

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

FRIDAY, 24TH MARCH, 2017

[CORRECTED COPY]

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FRIDAY, 24TH MARCH, 2017

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

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable Minister for National Security and Defence; the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; the Honourable Minister for Fisheries; the Honourable Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports; and the Honourable A. Sudhakar.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 23rd March, 2017 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to the final sitting day of the March Sitting of Parliament.

I wish to extend a very special welcome to the students of Bhawani Dayal Arya College of Nakasi, who are observing in the gallery. I hope you will find the proceedings educational.

I also acknowledge a delegation from Lautoka with some investors, and also members of the public who are joining us today as has been the case.

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

“Purple Day” – Epilepsy Awareness

As I had explained yesterday during adjournment, Purple Day (26th March) is a global initiative dedicated to raising epilepsy awareness that was founded in 2008 by nine year old, Cassidy Megan, of Nova Scotia, Canada; motivated by her own very real struggles with the condition. She named the day “Purple Day” after the internationally recognised colour for epilepsy, lavender. I commend all of you who have joined in this global initiative to highlight awareness today, and I thank you for the purple that you are displaying in Parliament this morning.

Birthdays – Honourable Members

At this juncture, on behalf of all Honourable Members and the Secretariat staff, I wish to advise that two Honourable Members are celebrating their birthdays this week; the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua who celebrated his birthday on Monday and the Leader of NFP, the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, who is celebrating his birthday today. A very happy birthday to both of you!

HON. MEMBER.- Sweet 16?

HON. SPEAKER.- Yes, I agree with you, sweet 16 to both of you.

We will move on to the next Item in the Order Paper.

QUESTIONS

Before we go on to the Questions, I am going to limit the supplementary questions to only three this morning so that we can go through our agenda in the Order Paper.

I now invite the Honourable Salote Radrodro to ask her question.

Oral Questions

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccine
(Question No. 88/2017)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO asked the Government, upon notice:

Considering the negative media reporting, can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services advise this House if a review has been undertaken to evaluate the safety and the efficacy of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccine?

HON. R.S. AKBAR (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I would like to thank her for the question.

Madam Speaker, the short answer to the question is, “yes”. Many, many reviews and clinical trials have been undertaken to evaluate the safety of the HPV Vaccine, as there are for any other vaccine or any other medicine that is approved by the world’s regulatory authorities for use. Madam Speaker, I can assure the Honourable Member and Honourable Members of the House that those reviews and trials have established that the HPV Vaccine is both, safe and effective in protecting our women and girls against cervical cancer, a major threat to their lives and health.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member refers in her question to “negative media reporting”. I wish to emphasise to this House that negative media reporting on HPV Vaccine and on vaccines and immunisation in general, risks driving people away from one of the most effective health care interventions we can offer. As such, negative reporting is unprofessional and unacceptable. So-called “anti-vax” campaigners, Madam Speaker, are only too keen to use naïve journalists to support their misguided efforts to spread misinformation about vaccine safety.

The consequences of their campaign, Madam Speaker, can be very tragic as demonstrated last week in Northern New South Wales, Australia, where an unvaccinated seven year old girl was diagnosed with tetanus, a potentially fatal disease which vaccination has more so eliminated it in Australia. As the doctor treating her observed, "This is the reality of not vaccinating."

Madam Speaker, I am sure the Honourable Members of this House would be aware that HPV Vaccine recently made headlines following the tragic death of a teenage girl in Savusavu last month. The cause of death has not yet been officially confirmed, but there were media reports suggesting that the death was due to pulmonary haemorrhage - bleeding in the lungs. While we do know that the girl in question had received the vaccine as part of the Ministry's routine vaccination programme, we also know that vaccination is one of the safest and the most cost-effective public health interventions that can provide protection against cervical cancer, which is a major cause of death among females.

Madam Speaker, an estimated 6,000 doses of HPV has been administered to Fijian girls and young women since it was first introduced in 2013 with no reports of any adverse effects. This vaccine is administered to Class 8 female students only through the school health programme.

Madam Speaker, HPV vaccine protects against certain cancers caused by infection with the Human Papilloma Virus. HPV infection can cause cervical, vaginal and vulvar cancers in women. It can also cause anal cancer, throat cancer and genital warts.

The vaccine, Madam Speaker, was tested extensively during its development. Since it was first approved for use in 2006, more than 200 million doses have been administered worldwide. In that time and with that many doses of vaccine having been used, there have been no reported cases of pulmonary haemorrhage following the administration of this vaccine.

Madam Speaker, the HPV vaccination commenced as a National Immunization Programme in Fiji in 2013, and it is just one of the vaccines that is routinely offered to all Fijians. Those vaccines offer protection against a whole range of potentially deadly or disabling diseases.

At a global level, Madam Speaker, the safety of vaccines is monitored and reviewed by the World Health Organisation's Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (WHO GACVS), which is comprised of internationally recognized experts in vaccine safety. The WHO GACVS is a highly respectable authority on vaccine safety. It has regularly reviewed the evidence on the safety of HPV vaccines and concluded in March 2014, that the vaccine continues to have an excellent safety profile.

Madam Speaker, we do know that vaccines, like any other medicine, can have minor side effects. Many people who get HPV vaccine have no side effects at all. Some people report to having very mild side effects, like a sore arm from the shot. The most common side effects are usually mild and these are similar to side effects seen with other vaccines.

The Ministry has reached out to media organisations and sought their support in protecting the people of Fiji by providing truthful, accurate and scientifically valid information on vaccines and vaccination. It is essential that communities maintain their confidence and trust, not just in HPV but in the vaccination programme as a whole.

Madam Speaker, we cannot allow and should not allow misinformation to spread and people to withdraw from our vaccination programmes. If they do so, they risk exposing themselves and the wider community to potentially deadly diseases. Some Honourable Members may remember the horrors of smallpox. Vaccination was one the factors that helped to wipe smallpox from the face of

the earth, saving millions of lives. Honourable Members, with shorter memories, may I also recall the very real threat posed by polio. Indeed, some Honourable Members may even have family members who still live with its disabling consequences. The world is on the brink of eliminating polio, largely due to effective vaccination programmes.

Madam Speaker, it could be argued that vaccinations have saved more lives than any other single health care intervention, and HPV vaccine is a valuable addition to our vaccination programme. Opting out of vaccination is irresponsible. Encouraging others to opt out is inexcusable. As such, I request this august House to support the Ministry in its endeavours to raise awareness on the importance and safety of vaccines, including HPV Vaccine, for the health and well-being of all Fijians. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Alvick Maharaj.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Speaker, before I ask my question, I would like to comment that such a substantive question by the Honourable Member only shows her lack of knowledge on clinical trials and how vaccines and medicines come into the market. It is a pity that these kinds of questions are being asked to actually discourage our young ladies from getting vaccinated.

Madam Speaker, my supplementary question to the Honourable Minister is, you mentioned that 6,000 girls have received the HPV Vaccine; can you inform the House about the total number of doses of HPV vaccine that have been administered by the Ministry and if there were any severe side effects reported?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I would like to remind Honourable Members that during question time, you are given one minute. So please allow the Member who is asking the question to make a statement, if he/she wishes before he/she asks the question. Honourable Minister.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, we have had reports of girls complaining of pains when injections are given in schools, redness and feeling weak but usually these symptoms subside after a few hours and the swelling and the redness that the girls get from the shot will take eventually a couple of days to go away.

The second part of the question, Madam Speaker, we have so far from 2013, administered close to 62,900 doses of this vaccine.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for her response. First and foremost, I must state that children are jewels to parents, grandparents and to our society and if the media is airing or saying negative issues, that is the freedom of the media because they are the watchdog of society.

Also, Madam Speaker, parents have raised side effects of this vaccine and we are only requesting that it be reviewed and if it could be halted to ensure that information is disseminated to the community to, sort of, address the fears of the safety of this vaccine.

My question is, will the programme be halted to allow for a proper review so that the information is disseminated to the community to alleviate or to take away the fears of the safety of this vaccine, particularly so because of the deaths and the side effects that have been associated or linked to this vaccine?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, your response.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, I had mentioned that reviews had been undertaken to prove the safety of this vaccine and we have tried to put a rest to the fears that the parents and the community have raised. About its safety, I had said that from the time this vaccine was introduced as part of the Immunisation Programme, we have received no such incidence or cases of death. Even the tragic death of the girl in Savusavu last month, Madam Speaker, has not been linked to this vaccine. So creating more fears in the public regarding the safety of the vaccine is not going to do us any good. We need these vaccination programmes to continue and the Ministry will continue with this programme for the safety of all our girls.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can the Honourable Minister please enlighten the House on the type of methodology they will be using for the review, how will this be conducted, when will it start and when does she expect this review to be completed?

HON. SPEAKER.- Which question do you want the Honourable Minister to answer?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Both, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- No, you are allowed only one question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- When do you expect the review to commence and when do you expect it to be completed?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, the review by WHO and other governing authorities was already completed in 2014.

(Hon. N. Nawaikula interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Please continue with your response.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- The review has been completed and they said that the vaccines are safe and effective, and the programmes will continue.

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

Student Enrolment at QVS – 2017
(Question No. 89/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts explain why 1,094 students enrolled at QVS in the beginning of the new school year when the current facilitation at the School can only accommodate 700?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I want to thank him for asking the question. In my response I am going to highlight some questions to him.

First of all, Madam Speaker, this number is factually incorrect. We do not have 1,094 students at Queen Victoria School (QVS). It is symptomatic on the other side to ask questions with incorrect information, and they always do this.

My second comment, Madam Speaker, is this, we have about 900 schools in this country, so why are they always talking about QVS?

(Hon. Opposition Members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, they also have dreams. If they are from Bhawani Dayal, did you ever ask how they are doing? They also want to be successful.

(Hon. Opposition Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, Ra High School was destroyed to the ground 80 percent. They never ever questioned about what is happening at Ra High School and how the children are doing at Ra High School, why?

Madam Speaker, let me get down to the numbers here. The current roll at QVS is 1,085,...

(Hon. Opposition Members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- ...day scholars and boarders.

(Hon. Opposition Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Wait, let me give it to you.

Madam Speaker, QVS has 936 boarders and 149 day scholars. The School has 12 dormitories. These dormitories cater for students from both, remote and rural areas, as well as maritime areas. However, there are also some students from the urban areas but that was after we had catered for students from the interior, rural and maritime.

Madam Speaker, let me give the details of the boarding facility. The Bau Dormitory has 15 rooms, each room has two bunker beds, catering for four students, so in total it caters for 60 students.

Rewa Dormitory has 15 rooms, each room has two bunker beds, catering for four students, so the total capacity of Rewa Dormitory is 60.

Verata Dormitory has 15 rooms, each room has two bunker beds, catering for four students, with a total capacity of 60.

Tovata Dormitory has 15 rooms, each room has two bunker beds, catering for four students with a total capacity of 60.

Madam Speaker, we have two new double-storey dormitories constructed by the Indonesian Military Team. Each dormitory has two wings, each wing has 24 bunker beds, catering for 48 students. Therefore, in total, the two double-storey dormitories cater for 384 students.

There are three old dormitories, Madam Speaker. Each dorm has four bunker beds, catering for 80 students, a total of three dormitories to cater for 80 students.

Madam Speaker, there are three rooms that we have converted into a dormitory. Each room has 12 bunker beds, catering for a total of 24 students, so we have got 72 students from Years 11 and 12 in a total of three rooms.

Madam Speaker, the 936 students in the 12 dormitories, the students are currently monitored by the teachers on duty as the School has divided the number of teachers in quarters amongst the four Houses. Each week, six teachers are on hostel duty and in addition to this, four teachers are on night duty until 10.00 p.m.

Madam Speaker, I also want to let you know that we did put a cap at 750 but the Old Boys' network connected with one of the staff there, photocopied the admission form, bypassed the Principal and enrolled 200 more students. This is what these people have been doing, and that is why we need to keep them out of the campus, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

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

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, the question raised in regards to QVS is the concern of the parents for their children's health in regards to the two Indonesian double-storeys, that is alright. However, the support facilities of the septic tank could not take the load of 384. Those facilities were built in the 1950s, the septic tanks and the sewerage system.

Can the Honourable Minister please address the parents' concern in regards to their health as far as the stench from the septic tank?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the two new dormitories have their own septic tank connections. If there is any specific issue, I would want to see where it is coming from.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, it must be obvious to the Honourable Minister that QVS is very dear to the *iTaukei* community. It is our premier school that dates back to 1908. Given how special it is to us, can the Government consider a new master plan for QVS? Given the number that we have now, can you look at a new master plan? That is all we are asking for, give us a new master plan!

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, every school is important to us, every school has a master plan.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Honourable Minister must admit that there is still overcrowding there and the structure – septic tank, old toilets, even the kitchen is still not fixed. Can you agree, therefore, that this is entirely in breach of OHS Standards?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, we are looking at every school, if there is any issue, we will deal with them.

Madam Speaker, every school has *iTaukei* students, and in every school we need to deal with that. Every school is special to us.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to ask her question.

River Bank Protection – Rewa River Delta
(Question No. 90/2017)

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

This issue has come up in the *Tikina* and Provincial Council Meetings for the past few years.

What types of effective river bank protection can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management provide for the Villages of Lomanikoro, Nukutubu, Nasigatoka, Nabua, Nasilai, Drekena and other Villages on the lower reaches of the Rewa River Delta which have been adversely affected by erosion and environmental degradation?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU (Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and I wish to thank her for the question. However, I am saddened by the fact that this question is specifically just for communities within the lower reaches of the Rewa Delta than the whole of Fiji.

