to respond to this motion given that the Public Service is in question here.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to very quickly highlight the lack of logic, as highlighted by honourable Minister Reddy in the question itself about future debt level. I think it is very timely that the honourable Leader of Opposition brought this to our attention because Standard and Poor's has just recently given a rating to Fiji.

So, Madam Speaker, I just want to highlight this. Fiji's sovereign credit rating has now gone up to B+ stable B. This is, Madam Speaker, a huge improvement. Fiji's debt to GDP ratio has dropped to 47.8 per cent, so obviously the retirement age is working well in terms of, as far as debt levels are concerned.

So, Madam Speaker, I also want to highlight the issue about superannuation that has been highlighted, I think very quickly. The superannuation again highlighted by Minister Reddy is that superannuation is payable at the age of 55.

Madam Speaker, the reality is this, the superannuation fund has been reformed. There are reports going back in the 1990s that said that if the Fiji National Provident Fund was not reformed, all the moneys would have finished by 2052. So, the honourable Prasad's son, who is a young bright lawyer would not have had a pension by the time he retired. That is what would have happened, Madam Speaker, if it was not reformed.

The reformation of Fiji National Provident Fund has meant that now the pensioners of Fiji are more secure than ever before. In fact, Madam Speaker, the Fiji National Provident Fund has recently won an international award for the manner in which the superannuation fund is now being run. The asset value of FNPF has increased. So, as far as the premise of this question is concerned regarding security of pensioners, it is very much intact.

Madam Speaker, just very quickly the reality is, as highlighted by the honourable Leader of the Opposition. The retirement age also in fact, is now applicable to those in the RFMF too. So it is the Police Force, the Prisons Department and also the RFMF.

The other point, Madam Speaker, is that, the re-engagement policy also does exist. So areas where we have lack of skills, lack of expertise, the technical know-how because we do not have young people coming up with that skill sets, those people over the age of 55 are re-engaged also.

So, there is that scope for that. It is not like government is left with a big hole in terms of lack of technical skill set that are suddenly missing. Now these include, Madam Speaker, doctors, nurses, engineers, land surveyors, hydrologists, the good land surveyors, researchers. All of those people, Madam Speaker, they are the ones who are re-engaged.

Now, the honourable Leader of Opposition spoke about how our teachers are going to the Pacific Islands. Why are they going to the Pacific Islands; because it was under the Bainimarama Government that established the Fiji Volunteer Service Scheme. It was the Bainimarama Government that created that. The examples that the honourable Leader sighted of those people in Nauru are paid by the Australian Government. I am talking about the Fijian Volunteers under the Volunteer Scheme established under the Bainimarama Government who are now working as teachers in various other Pacific Island countries.

Now the logic being, Madam Speaker, and the reality is and perhaps SODELPA should have noticed this because if you look at the bulk of the voters who were below the age of (I understand 33 or so), there are about 200,000 of them, in the last elections out of 592 or 594,000 voters, that is what they did not understand. The reality is that, Fiji's population distribution is more at the bottom end of the age distribution.

In other countries in Europe, the population is the top end. They are not reproducing as much as we are. Their population is getting older, they probably have only one child per family. In Fiji we have larger population based, bigger families, more mouths to feed, more people who need jobs, young people in Fiji need jobs and we are creating those jobs. The economy is growing in excess of four per cent unprecedented for the past three, four years. I know they do not like to hear that but that is the reality. The reserves have increased, foreign investment is coming in, our credit rating has gone up so more opportunities have been created. And people in many countries, Madam Speaker, even in countries like Singapore and other places, it is not unusual for many civil servants who have gained that experience to be able to enter into the private sector with that experience. In fact, they are highly sought after, many of those people.

Madam Speaker, this motion here essentially has got no basis. I heard the honourable Leader of Opposition talked about what happened in the past, we need to be future focussed. The Retirement Policy cannot change the past, the Retirement Policy needs to be future focussed. What are we going to do for the future and the reality is that, the current policy of the retirement age is something that is relevant, applicable to Fiji and therefore, this motion should not be supported.

MADAM SPEAKER.- I am mindful of the time and usually we have one from the Government and one from the Opposition. It seems that the honourable and learned Attorney- General has rounded off with this presentation on this one. So, I will now give the honourable Leader of the Opposition (mindful of the time as well) to give her right of reply.

HON. RO. T. KEPA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the honourable Members who have contributed to this debate on this motion and I thank those who have spoken with wisdom and logic to this debate. I note that the honourable and learned Attorney General has often said that we should not look at the past, but the past determines our future, Madam Speaker.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear.

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- And I feel sorry for the children who do not know or if they are taken up by what the honourable and learned Attorney-General has often said, is that we do not look at the past and we do not look at history. But history has made us what we are in this country and we look forward to the future because in the future, they will be looking at this time too where he will be part of history. We hope that history will judge him wisely for that, Madam Speaker, in terms of these reforms and the changes that he is bringing about to the various policies and decrees that we have now in this country and this critical ones that we have before us.

Madam Speaker, the brain drain as has been alluded to by various speakers, those that are leaving to go overseas under the Volunteer Scheme, they would not go overseas, if they opted to live in their own country. They leave their families behind, there is a different standard of living in those countries, so if you were to carry out a survey, I am sure many of them would prefer to live in their own country and to be employed here.

Those others that have spoken on the superannuation, we will look at that in a few years' time to see how it impacts on the workers who are contributing to that and in terms of what they will get out of the funds that are now in place through the reforms.

Madam Speaker, that is all I have to say this afternoon in terms of the contributions that have been made to this debate and I commend the motion to the House.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, the Parliament will now vote on this motion. Does any Member oppose the motion? We have noes and ayes, so we will put the motion to the vote.

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	16
Noes	:	24
Abstain	:	1
Not Voted	:	9

Motion is defeated.

Honourable Members, the last motion which is not disposed of today will remain in the Order Paper for the upcoming business. The Business Committee may decide to list them in the Order Paper on a future sitting Friday.

**ADJOURNMENT**

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, I beg to move:

That the Parliament adjourns to 9.30 a.m. on Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2015.

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

MADAM SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote on the motion. Does any Member oppose the motion?

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

Honourable Members, thank you all for your discussions and contributions today. I request members of the Business Committee to meet on Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> May at 4.00 p.m. in the Big Committee Room. We wish you all the best for the weekend.

Parliament is now adjourned to Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> May at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.29 p.m.