Madam Speaker, this is not only for the people of the Rewa Delta but, of course, we have done similar projects in Suweni Village in the interior of Cakaudrove, in Mataniqara in Ba, Draubuta in Tailevu and, of course, in all other places We look at the whole of Fiji rather than just one community, but the simple answer is that, we have four types of river bank protection that we use to mitigate this vulnerability.

Madam Speaker, one is the Gabion Box Reno Mattress Bank Protection, the other one is the Profix Mattress, we have got the Concrete Block Mattress and, of course, the Bouldering Bank Protection. Those are the four types of protection that we employ.

If I may just explain this for the benefit of the House and, of course, for the Honourable Leader of the Opposition as well, the Gabion Box and the Reno Mattress is a combination of two technologies. We are all familiar with the Gabion Box. The wires that you see are filled with what we call “stones” that are within 150 millimetres to 200 millimetres in diameter, but the foundation is usually the reno-mattress and the difference between the two is in their dimensions.

Gabion Box, Madam Speaker, has a 1m x 1m x 1m diameter whereas the Reno Mattress has got 6m x 2m x 0.23m. So it is easily laid at the bottom but the beauty in it is, it has flexibility. It will cope with the erosion as it occurs, so we usually have that sit on the surface and then we place the Gabion Box over it. If there is further erosion happening, what will happen is, it will fold itself according to the gradient of the erosion, Madam Speaker.

Profix Mattress, you would see most of these in Nabua in Rewa, likewise in Nasali Landing where you see, sort of, a plastic covering over the banks of the river.

Concrete block works similarly to the Reno Mattress but the difference is, this is the solid wall. There are advantages and disadvantages as well but with the concrete block, it only unfolds or bends to a certain limit because it is a solid wall and beyond that, it will break. There will be cracks as opposed to the Reno Mattress because of the stones. It sends a lot of natural elements so nature adjusts well to nature. It has more flexibility rather than the concrete block mattress and, of course, the bouldering protection. This is where we use boulders and concrete to attach the pieces together. You would see this in the recent project in Bau and along the banks of the Ba River.

I have talked about the Gabion Box and the Reno Mattress, you would see this in Narewa in Nadi. I have talked about Mataniqara in Ba and, of course, Suweni Village in the interior of Cakaudrove. So, those are the four major wall protections that we provide for villages along the river banks, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Honourable Minister should know that we asked for Rewa because it is not working there. They have that kind of mattress and the simple question is, can you please look at that and provide one that works whether it is Gabion Box or Concrete Box or whatever?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I have clearly stated that we cannot fight nature, only nature adjusts well. We have solutions; ecological solutions and technology-based engineering solutions. Unfortunately, in most of these instances, ecological solutions will never work because of the changing weather patterns and because of the intensity as well.

Madam Speaker, Nabua has been fixed already, but it is reoccurring. Likewise with the others, and it is the same throughout Fiji. So, we are doing continuous evaluation and, of course, it requests financing as well.

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

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- The Honourable Minister has already given up, Madam Speaker, because he has not really answered my question. If we had the seawall that they have at Kumi and Kiuva, Madam Speaker, we would not be asking for this particular assistance. What timeline, or how soon can he place effective measures because we have some houses that are almost in the river, if something is not done soon.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, we have different projects for different localities. There is definitely a big difference between Kiuva, Kumi, Nananu, Qoma and Rewa Villages because that seawall bank protection and rising sea level is a different issue compared to river bank protection.

I do not have definite timelines, Madam Speaker, because all these are work in progress and we are dealing with it. Right now, the focus is on Sigatoka River. We will look at the Qawa River and the Labasa River and, of course, the neighbouring communities but, work in progress, no definite timelines, and we have the will and commitment to do it.

(Laughter)

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

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker. The issue in regards to Rewa is common to all other river banks, especially those who live on the sides of the banks. My question is, how effective is the regulation or the monitoring of buffer zones in terms of agriculture and houses built close to the banks? You have a buffer zone that allows that space for the banks to be protected. In agriculture, they are planting right to the end of the river bank, so there is a regulated buffer zone.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, when you apply for agriculture lease, you also have a responsibility under the ALTA Act and that is, good husbandry practices, which is the responsibility of the tenant and the agency responsible for ALTA leases, to ensure that the farmers are practicing good husbandry practices. That is the simple answer to that. People have to take responsibility and they need to take ownership.

Government is doing its best, we are monitoring and there is a big process involved when it comes to bad husbandry practices, Madam Speaker. For bad husbandry practices if we go by the legislation, the Ministry of Agriculture files the report to iTLTB, then iTLTB takes the tenant to court.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It does not happen!

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- And that will lead to them losing their lease, but the ownership or responsibility is with the tenant to do good husbandry practices, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

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

Verification of Claims by Dreketi and Nasarawaqa Residents
(Question No. 91/2017)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources confirm to this House if there has been an investigation to verify the claims by the residents of Dreketi and Nasarawaqa on the red sea colour evident last two weeks ago at the Nasarawaqa, Naibulu and Nakalou Waters?

HON. F.S. KOYA (Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I thank him for a very pertinent question. Might I remind the Honourable Opposition Members that the FijiFirst Government never gives up and neither does it give in.

I specifically say that, Madam Speaker, because I am about to give a similar answer and please, forgive me if the answer is quite lengthy, but I think the general public needs to know and it is quite technical so please, listen.

Madam Speaker, this clarification is sought on the claims by residents of Dreketi, Macuata on the red sea colour that was evident about two weeks ago at Nasarawaqa, Naibulu and Nakalou Waters. The team from the Mineral Resources Department (MRD) had inspected the Aurum Bauxite Mine site at Naibulu from 16th March, 2017 to 17th March, 2017, and followed it up again on 20th March, 2017. They confirmed the following.

On the week of 13th March, 2017 to 17th March, 2017, water from the Wash Plant Retention Dam overflowed and the Dam collapsed, discharging heavy sedimentation and runoffs into the

creeks, down to the main river system. This was due to the continuous rainfall in the past two weeks and it is actually a natural process during heavy rainfall as surface runoff will find its way into natural waterways with sedimentation.

The Company, Madam Speaker, has put in place onsite surface drainage system that allows all surface water to drain into a settling pond, with a series of silt screens located randomly along the main drain, before being discharged into the adjoining creek. Similarly, processing water from the Wash Plant discharges into a retention dam, and water collected is either recycled or discharged to the adjoining creek, only if the quality is acceptable. During periods of heavy rain, Madam Speaker, when water volumes increase in retention dams, the Company normally discharges water to the adjoining creeks.

The MRD Inspection Team confirmed on the ground that Aurum Mining Company ceased operation as soon as the Dam collapsed, as per one of their conditions of the Mining Lease. The Mining Lease condition states that they shall comply with the requirements of Parts (4), (5), (6) and (7) of the Environmental Management Act (EMA) in regards to Environmental Management Procedures. The mining company's Stop Work initiative was also formalised by a Stop Work Notice issued by the Director of Mines on 17th March, 2017.

In such operations, Madam Speaker, sediment ponds are actually mandatory to allow for the discharge of water that contains high loads of suspended solid to settle, before final release into the main waterways. Two sediment retention ponds and breather ponds were constructed at the mine site to capture runoff from the beneficiation plant where it holds the waste water, while the soil and debris in the water settles out and clears the water, so it can be discharged to the adjoining creeks if need be or recycled for mining use.

Madam Speaker, as a way forward, the MRD has put in place a couple of other measures to address the situation. Firstly, water testing is mandatory to be carried out before any water is discharged into the nearby water system and the Environment Officer of the Company will monitor daily operations. The MRD had also stepped up its own monitoring to conduct such inspections on a monthly basis. However, random checks beyond the monthly basis are actually also carried out.

Mining companies are also being advised to improve their drainage design even further to allow all the surface run-off to be pre-treated before discharged off site. In addition to that, Madam Speaker, boulders have now been placed across the creek to trap sediments from the run-off during wet weather and during extreme wet weather conditions. The sediment traps are now being replaced along the Sosolosi Creek because of the excessive run-offs from the extreme wet weather and extra monitoring run-off controls from the actual Stock piles.

The Company is also required to carry out inspections on a monthly basis to all the creeks that are affected by run-offs from the mine site and remove sediments settled to allow free flow of water, especially at the weir system. A watermark level recorder will also be installed by the Company for measurements and monitoring purposes by the Environment Officer on the site.

Madam Speaker, crushed metals will also be used for the mine and all roads to minimise sediment wash-off and avoid slippery road surfaces during wet weather conditions. The Company's Environment Officer is to be also upskilled with the equipment that will be supplied by MRD for the purpose of mine visits.

Madam Speaker, Aurum Mining Company has undertaken rectification work to address the situation and has accordingly satisfied the Director of Mines that this has led to the Director uplifting

the Stop Work Notice. Obviously, the Stop Work Order was issued based on Regulation 8(1)(c) of the Mining Act.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the rectification work done by the mining company, the Director of Mines has laid out other conditions to be complied with by the Company, as I have mentioned. As of 20th March 2017, mining activities have resumed to normal operations with extraction, ore washing and ore transfer to the Naiviqiri Port site.

Madam Speaker, as you can see from the comprehensive answer, the Ministry is quite vigilant with respect to its responsibilities and takes very seriously any issues that affects people's livelihood and food security. I hope that clarifies the position to the Honourable Member.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for the reply, but my question is, can the Honourable Minister advise this august House whether any form of compensation will be paid out to the three Villages mentioned because one of their main sources of livelihood has been affected as per the question on hand?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA – Madam Speaker, I think I have just explained it quite comprehensively, in a short form, it is just run-off. We have done our tests and there has been no particular damage but if there is something that does come up regarding compensation, they are more than willingly to please write across to us.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, the competent department that should also be involved is the Ministry of Fisheries. Was there any approach to the Ministry of Fisheries to make their own assessment in regards to the species and *qoliqoli* for the landowners there?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA – Madam Speaker, maybe you should ask that question to the Ministry of Fisheries and its Minister but in any event, I have thoroughly explained that it is run-off. At the moment, we do not see any damage to the fisheries issue at all but if there is, you are more than welcome to ask that to the Honourable Minister for Fisheries.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, the operations are being taken in an open pit fashion so you should expect run-off. Can the Honourable Minister explain if this was foreseen before this happened within the lease conditions and were they taken as conditions to look into this? It is open pit.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I really wished some research was done before they actually ask these questions and I would really, really wish that you would listen.

I had just explained that all the procedures that have been undertaken post the run-off are procedures that you have to undertake once there is extreme weather condition.

(Hon. N. Nawaikula interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Are you finished, Sir?

HON. SPEAKER.- Excuse me, your question time is over. Please, Honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- There might be hot oil there, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, yes, there are measures in place. This is excessive amount of rain that actually caused this. Yes, we do undertake all the necessary activities that need to be undertaken as I had explained quite thoroughly. This is the reason why I did, Madam Speaker. All those things that I had actually mentioned are part and parcel of the procedures that are undertaken by MRD to ensure....

(Hon. N. Nawaikula interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I have explained it thoroughly. I think that is a sufficient explanation. Maybe, you need to come with me one day to go and inspect it, and I will show you myself.

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

Ship *DL MARIGOLD*
(Question No. 92/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications advise this House as to why the Ship *DL MARIGOLD* was denied entry into the Fiji Port?

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

Madam Speaker, on 7th March, 2017, Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) had prohibited entry of the Indonesian Ship, *DL MARIGOLD*, from entering into the Fijian Waters due to the biosecurity risks it posed on the Fijian marine biodiversity.

DL MARIGOLD was also ordered to leave New Zealand Waters by the New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries within 24 hours of arrival at Tauranga. The *DL MARIGOLD* had sailed into Tauranga from Indonesia on 4th March, 2017, and was due to berth in New Zealand Waters for nine days.

The reason why *DL MARIGOLD* was ordered to leave New Zealand Waters within 24 hours of arrival was due to the biosecurity risks the Ship posed. This decision was based on evidence collected by divers that the hull in the niche areas which is the sea chest, propellers, shaft, et cetera, of the vessel were severely fouled with barnacles and tube worms.

In New Zealand, non-indigenous tube worm species have had negative effects on the oyster eco-culture. Accordingly, the New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries also notified *DL MARIGOLD* that it will not be allowed back into New Zealand until it could provide evidence that it had been cleaned to 'below the severe' threshold.

The *DL MARIGOLD*, Madam Speaker, then intended to set sail to Suva to undergo the cleaning of the foul areas which was found infested with worms and other organisms by the New Zealand authorities. The *DL MARIGOLD*, Madam Speaker, is the first vessel which Fiji has refused entry due to biofouling.

Madam Speaker, biofouling is a process whereby organisms accumulate on a clean surface that has been immersed in a marine environment. Vessel biofouling is the attachment of organisms to wetted areas of a ship or boat, usually below the waterline. This can include the hull, propeller, bilge keel, the keel coolers, thruster, inlet breakings and anodes, sea chest, et cetera. Besides from being a biosecurity risk to the environment, biofouling can drastically reduce fuel efficiency, increase vessel output of carbon emissions and compromise crew safety during transit.

BAF was advised by the New Zealand authorities and also through other channels of *DL MARIGOLD*'s aquatic, invasive and infestation status. Following this, BAF promptly notified *DL MARIGOLD*'s local shipping agent, Campbell Shipping Agency, on the refusal of entry and also notified all key stakeholders of the incident which included the Office of the Prime Minister, the Department of Environment who are the focal point of biodiversity, the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Natural Disaster Management, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Public Enterprises, Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji Ports Corporation Limited and Fiji Ports Terminal Limited. This was a coordinated approach, Madam Speaker, with all the stakeholders who were advised by our official biosecurity notification and media release.

Madam Speaker, BAF promptly acted to prevent entry of the *DL MARIGOLD* to ensure that the evasive marine organisms, that is, plants, animals, pathogens and diseases did not enter Fijian Waters as this would have posed significant threats to the native biodiversity in the ecosystem. Evasive species are non-native or alien to the ecosystem under consideration, which introduced, can cause, amongst other things, economic or environmental harm, or even harm to human health.

Introductory aquatic species to new environments by ships is a major threat to the world's ocean and to the conservation of biodiversity, Madam Speaker. Aquatic species include both, aquatic plant and aquatic animal species.

By recognizing the equivalence of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, Madam Speaker, BAF assesses the biosecurity risks associated with all cargo vessels entering Fijian Waters before allowing them into Fiji. For the information of the Honourable Members of this Parliament, SPS measures are measures to protect humans, animals and plants from diseases, pests or contaminants. It applies to all sanitary relating to animals and phytosanitary relating to plants that may have direct or indirect impact on international trade.

Madam Speaker, marine species carried either in ship's ballast water or ship's hulls may survive to establish a reproductive population in the host environment, becoming invasive, out competing native species and multiplying into pest populations. Fiji's marine species are one of the biggest resources and it is very important that all stakeholders have close collaboration to address the global issue of invasive alien species.

BAF is committed, Madam Speaker, to preventing the introduction of invasive alien species which would have devastatingly impact the marine biodiversity and food security of all Fijians. Invasive alien species cause enormous damage to biodiversity and the valuable natural resources.

Madam Speaker, BAF is also currently in the process of negotiating a funding facility from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) through the UN system to modernise its legislation and also develop a National Invasive Alien Species Framework and Strategic Action Plans to ensure that Fiji is able to address the increased global challenges, such as climate change which is one of the major contributors to the increased alien species due to global warming.

Madam Speaker, GEF is a unique partnership of 18 agencies, including United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, national entities and international NGOs working with the 183 countries to address the world's most challenging environmental issues. GEF provides funding to assist developing countries in meeting their objectives of International Environmental Conventions.

Madam Speaker, mitigating impacts of climate change is always very important to ensure that we protect our Fijian flora and fauna.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of additional information that are here but I think that addresses the question from the floor. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are fortunate that New Zealand was the first port of entry and Fiji being the second, we have been warned by New Zealand in regards to that vessel. Does Fiji have the capacity if Fiji was the first port of entry for such vessels?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, Madam Speaker, Fiji does have the capacity. In fact, the reason why I cut my answer short was because I thought we should give the Opposition more time with their motions. I can actually elucidate further in respect of what we are doing, in fact, I had started doing that. Let me go on now, and I will tell you what we are doing.

Madam Speaker, as I have said, GEF is providing funding to assist developing countries in meeting their objectives of international environmental conventions. GEF serves as a financial mechanism to five Conventions which is the:

- Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD);
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);
- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs);
- UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); and
- Minamata Convention on Mercury, as you know mercury levels are increasing in the world because of manufacturing.

Madam Speaker, mitigating impacts of climate change is very important, to ensure that we protect our Fijian flora and fauna.

Madam Speaker, Fiji has again showcased its commitment to improve its compliance level by inviting the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), who are currently in the country. Actually, we are meeting them on Monday next week, to conduct the Veterinary Legislative

Identification Support Mission which was conducted by the OIE international consultants in November and December of 2016.

BAF's diligence and commitment has been displayed again by inviting the OIE consultants for the Performance of Veterinary Services Gap Analysis Mission which is currently being conducted in the country. In the PVS Gap Analysis, Madam Speaker, the Mission assists in the definition of the country's veterinary services' objectives in terms of compliance with OIE international standards, and the quality of veterinary services which is suitably adapted to national constraints and priorities.

Madam Speaker, Fiji's ratification of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and BAF's efforts to modernise this legislation to ensure that Fiji's legislative framework is in compliance with international standards, makes it easier for Fiji to trade as international trading partners. There is also a modernised science-based approach to BAF, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, zoonotic diseases are diseases which transmit from animals to human beings, hence combating invasive alien species is very important not only to protect our flora and fauna, but potentially even the health of Fijians. The refusal of entry by BAF, Madam Speaker, displays the commitment of the Fijian Government, of course, BAF

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, the question was actually whether Fiji has the capacity to screen these types of vessels. The answer is irrelevant.

HON. SPEAKER.- The question was clear and the answer is being given by the Honourable Minister, please continue.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. They asked a question and then when we actually explain it in detail, they do not like it. It demonstrates the capacity in Government and Government's agencies and they do not like that because they always want to portray a negative image, but this is the facts. So, I will elucidate further on the capacity in BAF and what BAF is currently doing. You asked the question, you get the answer.

Madam Speaker, the fact that BAF refused entry of this vessel shows a commitment of the Fijian Government to ensure that Fijians are protected from invasive pests. BAF deals with such matters on a daily basis. This is the one that actually made it to the media. There are other entries that take place. They do not only come through ships, but they also come through other mechanisms or other means; through planes and also through cargo that are sent across to Fiji.

We have picked up so many Giant African Snails (GAS) that do not exist in Fiji, but get transported through other Pacific Island Countries when they tranship goods through to Fiji. BAF also picks up on that. So the capacity is there and indeed, if they care to know about it, Madam Speaker, if they look at the laws that have changed and they look at the capacity of BAF, it has enormously changed significantly for the betterment of all Fijians. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Mohammed Dean.

Rakiraki Municipal Market
(Question No. 93/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport inform the House as to when the construction of the new Rakiraki Municipal Market will take place?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- (Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I also thank him for his question. My reply to this can be very straightforward and short, and to say next month. But the reason why I want to respond in detail is because I do not want the media to come tomorrow and say that the Minister stopped the construction of the Rakiraki Municipal Market.

Madam Speaker, the construction of the new Rakiraki Municipal Market will commence in April this year. This project is in partnership with Government, Local Government and UN Women. The benefits will also cover four major stakeholder groups, namely; consumers, farmers, value added businesses and local communities.

Markets such as Rakiraki forms a vital and significant link in our food chain and provide a valuable distribution channel, connecting farmers and food producers directly with customers. This proposed new municipal market in Rakiraki measures 3,600 square metres with a ground space of 1,800 square metres allocated for 307 vendor stalls, compared to the current 127 vendors. The first floor will have an open craft centre and accommodation centre for our women market vendors. The women's accommodation will assist rural women, providing them with the proper facilities as they come from faraway villages and stay overnight to sell their produce.

Madam Speaker, the investment projected is around \$5.8 million. This project is expected to be completed in 12 months' time. To promote the farmers and vendors of Rakiraki community and, of course, to support the national small and medium business policies, fees and charges will remain at the current rate. There will be no increase on the stall fees.

Madam Speaker, I am fully convinced that the Rakiraki Town has the potential to develop and unlock itself of the ample economic opportunities, likewise a suitable progressive infrastructure will be developed by the Rakiraki Town Council. There has been recent flooding noted in the area and a joint interagency team is currently working on it.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the proposed market development that I had mentioned, a new bus station will also be constructed, with the aim to improve bus stand facilities for the people of Rakiraki. The people of Rakiraki will now have a more convenient bus stand, linked to the new municipal market. Madam Speaker, I thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply. Due to the frequent flooding in Rakiraki Town, does the Honourable Minister have any option of building the market on higher ground rather than building it on the current site?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, there is no need to find a higher ground for that because normally, market is an open concept and in this market, the stalls will be made out of concrete and we have a measuring floor where the vendors can put their stock. If there is flood warning, the flood comes and goes, wash away debris, so there you go. Thank you.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is just that we do not know what to believe nowadays. The Honourable Minister promised elections by 13th or 14th August I think, and it did not happen. Can you assure this House that this will actually happen in April?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Did you hear?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I want his assurance that it will happen.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, let me make it clear once and for all in regards to the municipal elections, I never said that we will have municipal elections this year, next month, or 2017. What I said was, there is a process for municipal elections and my team is working on it.

Now going back to the assurance, this Honourable Member has a problem.

(Laughter)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- He himself is not sure and he does not understand when a policy is made.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, Point of Order!

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is un-parliamentary. For sure, it is un-parliamentary.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What is un-parliamentary?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is un-parliamentary.

(Hon. Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is un-parliamentary.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Member has taken offence to the statement that has been made and based on my previous ruling, I will ask the Honourable Minister to withdraw that word.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- I withdraw that, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, as I have said in my response that the construction of the new municipal market for Rakiraki will start at the end of April. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Dr. Brij Lal.

Assistance – Unemployed Youths and School Dropouts
(Question No. 94/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports explain to this House, what the Ministry is doing to assist school dropouts and unemployed youths, both in rural and urban areas? Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU (Minister for Youth and Sports).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and would like to thank him for his question.

As I had outlined in my Ministerial Statement earlier this week, many of the programmes are geared towards school dropouts or school leavers, both from the urban and rural areas, and as well as from the peri-urban areas.

Without taking too much time, I would like to summarise our initiatives as follows:

- We have five training centres and we conducted carpentry and agriculture, including organic agriculture at the four divisions;
- We also expand our training offer to include other trades such as, electrical works, tile laying and block laying through our training centres;
- We have a training music centre in Valelevu, where the youths can apply to attend training in music.
- The training that we take out to the communities; carpentry in Technical Colleges of Fiji, we are working together to teach fibreglass repairs, small engine boats and repair boat masters.
- We offer training for boat master with MSAF, agriculture and animal husbandry with OISCA together with the Ministry of Agriculture, chainsaw and proper logging procedures and best practice training with the Ministry of Forestry;
- We are also conducting leadership and management, financial literacy, project planning, budgeting, saving, and we are heading towards developing CVs for youths who want to apply for jobs and preparing them for interviews;
- We are also conducting massage, beauty therapy, sewing, screen-printing, cookery and bakery that are mainly aimed at young women but not excluding the young men;
- We are also conducting empowerment training, covering civic engagement, including Seeds of Success, the Duke of Edinburgh Programme and here, we are conducting training in sexual reproductive health and substance abuse;

- We understand the rights and obligations in terms of the *Constitution of the Republic of Fiji* and mental and physical wellness being conducted; and also
- we conducted teenage pregnancy, how to come out of it, and suicide prevention, climate change, violence against vulnerable groups. All of these are in cooperation with the college in the Ministry and the relevant experts.

The Ministry also provides small grants for project development through training after training, and then we support and monitor the progress. We are recognising the contribution of young entrepreneurs, in partnership with the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation, through our Young Entrepreneurs Award which will be the first time to be conducted in May this year.

I reiterate, Madam Speaker, that our training will now be accredited very soon, or soon it will be. I want our young people to be empowered to decide if they want to be employed in the formal or informal sector or to continue with their formal education.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry will also continuously review the support we provide to young people, to ensure it is relevant to the time and place. As an example, last year, we provided training to young people from five local settlements in and around Suva to introduce them to computers. So before the completion of the Course, 8 out of 20 of them had already received employment and right now, these young people have been identified by the Fiji Police Force as part of our cooperation with them.

The whole staff of the Ministry of Youth and Sports are now developing new programmes with the Fiji Police Force and the Fiji Corrections Service. With the Fiji Police, it is a preventative approach, using both skills training and sports and with the Corrections Service, it is about providing training on values as well as skills to empower young people to return to society and engage in legal economic activities.

I will keep you informed, Madam Speaker, as this cooperation develops. I would also like to reiterate and it would be remiss of me if I did not recognise the power of sports as a tool to address social inclusion in our communities. We often underestimate the potential where young people have the talent in sports and are leaving from sports. Many sportspeople have said that if it were not for sports, there would not be any corrections service. However, this is done primarily by the National Sports Organisation, the Fiji National Sports Commission and this is an area where we are continuing to develop through empowering people in our communities.

Madam Speaker, all these are demand-driven training, as we actually go down to youth clubs, adopting the bottom-up approach and adjust our programmes according to their demand that provide young people the necessary skills to create viable revenue and promote small-micro enterprise activities.

Yes, Madam Speaker, those are the programmes and the training the Ministry is doing to assist school dropouts and unemployed youths in rural, urban and peri-urban areas. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for that opportunity.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Leawere.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for the plans made in terms of school dropouts. I just want to ask the Honourable Minister if there is any analysis conducted to track the school leavers, in terms of finding employment?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Yes, Madam Speaker, we have a monitoring tool in place that monitors the grants that we give to youth clubs.

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

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Madam Speaker, as we know, some of the rugby players around the world earn good income from playing rugby and my concerns are that some of the school dropouts from Marist Brothers High School, Queen Victoria School (QVS), Ratu Kadavulevu School (RKS), Lelean Memorial School, Natabua High School, Ratu Navula Secondary School, Nasinu Secondary School, Cuvu College, et cetera, who even play right up to the Deans Final just fade away, but they are all good rugby players. My question is; does the Ministry have a programme in place for these rugby players that after dropping out from school, they continue to play rugby and eventually end up in greener pastures overseas?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Yes, we have the National Sporting Federation and for each sport, they have plans for those and particularly for rugby, we have the FRU that has a programme and this was mentioned in the Ministerial Statement that they have the grassroots development plan in place. They have officials from overseas clubs who go directly to schools and the Ministry does not have that control. They go to the parents or either to the teachers. But yes, we have a plan in place by FRU.

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

Employment Creation Centres
(Question No. 95/2017)

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

The National Employment Centre Act is mandated to register unemployment clients as a “one stop shop” and undertake placements into one of the Employment Creation Centres.

Can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations explain in this House what is the rate of placement of the National Employment Centre and what other programmes are being pursued by the National Employment Centre to boost placements of graduates in the employment market?

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

Yes, the National Employment Centre (NEC) actually has three employment services that we currently operate, so that people who are coming to the NEC, all the unemployed in Fiji, have their option of taking up either one of these three employment services.

The first employment service is what we call the Formal Employment Service and this is for those who wish to take up some formal employment domestically in Fiji. People coming out of

secondary schools or those who have left employment from places of higher learning, they can come and register with an intent of taking up this Formal Employment Service.

The second we have is the Fiji Volunteer Service where there are options open also for those coming out of schools, often institutions of higher learning. Even those who are retired, they have the opportunity of becoming volunteers either domestically in Fiji within our shores or increasingly now, as a result of requests from other nations in other countries in the Pacific.

The third one that we have is the Foreign Employment Service, and included in this, Madam Speaker, are the seasonal workers that we are now currently sending across to New Zealand and Australia.

Under the Formal Employment Service, if someone wishes to follow that path, we have established a system of work attachments. When people come out of school or when they come out of institutes of higher learning, they have a lot of knowledge but they have not really learnt how to apply that knowledge in a work setting; they know of the job, the special tricks of the trade that you cannot learn from an institute of learning that you need to learn from someone who has actually practised the work. There is also a need for them to learn how to work in teams, to be creative, to be able to search for information and learn all those things.

As part of the Formal Employment Service Programme, we have this six months' work attachment where we invite employers to take the unemployed people first, so that they can obtain work experience, then learn some basic ethics, they can build their capacities and as a result of this, they become more well-rounded and have the opportunity of getting further employment later on.

In this work attachment, the Ministry of Employment provides an allowance and a portion of that has to be paid by the employer. It is an allowance of only \$60, but it is basically to assist the person under work attachment to come to the place where they are getting attachment and go back. The other half of that attachment is paid by the employer. Some of the things that we are doing for formal attachment is not limited to what we do in our Ministry.

We also know that under the FRCA, they now have an Employment Taxation Scheme in which they have incentives to encourage employers to take on employees for the first time. For instance, give a 200 percent tax deduction for wages of those having their first full time employment. We also have a 200 percent work placement for students. We now know that students who are studying at some of our institutes of higher learning, in order for them to graduate, they need certain work attachment within a workplace. So that 200 percent work placement for students gives an incentive for employers to be able to provide that opportunity.

The other programme that we have, as I mentioned before, is the Fiji Volunteer Services Graduate Volunteer Programme. We are now having a lot of graduates who are coming out from institutes and if they do not have the opportunity to get employment straightaway, they can apply to become a Graduate Volunteer so that they can be placed within NGOs or with employers. For these graduate volunteers, the employer will be giving them an allowance of around \$60 and \$60 is provided by the Ministry.

We also have volunteers now, our retired teachers, retired nurses, whom some of them are being sought by other countries. We have teachers, for instance, where we have signed MOAs with countries such as the Marshall Islands. We are now considering retired teachers on the request of the Government of Tuvalu to be sent to Tuvalu and we are also discussing about requests from Tuvalu for retired nurses. So all of these can become part of this programme for the volunteer programme.

The last one, Madam Speaker, is something that is now in discussion all across Fiji which is Foreign Employment. Foreign Employment provides seasonal employment opportunities for clients to both Australia and New Zealand in horticulture and through the Skills Category under the Canterbury Rebuilt Programme and the Accommodation and Hospitality Sector in Australia.

Madam Speaker, from 2014 to 2016, the number of placements under the Formal Employment Service includes those under Work Attachment and those who are getting permanent employment, totals around 6,269. Those are the members that we have because there are also people who come and register under the NEC but when they get employed, they do not advise us so our databases do not capture them as people who have been able to get employment.

Under the Foreign Employment Service, Madam Speaker, we have been able to place 667 workers in various countries around the world - 667 workers on calculation at the very least, will be earning an additional income of around \$30 million, a significant portion of that money comes back into our economy.

The Fiji Volunteer Services from 2014 to 2016, the number is around 124. We expect that these numbers will continue to grow, given the positive economic growth that we are experiencing and through this, we will be able to provide continued assistance to those who are seeking employment. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Jilila Kumar.

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations explain the activities undertaken by the Ministry to ensure that services provided by the NEC effectively assist Fijians in searching for and securing employment?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, we always say that the most critical resource in any country is its human resource, and if we have more people who are unemployed as the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad said, "It is an opportunity cost to the country when we cannot employ them", so we are always trying to make sure that as we produce these graduates from our institutes of higher learning or from our schools, that we try to give them additional qualities and competencies to make them more marketable and more productive so that they can contribute effectively to our country.

One of the things that we do in the NEC, as people register, we try to provide them with some life skills. Some of the things they will not learn in your traditional education curricular; some of things about having great dreams, visions and more confidence in themselves and things related to emotional intelligence. Nowadays, researchers around the world are saying that the most successful people in the world are not necessarily the smartest, but some who are able to control their emotional intelligence, control how they react to things and also the idea of being able to be persistent even in times of difficulties. So these life skills is something that people who are registered with NEC also get training in life skills.

As well as that, we also conduct aptitude test because all of us have different aptitude. Some people will be good in certain things, others will be good in other things, so if people are given aptitude tests, we can identify what their special aptitude are, so that they can channel their lives towards the kind of occupation that can optimise on the aptitudes they have. Aptitude tests are provided, professional counselling is done as a result of the aptitude test to point out to the people being registered where it is likely that they will have success.

I have already mentioned about work attachments, that is also something which gives them opportunities for hands-on experience, to show their potential to their employers. A lot of the employers take on people as attachees and they have the opportunity to observe them over six months and during that period, they will be able to identify which of those attachees they would like to take on for employment.

In some cases, for some people who are coming out of primary or secondary schools, now with the partnership that we have with the technical colleges, people have the opportunity to hook on to employment skills training and the Certificate II Level programmes that are conducted by Technical Colleges.

Recently, over these past two weeks, we have been conducting Employer Forums, where we call employers together and we talk about these services. We hope to be able to partner with all employers. These forums have been held in Suva, Labasa and Lautoka and in mid-term next week to carry them out in the West, so that we can develop partnerships and also sign MOAs with employers so that they can take on more of these unemployed people or youth, and give them the hands-on experience that they need.

I think the seven thing that we have in the NEC is assisting people to seek employment, which is the establishment of a NEC Database. As people register into NEC, the NEC database will list down all their requirements and their experiences and qualifications. So, if an employer is looking for a person with certain kind of qualifications or certain list of competencies, we can go through the NEC Database and provide a list of those people that we have in our Database that matches those qualifications. That list can then be provided to the employer, who can then contact them directly. There are some issues with this database at the moment. We need to make sure that it is being cleaned up so that it is accurate, so that it can be a tool that employers use.

Those, Madam Speaker, are some of the things that we are trying to do in order to effectively assist Fijians who are searching for employment and also provide some assistance to the employers who are looking for Fijians to work in their organisations.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, that brings to the end our question time.

Written Questions – Responses to

HON. SPEAKER.- Written responses, although not in the Order Paper, the Secretariat has received notification from the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications, as well as from the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management that they have written responses for tabling. I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General to have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker and thank you for indulging us.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 45(5), I hereby table my written responses to Question Numbers: 32/2017, 40/2017, 50/2017, 52/2017 and 53/2017 by the Honourable Mikaele Leawere; the Honourable Aseri Radrodro and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition respectively.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Please hand your written responses to the Secretary-General.

(Written responses handed to the Secretary-General)

I now call upon the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management to table his written response.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 45(5), I hereby table my written response to Question Number 42/2017 by the Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please hand your written response to the Secretary-General.

(Written response handed to the Secretary-General)

Honourable Members, question time is now over. We will now move on to the next Item in the Order Paper.

Before I call on the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, I have been advised that Honourable Mosese Bulitavu has withdrawn his End of Week's Statement. Therefore, the debate on the two motions will continue until 12.30 p.m.

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

**EXTENSIVE REHABILITATION PACKAGE
FOR THE DAIRY INDUSTRY AND DAIRY FARMERS**

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

That this Parliament agrees that in light of the struggling Dairy Industry and worsening plight of dairy farmers, an extensive rehabilitation package be implemented for the vibrancy and vitality of the Dairy Industry and dairy farmers.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying that this motion is a direct result of our extensive consultation with, not only the dairy farmers, but all other stakeholders concerned about the Industry. In fact, Madam Speaker, if I could say right at the outset, that this motion comes from the farmers and the stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, the plight of the Dairy Industry and dairy farmers is an example, in our view, of another Government reform of policy that is failing to meet its objective. The reality of our Dairy Industry, Madam Speaker, is excruciatingly painful. An average of 80 million litres of milk is consumed each year. Our Dairy Industry is producing less than 10 million litres of milk annually. This means, Madam Speaker, that 17 million litres of milk either liquid or in powdered form, is imported into Fiji. This means that we are producing only 12.5 percent of Fiji's total milk consumption, while 87.5 percent is imported.

Madam Speaker, what does this mean for our Dairy Industry, dairy farmers and indeed the monopolistic Fiji Dairy Limited? Does it mean that it is making a loss or is technically insolvent, or are our dairy farmers struggling to survive? The latter, that is dairy farmers, are genuinely struggling to earn a decent livelihood, Madam Speaker, but Fiji Dairy Limited continues to be a healthy and profitable entity, and thanks to the 32 percent duty concession or zero-duty it enjoys on the import of milk.

On the other hand, Madam Speaker, an import duty of 32 percent is placed on all importers but this particular company gets a zero duty to import cream milk, sell them to consumers at a price which many are not able to afford, makes the argument by Government to protect the local Dairy Industry pretty contradictory.

Madam Speaker, my understanding of an import substitution policy is that, if you want to improve local consumption, this is probably not the way to do that. This favourite company, which has got zero duty, has no incentive to promote the local industry when it can continue to rake in millions of dollars by simply importing. This too is at the expense of the ordinary consumers, who are paying high prices for milk and milk products.

It is a matter of some wonder, Madam Speaker, that Government, while giving millions of dollars in duty concession, is ensuring that the same company maximises profits when it is the sole provider of milk to students. And while this company makes exorbitant profit each year, the dairy farmers are suffering with low milk price and rising cost of feed for cows.

Madam Speaker, farmers are paid price per litre of milk in three grades; premium, first and second. The highest price is 0.94cents per litre, which is less than the cost of producing one litre of milk. The average price paid to farmers is 0.80cents per litre and 0.04cents per litre is the surcharge for transportation of milk to Chilling Centres.

Madam Speaker, the rot of the industry started with the promulgation of what was then known as the Dairy Restructure Decree 2010.

HON. A.SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The rot was there before my friend.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It may have been there but it made it worse.

We all know, Madam Speaker, that the Decree led to the restructure of what was then known as the Fiji Co-operative Dairy Company Limited (FCDCL).

Madam Speaker, the Decree's main intention was to transfer FCDCL to Fiji Dairy Limited all interests for separating milk supply for milk processing. And like other decrees, Madam Speaker, this Decree cannot be challenged in a court of law and we believe that this Decree which is now an Act, has become a noose around the necks of dairy farmers in terms of them being milk dry by this company.

Madam Speaker, in July, 2016, the CEO of FCDCL revealed a huge decline in milk production and in an interview with the media in the *Fiji Times* published on 23rd July, 2016, it revealed that in the first quarter of 2015, dairy farmers were supplying 26,000 litres of milk daily to the factory, compared to 19,000 litres in 2016. The reduction by 7,000 litres means in 2016, FCDCL farmers would have supplied only a little over 6.9 million litres of milk. Of course, some of the reduction is directly attributed to the TB disease.

This is a significant reduction of almost 27 percent but Fiji Dairy Limited is not complaining. Why would they complain, Madam Speaker? They enjoyed zero-duty on milk imports. We have a very fair idea of why they are silent while the Dairy Industry and plight of farmers are worsening by the day.

Of course, Madam Speaker, the company will enjoy the zero-duty on imports for a total of 10 years. Other importers are subjected to a 32 percent duty on all milk products, except ghee, which I understand and I stand to be corrected, I am told it is 15 percent.

As the Honourable Minister for Economy and the Minister for Agriculture can either confirm or deny this, I am told that apart from the white packet Rewa Life, butter, yoghurt and a few flavoured milk brands, others are imported by Fiji Dairy Limited. The blue packet Rewa Life, Devondale and Dawn brands are all imported, so there is really no incentive for Fiji Dairy to develop the local industry when it can maximise its profits through imports that are zero-rated and indeed, the world market price for dairy products has been low. So the incentive for this company to continue to import and not promote the Dairy Industry locally, makes sense for them, not from the point of view of making profits.

Madam Speaker, FCDCL, during its Annual General Meeting last year proposed that it should have its own processing facility because the milk supply agreement with Fiji Dairy Limited was questionable. I understand that there are some discussions on renegotiating that supply agreement. The AGM also heard that the price of a litre of milk should be \$1.25 from an average of 82 cents.

Madam Speaker, the plight of the sugarcane-turned dairy farmers in Vatukoula was highlighted recently in the media in a series of reports. Despite the series of articles, no response has been forthcoming from the dairy company and the Ministry of Agriculture. In fact, Madam Speaker, farmers complained about their milk being rejected and not rejected at the time when they supply, but they are informed the next day that their milk has been rejected, so dairy farmers struggle to survive.

Madam Speaker, there was an article on Saturday, 4th March. That picture tells us the painful reality of the plight of dairy farmers.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- A Vatukoula farmer Hirdesh Nand shows cans of milk rejected by the company, causing them more losses in addition to the low price of milk.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I can tell the Honourable Prime Minister, we do not write articles in the *Fiji Times* unlike what they do for *Fiji Sun*.

(Laughter)

Mr. Nand said the company does not even call them the same day to tell them that the milk had been rejected but as I said, “the next day”, Madam Speaker, and there has been no remedial action there.

Madam Speaker, another article in the *Fiji Times* on 6th March titled, “Dairy cow shortage hits farmers firm”, quoted the CEO of FCDCL as saying that the number of cows has reduced significantly since 2015 and he says that the outbreak of TB in 2015 and 2016, shrunk their stock by 22 percent to 23 percent. He said it was difficult to import farm animals from neighbouring countries because of disease issues, and there is no response in this article or in its aftermath from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Honourable Minister may want to explain this.

Madam Speaker, again, another report in the *Fiji Times* on 15th March said that the Ministry of Agriculture was tight-lipped on how it was going to help the affected Vatukoula dairy farmers who had called for an increase to the price of raw milk, solutions to transportation issues and rejection of fresh milk by the buyers.

The CEO of FCDCL, Madam Speaker, is also quoted here saying that the price of a litre of raw milk has decreased from \$1 in 2012 to 80 cents. This is following the restructure of the company when Fiji Dairy Limited became the supplier. This is confirmed by one of the directors of FCDCL as well. The price before was \$1 VET or VET exclusive, while the lower price of 80 cents is VAT inclusive, Madam Speaker. We have to ask this question, why a corporate giant is allowed to profit at the expense of farmers and taxpayers?

Madam Speaker, we fear that the Dairy Industry and the plight of farmers will be the same as that of our cane growers if Government does not review its policies and adapts and implements an extensive rehabilitation package to prevent the industry from collapse. This is a very genuine request from the farmers, Madam Speaker. We urge the Government to immediately review this policy and perhaps, the first thing they need is to bring to Parliament and review the Dairy Industry Restructure Act 2010.

For it to be considered an Act, it must be fully scrutinised by Parliament and it will give an opportunity for Parliament to reconsider some of the concessions and the zero-duty to one particular company, which is affecting the incentives and the encouragement for local dairy farmers. Instead of reviving the Dairy Industry, these measures have and are leading it on a path of destruction, Madam Speaker.

Let me say, Madam Speaker, if Government is serious about helping dairy farmers and the Dairy Industry, we suggest that it should be through direct support to the farmers because sometimes when you do this indirectly, you rely on a company to undertake incentives, provide restructuring of the facilities and help the farmers, they normally do not have the incentive if they can make profit by just simply importing. So I think we need to review the policy that we have now and provide the support directly to the farmers. I think the farmers would be more grateful to Government if they do this, not to the mover of this motion, Madam Speaker, because they need direct support in those areas.

There are a number of challenges and opportunities that the FCDCL, Madam Speaker, I could read all this out. These are some very, very good suggestions that they have provided in terms of the challenges and the opportunities on which the Government rehabilitation package could be based on for the farmers. So the most important thing, I think, Madam Speaker, is, the price of raw milk should be increased to \$1.25 as suggested by the farmers and the grading system be scrapped because when farmers take their milk there, they get regraded but the company puts it into one container. So the farmers are bewildered with the fact that they get different prices, low prices, but it goes into one container. So protecting one company to promote the local Dairy Industry by assisting the imports, in my view, has been a colossal failure and it is not going to work.

Import substitution policies, Madam Speaker, are used to promote local production, but if this import substitution policies are not designed properly, like in this particular case, you are giving an incentive for a company to keep importing from outside and because the powdered milk is very cheap, they have no incentive to ensure that the local farmers produce more. So in the end, Madam Speaker, this policy needs to be reviewed and an extensive rehabilitation package should be put out to the farmers, and that is the only way that farmers will be helped.

I know there have been a lot of representations, including to some of the Government backbenchers as well, and I know these issues have been discussed by the farmers for a while so that is why, Madam Speaker, we feel compelled to bring this motion to Parliament. I hope that the Government will see this as a very helpful motion in addressing the plight of the dairy farmers as an immediate priority. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, we thought that this motion was about revitalising the Dairy Industry , and that the Honourable Professor Prasad would actually speak about the Dairy Industry per se. If you all listened to his statement, it is all about the Southern Cross Foods. We know from day one that he has got a gripe against Southern Cross Foods and the bulk of his speech is about Southern Cross Foods and he has raised it previously.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Prasad is also, I think, quiet confused because on one hand, he is on record for saying that import substitution does not work. He is known to say that. He is known to also say, ‘let’s open to the markets, wherever we have competitive advantage, let us just focus on those areas and wherever we do not have a competitive advantage, let the open market prevail.’. He said that, it is on record and, Madam Speaker, he cannot deny that.

The fact of the matter is, what he is saying is actually contradicting that. Today, he is suddenly concerned about the Dairy Industry when we are actually providing an uplift to the Dairy Industry and have been doing so since 2012. Our focussed attention is to encourage our dairy farmers to grow (I will show you some statistics and figures about that), encourage an environment for the dairy farmers to be able to grow and that is actually the processing of their milk.

Madam Speaker, you cannot complain on one hand about giving protection (to use their words) to a local company so that they would use more local resources and then on the other hand say that we should grow our Dairy Industry because at the end of the day, it is the farmers who contribute the milk to Fiji Dairy Limited.

Fiji Dairy Limited is known as Rewa Dairy. Madam Speaker, as we have repeatedly said, prior to the sale of Rewa Dairy, it had accumulated losses of \$9 million and had a debt stock of \$17 million. Madam Speaker, \$17 million of debt stock and the Honourable Member has not spoken about that. He has not spoken about the accumulated losses of \$9 million, nor has he spoken about the negative asset worth of \$4 million before the restructure. He has not spoken about the mismanagement, the corruption that exists in Rewa Dairy, and everyone knows about that. Until today, in my drawer, I have got the receipts of a Rolex Watch that was bought by a former CEO of Rewa Dairy from Prouds, bought by Rewa Dairy’s money.

Madam Speaker, he has not spoken about the inefficiencies, he has not spoken about the fact that Rewa Dairy was not OHS compliant. It had not met ISO Standards, he has not spoken about any of that, but he had simply gone on his rampage against Southern Cross Foods because this is his little baby.

Madam Speaker, that is the reality of Rewa Dairy. What the Bainimarama-led Government did before the Elections was to restructure it, provided some net worth to the asset, it got actually \$10 million out of it and today, the farmers which he has not mentioned either are also shareholders as Class ‘B’ shareholders, without contributing any equity. They are not contributing any equity.

Before, Madam Speaker, yes, your shareholding of Rewa Dairy depended on how much milk you gave. It changed as a cooperative, so you had a larger share of milk, you get more shares, so the big guys ruled the roost. They have not mentioned that at all.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Agriculture will, of course, speak about exactly what the Ministry of Agriculture is doing in respect of assisting and providing assistance to the farmers. With the restructure, you have the company, the operations side, the processing side that

was sold off to Southern Cross Foods Limited but Fiji Cooperative Dairy Limited, which is the farmers arm, still exists.

Madam Speaker, let me tell you how much they actually got in respect of the dividends. Dividends paid to the FCDCL farmers increased, for some years they did not get any dividends. The last we checked was about \$0.5 million. Madam Speaker, the latest figures showed that farmers as shareholders received \$1.2 million as shareholders of Fiji Dairy Limited. Fiji Dairy Limited is not 100 percent owned by Southern Cross Foods Limited shareholders, the farmers actually have a share in it. They have not mentioned that at all.

Madam Speaker, the total number of farmers in 2016 stood at 340, in comparison to 2012, there were 250 farmers. There are 130 new dairy farmers added into the Industry from Ba and Lautoka, where Fiji Dairy Limited has set up their new chilling plants.

We never actually had plants in the Western Division, we never had it in Ba and Lautoka. The Honourable Minister will also highlight how they are looking at it with Fiji Dairy Limited. Fiji Dairy Limited set it up at their own cost and we are looking at setting up a plant in Rakiraki, Sigatoka, possibly in Sovi Bay and one between Nadi and Sigatoka. This is giving additional income to those people who currently are not able to supply on a commercial basis, to a processor of milk.

Madam Speaker, let me also tell you, it has created \$720,000 new income for Ba and Lautoka areas. The Honourable Professor Prasad has brought one farmer who is disgruntled about it, but milk grading is essential and the Honourable Minister for Agriculture will tell you that. Milk grading is essential and the premium milk, Madam Speaker, when New Zealand was throwing its milk into the drains with an oversupply, Fonterra (go to the news and watch it), Southern Cross Foods was giving actually more per litre to our farmers than what they were getting in New Zealand. Check those facts and figures!

Obviously the articles that appear in *Fiji Times* will not have those kinds of figures because they are setting him up for this motion, that is what happens, Madam Speaker. As I had said yesterday, it should be called OT – Opposition Time and not Fiji Times.

(Hon. Opposition Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the factory did not have any standards, procedures and had serious OHS issues, as I had mentioned in February, 2014. Now the factory has ISO 22000 Certification - HACCP and GMP Certification. Dairy technologies assist the factory and veterinary surgeons assist the farmers in the country, Madam Speaker. An expatriate Veterinarian has been brought in (not by Southern Cross Foods Limited) to help the farmers improve their quality of milk and more to improve the meat quality and efficiency, and the effective manner in which this will be delivered, Madam Speaker.

As part of improving the upstream of milk output, a warehouse has also been set up to supply dairy feed, copra, mill mix, molasses, et cetera, and we also work together, and in respect of the feed, the Honourable Minister will also highlight on how the Ministry of Agriculture is providing feed to the farmers.

Madam Speaker, yes, the milk production in 2012 was 9.5 million litres; 2014 was 10.3 million litres; in 2016 it decreased to 8 million because of the TB outbreak and, of course, because of *TC Winston*, that is a fact and a matter we have to deal with. But the reality is, Madam Speaker, prior to that, milk production was increasing. A lot more people have faith in the milk industry by way of having a commercial and professionally run milk processing plant.

Madam Speaker, as highlighted, the number of new registered farmers have increased in the Lautoka-Ba areas from 80 to 130.

Let me also tell you about the capital investments, Madam Speaker; \$3.2 million is invested, \$2.2 million worth of refurbishments took place in 2014. In 2016, capital investment, another \$3.8 million; repair and refurbishment, \$1.1 million; and committed additional \$3.6 million for the first six months in 2017.

We now have a \$1 million agreement and the MOU is currently being vetted between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Economy to have this \$1 million given by Southern Cross Foods Ltd to bring in New Zealand breed cows to increase our milk yield. We need to increase our milk yield, there is no doubt. The yield from each cow in Fiji has been comparatively low for decades. There is, in fact, no significant investment made in that. There is no significant improvement as what we are trying to do with the sugarcane industry, providing new genes in respect of having the yields increase.

Madam Speaker, the Chilling Plants have increased. The number of liquid milk has also increased in respect of the output, and we are not told about that. Yes, Madam Speaker, the protection has been given.

Madam Speaker, you have a company, a cooperative that has been run to the ground and not OHS compliance. I do not know whether the Honourable Professor Prasad went to Rewa Co-operative Limited before the sale and saw the condition of the milk processing plant; he probably would not want to drink liquid milk if he saw how the milk was being processed. And if you saw how you get bulk powdered milk, Madam Speaker. He does not also tell you that Rewa Dairy used to get protection previously, Rewa Dairy also got protection and that is how Rewa Dairy also survived. He does not want to tell you about that.

Madam Speaker, the reality is this, the condition with which the factory was operating was abysmal. The new standards have now been increased, new farmers are now being added and we have a fantastic new approach by the Honourable Minister for Agriculture and his team. We were unfortunate that we had Tuberculosis that hit the industry and that is something we have to 'roll with the punches' as they say, but the fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, that a fledgling industry is now up on its feet. Of course, there may be one or two people whom Honourable Professor Prasad may have spoken to, one or two people who had a hand on the till or hand in the pie previously who could wreak the system, maybe they are the ones who are disgruntled or maybe, there are one or two farmers who are disgruntled about the fact that they did not get the premium price because they did not actually produce the premium milk.

We have to uplift our standards. There were certain Chilling Plants that were run by farmers where there was always invasion by bacteria and these are the kinds of new standards that need to be brought about. This is why the new investments are being made, this is why they are bringing up new veterinary services because it does not make sense, Madam Speaker, for a processing plant to not have supply.

You may hear the story from the other side as if they are just sitting there, milking money (excuse the pun) only from some sort of protection. No! The factory, the milk, they would not get a return on the investment if they do not get the milk supply. So it is in their interest to make sure that milk supply comes through, it is in their interest not to reject the milk, if it is not rejectable. They are increasing new standards.

Madam Speaker, this is the reality. What is being done is a big smoke screen, it is an obfuscation of the facts, obfuscation of the reality and obfuscation of the future. The future looks bright. The Honourable Minister for Agriculture will tell us also how we will ensure that the future will be bright. We have a partner that is willing to work, a partner that is willing to pick up the debts that no one else is willing to pick up.

Madam Speaker, like some of the other issues that have been brought in from the other side, again we implore that, “Please, do not clutch at the straws.” We know that you may think you have political walls facing you, but that does not give you the right to manipulate ordinary farmers. Do not go individually to a few cane farmers and get their signatures. The moment you go and speak to them and say, “I will improve this”, of course, they will sign, and that is how they have been manipulated. Do not go and see the dairy farmers and say, “I will do this” and then you do not fix it up. You all know the Honourable Prime Minister is the Chairman of iTLTB and he has also spoken to the Management of iTLTB that “wherever landowners concur, leases are renewed.” Longer leases are now being given out, Madam Speaker.

We now have bylaws. Leases for agricultural purposes can be given up to 99 years. When leases are given up to 99 years, it gives them confidence. They can go and use that lease at the bank and the bank will give them money, they are buying new technology. Many farmers in Fiji, Madam Speaker, have been held back because of the fact that the lease that they hold is not used as collateral or security by mainstream commercial banks because leases are short-term.

In all countries, Madam Speaker, wherever you go, when farmers want security tenure of land and they have longevity of tenure, they actually are able to participate a lot more freely in the financial system, and the bank use it as collateral. At the moment, the farmers only get things like crop lien and BSP gives that because it inherited that from NBF. NBF was sold to BSP or Colonial at that time from FDB, that is the only level of financial participation of mainstream banks, unless they get a long-term lease.

These are some of the symptomatic issues that we need to look at. The Honourable Professor Prasad knows this, and as an economist he should know that. You need to take a holistic approach to agriculture. We need to provide the tools of production and the tools of financial accessibility, Madam Speaker. So, land tenure, longevity of land tenure is a very critical issue. It is not good to say, “I will give it to you for 30 years and therefore you can have production”, no! As you have seen in the cane farming area, you need to adapt to new technology, so it is the same thing with the Dairy Industry. We need to have new standards.

We have the Kava Bill that talks about new standards. We were able to sell kava at one period at exorbitant prices. When people started mixing all sorts of things in it, the standards dropped, no one bought it. Suddenly, no one is buying from us. So if you want to draw that particular industry, you need to have standards.

Madam Speaker, farmers also need to understand that they need to have standards. So to bring one farmer who maybe disgruntled, or two and say, “They are not getting the right price”, the question that should be asked is, are the same standards being applied to everyone? If Southern Cross Foods is discriminating against this farmer because he is from Tailevu, and giving more to farmers from Ba, even though they have dropped in standards, then obviously we have a genuine complaint.

If the protocols have been established, if the protocols are being adhered to and applied equally, if they have been made well-known through the cooperative association, then we have a level playing field and we have a way to move forward, then we have the plan.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that, we need to be able to be focussed and the Honourable Minister for Agriculture will also subsequently highlight the packages that he is also offering. We have a bright future, this motion, Madam Speaker, should not be entertained. We should reject this motion because we already have a great process and one of the fundamental reasons why we should reject this motion, Madam Speaker, is not necessarily about the farmers.

As the Honourable Professor Prasad is now making his little hay while the sun shines ...

(Hon. Professor B.C. Prasad interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... just having a go at Southern Cross Foods Ltd. Three quarters of his speech was about Southern Cross Foods, three quarters of his speech, Madam Speaker, was about the protection levels, but he was not able to draw annexes between that and what he is supposedly saying is happening on the ground.

Madam Speaker, that is the problem you see; you need a closer link, but there is no closer link between what he is saying regarding Southern Cross Foods and what he is saying the farmers are suffering from. We need intellectual honesty, Madam Speaker, there is a lack of intellectual honesty in these discussions.

Madam Speaker, all of us in this Parliament need to be able to be concerned about every single farmer, every single industry and to be able to do that, so we need intellectual honesty, not simply grabbing on to something and not letting it go. That is what that is happening, letting on to something and it is like, “I will pursue this come what may”.

We have, on a number of occasions from this side of the House whenever there have been issues, for example, yesterday I raised about FNPF, they said, “Oh, you appointed Daniel Urai and Felix Anthony”, we admitted, “Yes we did” because that was the law. If they did something that is not appropriate, we will fix it up. We accept that, Madam Speaker, if we have done something and needs fixing up, we have the humility to be able to fix it up and we will continue to do so. The Honourable Minister for Agriculture will further enlighten us, thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I invite the Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the spider has shifted from the Sugar Industry to the Dairy Industry.

(Laughter)

So, what we will do after this, we will strengthen the border security between the West and the dairy areas in the Central Division because I have seen the spider encroaching out into the dairy areas, Madam Speaker.

(Laughter)

As Minister for Agriculture, I was eagerly waiting for the extensive rehabilitation package, but nothing was coming from the Honourable Member. I find it interesting, Madam Speaker, as I was expecting a good in academic analysis that will contribute to the extensive package, but unfortunately politics has denied that good academic analysis.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, but let us get to the bottom of the issue, this is about milk production.

Fiji Dairy Limited makes money from milk and because there is insufficient milk in the domestic market as correctly identified by the Honourable Member, and that is why they need to import. That is the fact, Madam Speaker, but let me go to the production side.

Before Tuberculosis, we had Brucellosis. When we looked at the livestock sector in Fiji, Madam Speaker, these were the three critical sub-sectors that we focussed on:

1. Small ruminants - sheep and goat because there is huge potential in that and I have talked about the importation of the new sheep breed, and of course, the goat breed that is already here.
2. Beef sector, we are looking at revitalising Tilivalevu, Uluisaivou, Yaqara, et cetera.
3. Dairy Industry is high in our priorities amongst these subsectors within agriculture.

Madam Speaker, Brucellosis initially came in in 2009. It was detected when we saw that one of the major milk suppliers in Tailevu had regular abortion cases reported by the owner and after investigation, we found out that the main cause of this was Brucellosis.

Madam Speaker, for Brucellosis, in 2010, we lost 562 milking cows; in 2011 - 385 milking cows; in 2012 - 615 milking cows; in 2013 - 261 milking cows; in 2014 - 85 milking cows and in 2015 - 23 milking cows. It tells us that we are succeeding with the eradication programme, Madam Speaker.

Tuberculosis was detected after we were so excited about the positive results in Brucellosis. Then we found out as well in some initial tests in the reactors. We had about 18 reactors. Reactors are the ones that have shown positive but that does not mean that the other animals do not have TB, they already have TB, Madam Speaker. In 2011, it increased to 69 and then in 2012, we had 45.

One contributing factor to the reduction and this is one of the main arguments that we had with the farmers and we asked them to understand us, was the skills of those who were involved in the testing. Suddenly, Madam Speaker, in 2014, we had 721 reactors. It takes time for these diseases to be detected and, of course, spread as well, so in 2015, we had about 1,500. This resulted in a massive loss of our milking cow stocks, and that has directly reflected on the loss of production. But, Madam Speaker, let me assure the House and the Honourable Members that we are succeeding in our programmes on the eradication of these two diseases.

Apart from the diseases, Madam Speaker, let me talk to you about the package that we have. I have talked about the commitment of Government to improve the dairy sector.

Madam Speaker, firstly, we brought in cows from New Zealand in 2011. This amounted to about 340 and most of these cows have been impregnated already. The whole idea was to replace the breeding stock, particularly for the farmers in the worst affected areas but unfortunately, Madam Speaker, most of these cows again suffered from TB because that was during the height of the Brucellosis eradication campaign and we thought that we have succeeded.

We brought them in to replace the cows that we lost during the Brucellosis eradication campaign but most of these cows suffered TB again. We have temporarily halted the importation of cows because of diseases, as well biosecurity regulations in the areas where we wanted to bring cows from, but we have assisted farmers in those areas.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, was the milk price. We increased the milk price by 25 cents way back in 2010 to bring it to a dollar but, Madam Speaker, the reality in the Dairy Industry, we only have less than 10 big commercial farms and we have more than 400 smallholder farms.

As we speak, Madam Speaker, we have taken serious look into the smallholder Dairy Industry concept of India and that is why we have extended into the Western Division as well. India had problems with milk and dairy products but now, they are one of the biggest producers, self-sufficient because of the smallholder dairy concept and we are looking at that concept very closely, we will try and improve. I will explain how we will improve in the smallholder dairy sector and, of course, extend into the Western Division as well.

As already highlighted by the Honourable Minister for Economy, we have put up two Chilling Centres in Ba and Lautoka. Of course, we are looking at an additional four, probably one in Yaqara; the next one in Waimicia, Burenitu area in Ra; of course probably one in Lomawai, between Nadi and Sigatoka and, of course, another one will be in the Sovi Bay area, but of course it is about the land issue. We are working very closely so that we can extend the rural smallholder concept to the Western Division and this will be good for the cane farmers as well.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, on the improvement of breed, I have talked about BAF stopping us from importing milking cows, but we have gone into other new technologies. We sent our people to New Zealand and they have learnt new technologies, particularly on artificial insemination. We are trialling this and the success rate is quite impressive. That will help us to improve the genetics and, of course, milk production in the long-term. So, we are looking at long-term strategic investments into the dairy sector.

On lease renewal, Madam Speaker, when CBUL was established in 2008, it initially concentrated on the sugar sector but as most of the leases under the sugarcane belt areas were renewed, we are now moving into the non-sugar sector and dairy is one of our priorities. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform this august House that for the big farmers in the Central Division, in Tailevu and Naitasiri, this was the initial priority. iTLTB has renewed the leases for these farmers and there are few others in progress, but I will not go into details.

Madam Speaker, nutrition is also an area that we are seriously looking into. Unfortunately for Fiji, it is just pasture and very limited supplements. But in animal health, 80 percent of the cost is on feed alone and unfortunately for Fiji which is one of the major contributing factors to the low milk production is that, majority of these smallholder farmers are not reinvesting into their businesses. They cannot afford supplements that will help in the production level for the cows.

However, let me assure you, Madam Speaker, that we have been assisting the FCDCL over the last four to five years. From the reform, we have given FCDCL about \$4 million. Apart from the facility in Manoca, transportation and equipment that they have purchased, the latest is a Feed Mill that has already been installed and is operational, that will help us, particularly the farmers and members of the Cooperative to access good supplements at reasonable costs because nutrition is very, very essential for the increase in production.

On hygiene and animal health, Madam Speaker, this is where we need to improve our extension services. This is part of the package, Madam Speaker. You will note when you go to FCDCL, they have two specialised vehicles. Through the Government subsidy, we have purchased dedicated specialised vehicles for the Cooperative members so that the Extension Officers can improve on their extension services because the Honourable Member has talked about scraping the grading of the milk. However, let me assure Honourable Members of this House and, of course, as Minister for Agriculture, that we will never accept that because that excuse can only come from lazy

farmers. If we need the dollars, then we need to meet the standards as well, Madam Speaker. That is very unbecoming! Milk is consumed and we need grading. There has to be certain standards, Madam Speaker, so we are trying to improve the health and hygiene of the animals.

Fiji Dairy Limited, Madam Speaker, is about private and public partnership. They are also assisting us in the improvement of the facilities itself. I have always talked about the whole value chain. Agriculture is not only about producing milk, but someone has to transport the milk, someone has to provide the agro inputs, someone has to process and someone has to market the product, so it is the whole package that we are looking at. So for our products to be competitive, we need state-of-the-art technology with the processes and, of course, Fiji Dairy Limited has done a lot in improving the facility at Nabua.

Not only that, Madam Speaker, they have also assisted us in terms of the aid package. Apart from giving dividends which the farmers are happy about, they have also given us \$1 million to help bring in new stock when BAF allows us to bring in the new stock. The farmers are saying “Alright, artificial insemination, that will take a few years because we have to impregnate the cows, it will drop and then the cycle, so maybe two or three years down the line, then we are alright but the easiest solution, Minister, get the cows from New Zealand.” We are awaiting on BAF, we have \$1 million already set aside from Fiji Dairy Limited to assist us in this regard, Madam Speaker.

I also wish to talk about new technologies and how we can invest. Madam Speaker, in 2014 before the Elections, we were already discussing with the New Zealand Government. Madam Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the New Zealand Government here, they had given us a package of NZ\$10 million to help the Agriculture Sector, and 70 percent of that \$10 million is for dairy alone.

Madam Speaker, if you go to the Ministry of Agriculture now, we have two Veterinary Officers from the New Zealand Government. As we are now reconstructing the road between Koronivia, you will also see on the left that we are constructing a new demo farm funded by the New Zealand Government where we will bring all our dairy farmers from all over Fiji to get exposed to, learn the new technologies and they go back and improve productivity. So that, Madam Speaker, is already being part of the package that we have undertaken, together with the New Zealand Government.

They have also given machines to the FCDCL because pasture improvement is something that we are working at. I have talked about new technologies, such as artificial insemination. We are also looking at probably, instead of grazing, putting animals in barns but for that, that needs investment, Madam Speaker, and it depends on the ability of the farmers to reinvest, commit into this business, but these are all the things that we are looking into.

Madam Speaker, from 4th April to 7th April, 2017, I will be in New Zealand on the invitation of the Honourable Murray McCully to visit New Zealand, look at disaster management and, of course, agriculture. I will spend three days with the dairy stakeholders, including Massey University in New Zealand, to look at the new dairy technology and how they are doing well. Of course, I will be taking a few of my staff with me so that they get exposed to this.

Not only that, two weeks ago, Madam Speaker, Cabinet endorsed the MOU with the Israel Government. Of course, in Israel, cows produce 40 litres in the middle of the desert without any green grass. Of course, this is one of our priorities as well with the Israel Government. We are looking at Brazil as well for us to get into this, Madam Speaker.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, let me assure the dairy farmers and this august House that these commitments started way back in 2008; improving the Dairy Industry. The reform has taken

place and this was mainly to separate production from processing and, of course, bring in more private sector partnership.

As we speak, one of the contentious issues in the reform is the Milk Purchase Agreement. Madam Speaker, this is from Tuia International of New Zealand, the company that I have talked about, the \$10 million package by the New Zealand Government. This is the Policy Analysis of the whole dairy sector and the Milk Purchase Agreement is part of this already, Madam Speaker. We are already undertaking the necessary steps required for the reform.

Madam Speaker, additionally this is the Fiji Livestock Sector Strategy. We will be tabling this in Parliament very shortly, so the Dairy Industry is part of this package. We have political will and commitment, and we will improve the Dairy Sector, Madam Speaker, because it is important for us and let me assure the Honourable Members that Government has already undertaken all it can within the means and the resources available to improve the Industry. So I do not see any need for us to support this motion this morning, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Before we continue, let us be cognisant of the time because we are finishing at 12.30 p.m. and there is still one more motion to cover so please, be considerate.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- One minute, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- One minute, so I give the floor to the Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker the plight of the Fiji Dairy Limited farmers is directly linked to the Government. The two basic reasons for that have just spoken; the Government through the Attorney-General and the Ministry of Primary Industries, and I sincerely feel that. The Government because of its continued interference in something which does not belong to it. The Dairy Industry belongs to the farmers, just like FNPF whereby Government is interfering with something that belongs to the workers.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Just speak on the motion.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Just like iTLTB, Government interfering with something that belongs to the landowners.

The second problem is primary industry, and the Honourable Minister will vouch for that. He needs only to look at the report that was prepared by the Honourable Cawaki of how bad the situation there is - non-capacity, they have not increased any production in anything. If they had done their work in all these years, we would not come to here. There would not be any problem with the farmers. They have not assisted the farmers.

And in that Report by none other than Honourable Cawaki, he had outlined several and which says very clearly that there is a lack of capacity within the Ministry in assisting the farmers. What is happening here is that, the Government without consulting the farmers, went directly to a solution, informed their company - Southern Cross Foods Ltd.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- They formed a company.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You formed the company?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We didn't form a company!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- They formed the company, invited CJ Patel to come into it and \$17 million.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, a Point of Order!

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Through you, Madam Speaker, a Point of Order. The Honourable Member has a habit of actually not telling the truth. The truth is, we did not form Southern Cross Foods Limited, we did not invite CJ Patel. There was expressions of interest called, there were 16 companies that applied, Southern Cross Foods Ltd was the successful company. So he is factually incorrect by saying that Southern Cross Food was formed by Government. He is factually incorrect that C.J. Patel was invited. It was Southern Cross Foods that got it. We did not form it. You are a lawyer, you need to understand what you are saying, supposedly!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Under the Standing Orders, I am entitled to speak.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No!

Madam Speaker, speak the truth, do not lie.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Under Standing Order 81, after I have spoken then you can stand up, so please, sit down. It was formed by the Government.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, a Point of Order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- He is now making the rules. He said something that you have ruled, Madam Speaker, that I find objectionable so I will immediately stand up and object to that and that is the rule that has been established.

Madam Speaker, maybe you can provide clarification. He has said something that is factually incorrect, attributed a comment to me that is also incorrect, so I am, therefore, standing up and correcting him and saying that this is not correct, and therefore he needs to withdraw that.

The second point also, Madam Speaker, is that the Opposition on a number of occasions, also makes statements that are factually incorrect and pass it off as factually correct, but they are not.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Based on my previous ruling, there has been a request for you to withdraw a statement that has been incorrect.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I withdraw that, Madam.

HON. SPEAKER.- Not only withdrawing, I would like to end the debate on this motion now, considering the time that is given. You asked for one minute, and you have gone more than your one minute.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, the problem is, they formed this company - \$17 million, paid nothing - \$17 million was part of the equity.

HON. A. SAYED KHAIYUM.- A Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Again, he is factually incorrect, withdraw it because he said that they were paid nothing!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Southern Cross, made \$17 million....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, again, if I can reiterate, please sit down!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Sit down!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I have a Point of Order, sit down! Sit down!

Madam Speaker, the Point of Order is this, Southern Cross Foods did not get it for nothing. Factually, he is again stating something that is incorrect. Southern Cross Foods did not get it for nothing. They took a debt-stock of over \$17 million, paid \$10 million to the Government of Fiji, so they took over the debt to pay \$10 million. He is saying that they took it for nothing. We have got a cheque of \$10 million, how can that be nothing? How can it be nothing that it has \$17 million debt, Madam Speaker? He continues to regurgitate

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You sit down!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You sit down!

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! He is still on a Point of Order.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I am still on a Point of Order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Would you like to

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No! I'm against that, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, can you consider....

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

Madam Speaker, the Point of Order is this, that the Honourable Member, even after I have said what the facts were, has made a statement that is factually incorrect. He is saying that the Southern Cross Foods got Rewa Dairy for nothing, paid nothing.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Paid nothing!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- And we have said, Madam Speaker, on occasions in this House, how much Fiji Dairy was sold for. Rewa Dairy became Fiji Dairy, how much was it sold for. We said that it was sold for \$10 million, we said that it took over a debt-stock of \$17 million. How can the Honourable Member in his right mind stand up and say, "They got it for nothing?" That is my point, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, again, we have stated this on a number of occasions. If you pick up the *Daily Hansard* of 3rd December, 2014, the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism also spoke and regurgitated about this previously. The *Daily Hansard* is here with me, but he continues to say that they got it for nothing.

The Point of Order is, the Honourable Members have their honourable duty to make sure that they speak the truth.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. As I had already commented on previously that Parliament should be seen as a source of factual truth and, please, before you stand

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- My Point of Order, Madam Speaker, if you can allow me to speak, is that simply under Standing Order 81, I can say whatever I want, even if it is false. Then after that, you can stand up if you feel it needs to be corrected, then only you stand up.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! It has been raised that you have said a statement that is incorrect and it has been requested that you withdraw that statement because of its incorrectness, and I would like you to withdraw the statement.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can I say it again? Nothing was paid, they only acquired a debt, that is all.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I have made a ruling. I had ruled that you withdraw the statement and you have not withdrawn. Therefore, I will end your time given to you.

Honourable Members, I think Government has been given enough time, however, we can negotiate. Will the Government agree that we extend this beyond 12.30 p.m.?

HON. MEMBERS.- No!

HON. SPEAKER.- If we are not extending, then I will now give the right of reply to the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, considering the time and that a motion is still to come.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, it is quite depressing that whenever there are motions from the Opposition, especially motions that have the support of the people through petition, there were more than 300 people signing the petition yesterday and we are talking about more than just one dairy farmer here, Madam Speaker.

Government has got into the habit of saying this is a political issue, come on! We have the right in this House to come and present a petition, put a motion on behalf of the people who come to us, that is what democracy is all about. They can respond, they can win the election, we have no problem. But we should have the right to come here and present the motion and talk about it on behalf of the people who come to us as well as we are elected Members of Parliament, Madam Speaker. So I would urge Government to stop talking about politics, let us talk on the issue!

Let me get back to the substantive issue, Madam Speaker. I think the Honourable Minister of Economy talked about what happened in the past. Yes, I agree with some of his points with respect to what was happening in the old Rewa Dairy. But the point is, Madam Speaker, what has happened since 2010? This is the statistics from FCDCL.

In 2009, we were producing 11 million litres of milk. In 2015, we were producing only eight. The fact of the matter is that milk production has declined. Let me give them some lecture about what I call a “binding constraint”. The reason why I talked about the Fiji Dairy Company and the monopolistic stance that they have with respect to the import of milk and the support to the dairy farmers is a binding constraint, Madam Speaker. Unless you remove the binding constraint, let me explain to you what binding constraint is, and they need to listen. I will give you an example; there is a country in the Pacific where they were trying to raise the number of tourists coming into the

country. They did all sorts of things - marketing, budgeting, looking at accommodation but they did not realise that the binding constraint was that they only had one airline flying into that country. That was the binding constraint because if you do not have airlines flying into the country, how can you bring tourists, no matter how many hotels and marketing strategies you have?

In this particular case, Madam Speaker, the binding constraint is the incentive structure and the price structure that the farmers are getting from this company. This company has no incentive because the price of milk and cream, the world market price is very low so you have given them a 10-year monopoly, a 10-year concession to import milk and cream at zero duty and put 32 percent duty on all others who want to import. When will this company have any incentive to support the farmers?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Give me the facts only!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I think the Honourable Minister for Agriculture has talked about the support. They are all important, I know all that. I could have talked about that for an hour on what the Government should do - the challenges with respect to diseases, smallholder farms, low investment, milk collection or logistics and feed supply.

This is what I was saying that the rehabilitation package will have to look at all that but you cannot have a rehabilitation package working, Madam Speaker, if the incentive and the price that the farmers are getting, and if the grading of the milk is not done properly. I mean, I talked about one farmer, there are 24 farmers, Madam Speaker, in Vatukoula who were affected by that and clearly here, the Ministry of Agriculture is actually investigating, that is good.

So it was not just one farmer, Madam Speaker. The point is that, if you have the incentive structure and I think the Honourable Attorney-General has enough knowledge of economics to understand that because if you do not write the incentives, you cannot do everything else, so the binding constraint is that incentive structure. This company has no...

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, I have looked at the Decree and the Act. Unless you review that Act, unless we remove this duty concession, unless we have a targeted direct support towards the dairy farmers, this company, Madam Speaker, will have no incentive. In fact, if I can give another lesson to the Honourable Attorney-General and the Minister for Economy.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I know, I understand there were problems.

Let us say, Madam Speaker, for argument sake that the incentive/protection that the Government has given to this company, if that existing company was restructured, if they had the same protection, the same incentive and they were going to make all that money that this company is making, they could have used that money more effectively and more extensively to help the farmers.

Madam Speaker, I understand this idea of import substitution. I have been saying that import substitution policies can work with the right policies. If you put an import substitution policy such as this one, where you are giving a company a monopoly, you will have no way in the world!

I think the Honourable Attorney-General and Honourable Minister of Economy is talking about what happened in the past. He actually knows that it has not worked so far but he is hoping, Madam Speaker, that it will work in the future and the \$10 million investment that the Honourable Minister for Agriculture talked about, it is over a period of time.

Madam Speaker, let me say this again, the reason why I have talked about the restructure and the existing incentive for the farmers, if not changed, no rehabilitation package is going to work. If there is no direct support to the farmers in all the things that I had pointed out - feed supply and supplementary feeding, farm hygiene, investment and diseases, all these things will come to naught if you do not have the right price structure/incentive structure for the dairy farmers, and that is what the rehabilitation package ought to take into account.

Otherwise, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister for Agriculture could do all the right things and with all good intentions, but if the farmers do not have any incentive to go and improve the pasture, go and re-invest because they are going to get good prices, Madam Speaker, they are not going to be in the dairy farm. So that is the binding constraint.

I would ask the Government to consider that binding constraint, accept this motion and set up a rehabilitation package in light of the review of the incentive structure. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I support this motion.

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

Question put.

The question is:

“That this Parliament agrees that in light of the struggling Dairy Industry and worsening plight of dairy farmers, an extensive rehabilitation package be implemented for the vibrancy and vitality of the Dairy Industry and dairy farmers.”

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

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

Votes Cast:

Ayes	-	16
Noes	-	27
Not Voted	-	7

The motion is defeated.

Motion lost.

I now call upon the Honourable Mosese Bulitavu to move his motion.

**INNOVATIVE OPTIONS FOR LAND USE –
DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL AND MEDIUM *MATAQALI* ENTERPRISES**

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, I move:

That this Parliament calls on the iTaukei Land Trust Board to explore innovative options for land use to help develop small and medium *Mataqali* enterprises.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, at the moment, iTLTB's core business is managing and dealing with iTaukei lands by way of negotiating leases, issuing licences and collecting lease monies on behalf of the iTaukei landowners.

Madam Speaker, iTLTB has simply remained as a landlord, administering leases and collecting rent rather than having an active hand in land innovation. As its current arrangement both, under ALTA and NLTA and also under the Land Use Decree 2010, iTLTB and the Land Bank have locked indigenous people into a role of passive providers of land rather than active entrepreneurial landowners. This contributes to the retardation of commercial participation of indigenous people because as passive recipients of lease money, they are not encouraged to develop their commercial farming skills and expand their business acumen.

Madam Speaker, we have, on numerous occasions, heard in this august House the line; “*iTaukei* people are resource rich but cash poor.” Given they have, in their position, the resource assets which are communally owned, land and its commercial potential given to tenants, many are not able to translate those assets into income.

Madam Speaker, the question we ask is; how will iTLTB lift the poor and disadvantaged indigenous Fijians, given that land being a fact of production and the *iTaukei* own about 80 to 90 percent of land in Fiji? How has iTLTB created an enabling environment so that *iTaukei* resource owners are proportionately represented at the top income level and are active participants in the commercial sector?

Madam Speaker, no doubt, *iTaukei* land has helped drive economic and social developments in this country since the Deed of Cession and post-Independence. It has generated national income, wealth, jobs and Government revenue. The land has helped combat poverty and improve the standard of living of many citizens, but indigenous Fijians are still the largest of the poor in Fiji, and are the poorest going by all indicators of wealth.

Madam Speaker, has the *iTaukei* Affairs Board and iTLTB identified the right development model, right leadership style, right environment and the appropriate skills to enhance the status of landowners? The two current iTLTB policies by the current Government; equal lease distribution system and the CBUL system, further entrenches the pattern solely driven by the neo-liberal notion of liberalising land ownership but does not encourage formation of *Mataqali* SMEs.

Through the two policies, the *iTaukei* people remain passive land providers and iTLTB gets tenants to lease their land and they sit to wait for the lease monies that come in. Lease monies are deposited into their accounts monthly whereby some get \$30, some \$50 and those with more land get \$100.

The CBUL system further tops up 7.3 percent per year to thank iTaukei landowners for renewing leases. Most of this money is used for consumption and are not re-invested. Madam Speaker, iTLTB reforms should be driven by consideration centred on innovation, empowerment and sustainability. The iTLTB needs to have innovative policies and programmes for land use, given that Fiji continues to grow and makes its presence felt in the world of tourism, agriculture and commerce. If iTLTB takes a more active role in land innovation and development, then the requirement for the utilisation of *iTaukei* land will expand dramatically.

Madam Speaker, before I suggest the alternative, let me outline the various categories of development the *iTaukei* landowners fall into.

Madam Speaker, all *mataqali* land have title called RNL. To lease land, first, they need to be de-reserved. Once it becomes a proper lease, they then have a title and that can be used as security at the bank. If they want to set up a business, they need to register at the Registrar of Companies and once they get a Business Certificate, they need capital to help start up their business, pay lawyers, surveyors, valuers and environmental consultants, et cetera. Then they need approvals from the Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Fisheries or the Department of Town and Country Planning, depending on the nature of the business.

They also need to get Tax Registration Numbers and with all the documents, plus the business plan, enter the bank with a deposit, depending on the amount of loan. The bank processes and assessment of risks and viability of the business becomes another hurdle, if the loan officers are not satisfied with the justification. Those who come through then face a problem of finding the suitable location of the business in town, either there is no space, or there is high rank in key economic centres, Madam Speaker.

In addition, they need to register to get business licence from the Town Council, approvals from FEA, water and telephone connections, Madam Speaker. Once in the running, they face difficulties in tax payments, FNPf payments and other overhead costs. In addition, they even face more problems when it comes to competition, given the current monopoly that exists, if they do not derive from their business a fair share of income. They cannot compete and make profit, so in the end, they close down. This is the painful experience SMEs have to come through if a *mataqali* wants to participate commercially.

Given that, Madam Speaker, I had outlined that iTLTB has not provided the necessary environment. They are the major barrier for iTLTB in moving to land innovative options. It is in its legislation, especially the iTaukei Land Trust Act Cap 34, which is called ALTA or NLTA previously.

Given the legislation barrier, the motion proposes to Government that the iTaukei Lands Trust Act, Cap 134 is reviewed because it hinders the good management of the *iTaukei* land to facilitate fair development and equitable return to landowners and does not promote sustainable development, for example sustainable land management, sustainable farm management, good and modern land use practices and the green growth framework that the iTLTA review needs to be implemented holistically with other legislations, such as Town and Country Planning Act, Subdivision of Land Act, the Local Government Act, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, the review of the TLTA will enable iTLTB to formulate land innovation policies that will allow the formation of business partnership between foreign business and *mataqali* SMEs for agriculture development. Using land as equity, this will cultivate a culture of innovation by sponsoring students for higher level postgraduate training in land utilisation, agriculture engineering, crop science, food technology, legal patents to raise land development to a higher level

of entrepreneurial innovation. Some other innovating initiatives, such as the areas for patenting crop and vegetable preservation in techniques for expert and value added

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, in looking at the motion on the paper, the motion says, “That this Parliament calls on the iTaukei Land Trust Board to explore innovative options for land use to help develop small and medium *Mataqali* enterprises”.

The Honourable Bulitavu said that his motion is to review the various Acts, so the motion is something else now but, Madam Speaker, he cannot see that it is all part of it. The motion is a specific motion, the motion says for iTLTB to explore innovative options for land use to help develop, but he is saying we must now review the iTLTB Act and the various other Acts related to that. That should have been specifically stated so we can actually speak on that. He is now talking about exploring innovating options for land use. It does not talk about explore options for amendments to the law, he talks about explore innovative options for land use, which could be, how do we provide, like drainage system, how do we provide or what do we plant. So they are completely moving away from the actual stated motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member, you have 20 minutes to speak on the motion.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- In cognisance of your time, just please focus on the motion.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I had mentioned the legislations that I had highlighted, Madam Speaker, because it will enable iTLTB to move into that environment, because those legislations become a barrier and we cannot move into land innovations and land use and into *mataqali* SMEs with the current arrangements that we have. That is why it is very important to be stated before we move into other innovative options.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- It is coming.

This takes care of the major concerns which is in the spirit of this motion for effective use of land, development of innovative skills and empowerment of landowners, increased agriculture production, all which would be good for the national economy.

The same policy, Madam Speaker, can be used for the mining industry, where joint ownership would include allowing the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology, and management system to landowners. Landowners could be empowered through training and attainment of qualification in mining, engineering, economics, et cetera, to allow them to progressively assume greater share and control in the mining operations.

Madam Speaker, the partnership policy will also allow, form business partnerships with Indo-Fijian farmers and indigenous Fijian farmers, between Indo-Fijian Entrepreneurs and *mataqali* SMEs in the form of co-operation, and other forms of commercial enterprises which will entail development and the sharing of skills, knowledge and resources by both sides.

Madam Speaker, the same partnership policy can be encouraged in urban-based industries where Indo-Fijians and *mataqali* SME entrepreneurs can engage in commercial collaboration to

ensure sharing of skills, expertise, resources, as well as contributing to multi-culturalism and inter-ethnic goodwill. The Government can encourage this by granting tax concessions to companies based on inter-ethnic co-operation.

Madam Speaker, we need iTLTB policies that will generate opportunities to raise indigenous development to another level of innovation ...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- ... so that small, medium *mataqali* enterprises will spring out to connect to potential opportunities that off shoot from bigger businesses like tourism, mining and other industries, with the view of enhancing their divestment and growth.

Madam Speaker, having said that, this motion provides a way for consolidating the partnership between landowners, investors and Government, which will make iTLTB play a role based on innovation and productivity. That will help accelerate the *iTaukei* community into the commercial sector, with better protection and proper assistance, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, having outlined the background, purpose and benefits of the motion which is before the House, which I have said it is for the betterment of all Fijians, it is for the betterment of the institution that currently looks after *iTaukei* lands, it is for the benefit of *iTaukei* landowners, and all that. Madam Speaker, I call on the Government to support this particular motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The motion is before the House for debate and I invite input, if any? Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I want to tell the Honourable Bulitavu that there is no penalty in looking after land, we do it.

Let me, Madam Speaker, bring him back to his motion because for the last 10 minutes he has been harping on supposedly his motion, I could not figure out what he was talking about. I do not think Honourable Members on the other side understand what he was talking about. I do not think the people watching us understand what he was talking about, but his motion was very simple, "that this Parliament calls on the iTaukei Land Trust Board to explore innovative options for land use to help develop small and medium *mataqali* enterprises". That is his motion.

I also could not figure out why he wants to change some Acts when that was not part of the motion. But very simply put, Madam Speaker, I also want to say that in a way, this is good for us so that we can explain and tell the public at large what we do at iTLTB, and there is no lying during campaign.

I have already said that if you lie during the campaign, you will also lie in this august House. There is a lot of untruths being uttered in Parliament. The Honourable Bulitavu knows that fairly well, with the disk that they put out with the Honourable Niko Nawaikula and that was supported by a certain church, CMF in fact, that came up with a lot of untruths. So, if you lie during the campaign, you will also lie here in Parliament. I want to tell everyone, Madam Speaker, that ITLTB under the leadership of my Government, has already embarked on a landmark reform and review programme to identify new innovative strategies to maximise the benefits of land use and give our landowners the absolute best chance of realising the full value of their land resources.

Madam Speaker, not only are the *iTaukei* land most secure in our history, nor are their land rights the most protected, but my Government has also done more than any before to empower our landowners and create opportunities for them to succeed, particularly in launching small and medium

enterprises. The Honourable Minister for Trade had talked about SMEs and he was hushed down by the Opposition, who said it was a vote buying tactic.

The Micro and Small Business Grant (MSBG) Scheme, Madam Speaker, that they have been debunking and saying it is vote buying, is precisely what helps *i Taukei* landowners to develop their land and develop small and medium enterprises for them, and is exactly what he was harping about. This is the kind of short-sightedness that they have. This is how they contradict themselves, and this is how they are hypocritical. This Grant, Madam Speaker, helps landowners to start their small and micro enterprises or to give them further life to existing small and micro enterprises and this includes; starting piggeries and vegetable farming, root crop farming, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, they are talking about vote buying and yet, they have forgotten to also tell us about the agriculture scam that came up. The lower echelons or those who were involved in the agriculture scam were taken to task, charged and sent to jail. A lot of the top people got away with that. However, anyone who is paying attention to the good work that is going on should know that the incentives to run small and micro enterprises for our landowners are already built into our lease application process. I want them to listen to this properly so there is really no need for this motion and it should be thrown out of the House.

Right now a *mataqali* member seeking a lease to launch a micro or small enterprise on their *mataqali* land, pays zero for their lease premium and should they decide to sell off their business down the track, this premium can be recovered and paid back to the *mataqali* as lease income. The *tokatoka* and *mataqali* units are also encouraged to form trust and lease their own *mataqali* land and in this case, the Board will also waive premiums to give them a leg up in pursuing their enterprises. The iTLTB has also sought to encourage development on *i Taukei* land that is carefully planned and structured to have the most positive impact possible. That is why we are assisting *mataqali* members to draw up their scheme plans for land subdivisions, and we have supported frameworks in place for our landowners to seek advice on how to maximise returns on the use of their land.

Madam Speaker, the iTLTB has also set up a Landowner's Affairs Department at the Board for the specific purpose of researching long standing issues affecting our landowners' business and commercial interest. The Landowners' Affairs Department also serves as an advisory role, providing support services direct to our landowners as they explore new commercial opportunities on their land. The iTLTB has also opened up the possibility of using *mataqali* lease funds to contribute to the initial setup cost of *mataqali* commercial projects, so long as 60 percent of the *mataqali* members above the age of 18 years provide their consent. Perhaps, the Honourable Member is also unaware that the iTLTB, as part of its regular responsibilities, runs financial literacy training for *mataqali* members who are interested in launching their own businesses. As part of this commitment, the iTLTB also provides ample information on possible investment opportunities available through reputable financial institutions.

In fact, Madam Speaker, at the iTLTB Board Meeting just this month, the Board endorsed an unprecedented programme to assist landowners who are interested in carrying out value adding projects on their land by supporting them through the provision of seed capital. The programme will begin as a pilot project with funding of \$300,000 to fund up to 10 landowning units, who have demonstrated readiness to pursue new business opportunities. And as time goes on and we expand this programme, these landowning units will emerge as business models, success stories that can be looked to by all of our landowners on how to maximise their use of land resources rather than leaving them idle.

Madam Speaker, one of my Government's top priority is to ensure that *itaukei* landowners have increased and direct benefits from the development of their land. Accordingly, my Government has partnered with iTLTB in various areas. As I had stated yesterday, the updated and digitised VKB

records kept by the *iTaukei* Lands and Fisheries Commission or the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs is accessible to the iTLTB with regards to the equal distribution of land lease monies from the iTLTB to the individual members of the landowning unit.

Also, there is a \$10 million grant initiative provided by Government to landowning units to meet development costs of their land, in particular the cost of connecting and constructing utilities such as water, electricity and road to and on the proposed development areas. This will not only assist landowning units from earning more revenue, thereby empowering them in a more tangible manner but also contribute to increased national economic activity and sustainable growth of the Fijian economy.

Madam Speaker, iTLTB, in partnership with the Government is providing assistance to landowning units to convert agriculture leases to tourism leases for eco-tourism projects and there are already discussions with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Madam Speaker, together with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism to explore various business models to suit small and medium enterprises and to allow those SMEs to be sustainable.

Finally, Madam Speaker, iTLTB is also profiling *mataqali* land, giving our landowners what they need to take stock of their valuable land resources so they can make decisions anchored in up to date and reliable information. For those *mataqalis* that have demonstrated clear direction and sound strategic planning, the Board is working with them to complement their effort with the infrastructure to match, whether it be fishing operations in Lau, forestry and forestry bio-products projects in Ra, tourism enterprises along the coast in Nadroga or a commercial agriculture in Tailevu, the Board is tailoring assistance in the form of road networks, the supply of water, electricity, ICT services and the necessary infrastructure requirements to support these enterprises.

So, Madam Speaker, there can be no questions that the iTLTB Board in partnership with my Government, already takes the development of micro, small and medium enterprises for our landowners very seriously. To suggest that there is a need for greater effort and attention to be given in this area is to ignore the tremendous development already ongoing, but that is always the truth with those on the other side of the House. The resources and the support are already there for our landowners, to seize upon commercial opportunities as we have so often done before.

We have created an enabling environment. We have put the foundation in place for our landowners to pick up the ball and run with it. We have done so because we believe in their ambition, we believe in their dreams and we believe in their ability to make them a reality, like we believe in those young Fijians out there. And we will continue to support them so that they build up themselves and their communities, and help build a better Fiji for us all.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, there is really no need for this motion to be entertained in this Parliament.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

Honourable Members, I see that the time is now exactly 12.30 p.m., and we are not able to complete the process of this motion. Therefore, we will vote on this motion.

Question put.

Parliament will now vote on the motion. The Question is:

That this Parliament calls on the iTaukei Land Trust Board to explore innovative options for land use to help develop small and medium *mataqali* enterprises.”

(Chorus of “ayes” and “noes”)

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

Votes Cast:

Ayes	:	15
Noes	:	27
Not Voted	:	8

There being 15 Ayes, 27 Noes and 8 Not Voted, the motion is defeated.

Motion lost.

We have come to the last item in today’s Order Paper. I now call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That Parliament adjourns until Monday, 24th April 2017 at 9.30 a.m.

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

Question put.

The Question is:

That Parliament adjourns until Monday, 24th April, 2017 at 9.30 a.m.

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of “noes”)

Since no Member opposes, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- Just before we adjourn, I would like to remind Honourable Members that there will be a Workshop for Members of Parliament on Non-Communicable Diseases on Monday, 27th March, 2017 from 8.30am to 4.00pm.

The Speaker's Debate programme is also on Monday from 5.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. at GPH. The topic for this debate is based on SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-Being and the topic is, "Is it time for Fiji to toughen rules on junk food and drinks to tackle diabetes and heart disease?" I anticipate an interesting panel discussion and welcome everyone to attend.

I would also like to thank the UNDP Fiji Parliament Support Project and their donors - the European Union and the Governments of New Zealand, Japan and Australia, for their support for the Workshops and Speaker's Debates, which has enabled Parliament to raise the profile of the SDGs in Fiji.

Thank you, Honourable Members. Parliament is now adjourned until Monday, 24th April, 2017 at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.33 p.m.